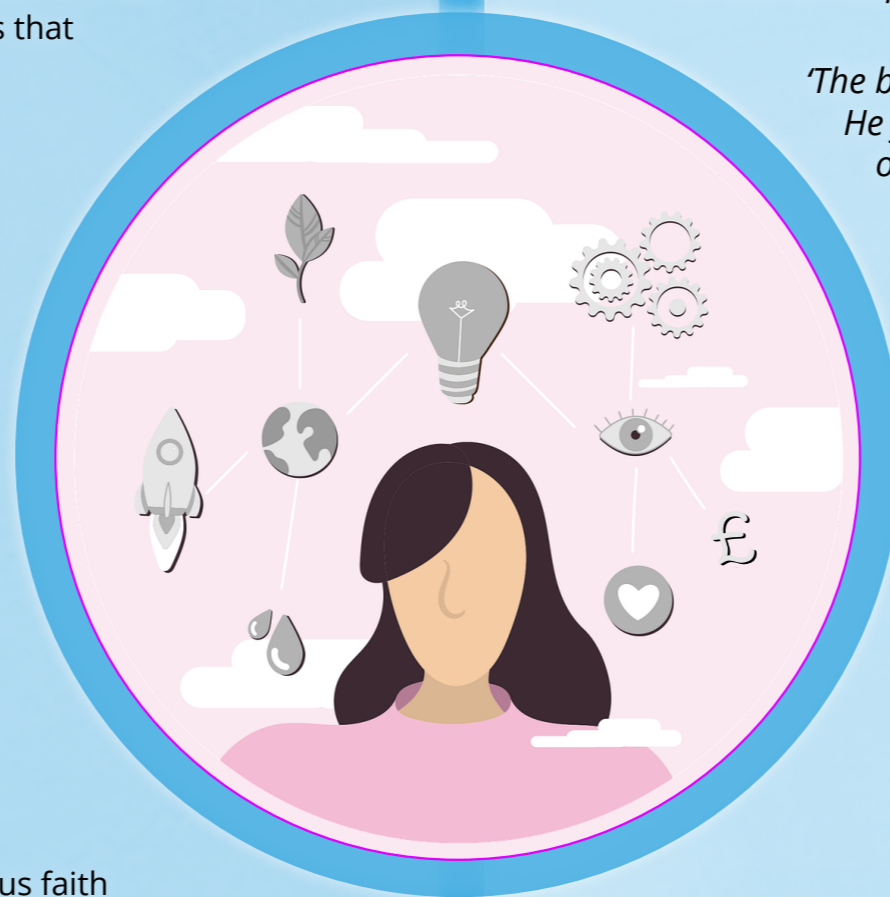


## Key concepts

- Alister Hardy described religious experience as producing a conviction that the empirical world is not all there is, thus altering a person's behaviour.
- Religious **practice** includes actions such as rituals, festivals, and duties.
- Religious **faith** involves an act of will, trust and belief in a body of teachings.
- Religious experience can be the source of religious teachings. World faiths often have key figures whose teaching is based upon their religious experience.
- Religious experience reinforces existing teaching about the divine e.g. if a religion teaches that God is loving, religious experience will confirm this belief.
- Max Weber claimed religion is a fulfilment of our **ideal interests** (need to make sense of life). Religious experience may answer or confirm messages that appeal to our deepest needs.
- Religious experiences can be used to promote a belief system, to motivate people to behave faithfully or as an example to aspire to.
- Moral and religious teaching can be inseparable from the account of a religious experience e.g. The revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses, or the Qur'an to Muhammad.
- Emile Durkheim wrote that belief in the divine works as a social motivator for moral behaviour through religious practice.
- He also wrote that religion was vital for social cohesion (keeping the community together). It brings people together and enables cooperation.
- Corporate** (public) experiences offer a focus for **collective worship**.
- This creates a sense of unity through fellowship and establish common identity, purpose for faith.
- This can be achieved through corporate, **charismatic** experiences or through celebration of a past religious experience through pilgrimage or festivals.
- Religious experience can be said to restore a deeper sense of religious faith for the individual recipient.
- Martin Buber differentiated between an **I-It** (Factual/impersonal) relationship and an **I-Thou** (personal / emotional) relationship. Religious experience can be said to produce the unity of the I-Thou relationship with the divine.
- H.H. Price differentiated between **belief-in** and **belief-that**. Religious experience can enhance belief in the divine, providing the believer with belief in the divine rather than belief that something exists.
- E.g. participation in Hajj, Kumbh Mela or the Eucharist can help to rekindle faith and commitment within an individual.
- For an individual, religious experience can restore faith in the face of opposition or persecution e.g. Disciples at **Pentecost** were ridiculed as drunkards, Guru Arjan was executed for upholding Sikhism.
- According to William James, religious experience leads to the **fruits** or valuable qualities of genuine faith such as devotion, strength, and charity to help them deal with those who seek to oppose their religion.



- James speaks of the '**sick soul**' who needs to be born twice to achieve contentment and healthy mindedness. Initiation ceremonies symbolise the death of an old way of life and the beginning of the new.
- E.g. Baptism, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, wudu or Amrit all involve the dying of the old way of life and the start of the new.

## Key quotes

*'We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard.'* (Acts 4:20)

*'The believer who has communicated with his god...is a man who is stronger. He feels within himself more force, either to endure the trials of existence, or to conquer them.'* (Durkheim)

*'The best fruits of the religious experience are the best things history has to offer... charity, devotion, trust, patience and bravery.'* (James)

## Key words

practice	faith	ideal interests	corporate
collective worship	charismatic	i-it	i-thou
belief-in	belief-that	fruits	Pentecost
sick soul			

## Issues for analysis and evaluation

### Key arguments/debates

- Whether it matters if religious experience is real or not real
- Whether religious believers need religious experience for their faith
- Whether a religious faith is stronger if it is based upon religious experience

### Key questions

- Can a believer have a personal faith without any religious experience at all?
- Is it useful to strip the mythology of religious experience away from moral exhortation and commands?
- Are the fruits of religious experience, such as strength and devotion, always positive?