

The Illusion of Divine Peace: Emotional Evidence and the Demand for Diagnosticity — 27

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Central claim

The illusion is not the feeling of peace; it is treating that feeling as a public source-identifier for specifically Christian truth. Cross-tradition interpretation and ordinary emotional pathways keep serious rivals in play, while the present evidence supplies no independently validated feature that separates the Christian source-attribution from them. Peace may remain real, valuable, privately warranted, or divinely mediated; without a demonstrated differentiator, however, it does not publicly identify its source.

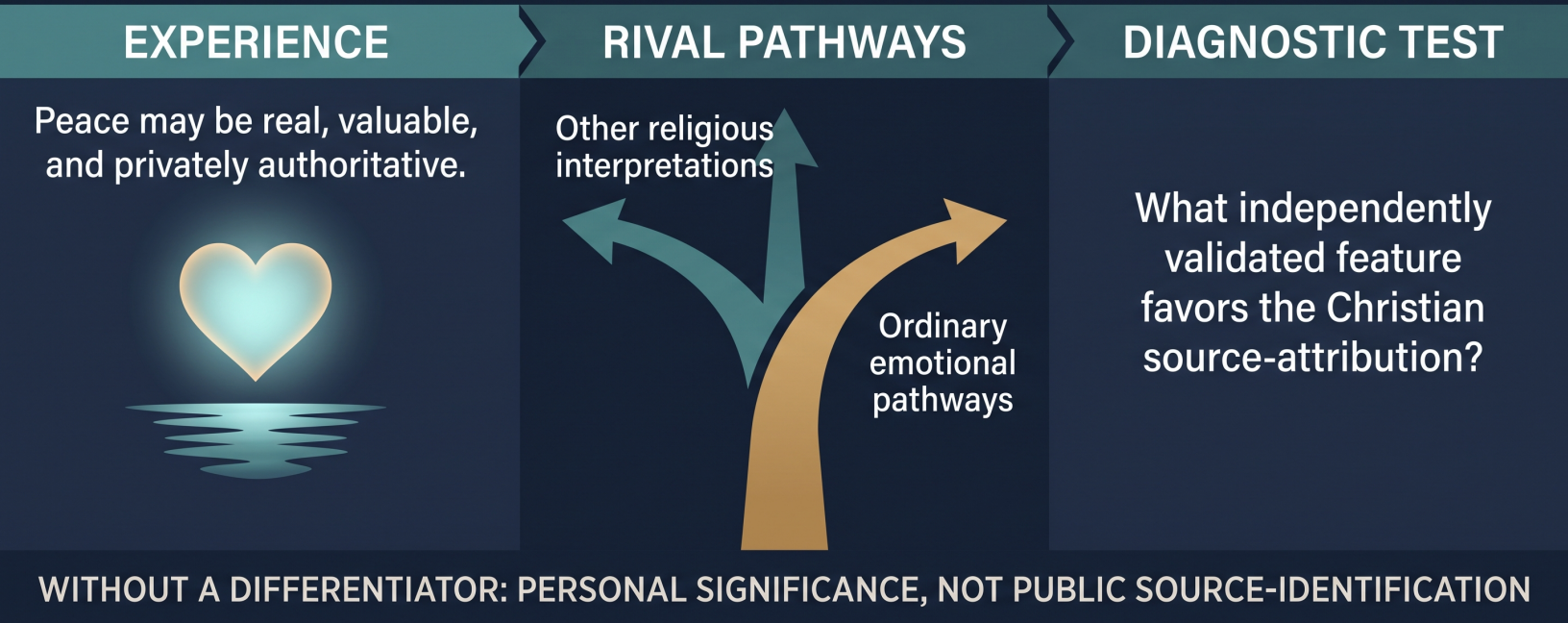
Preview:

Experience	Claim under pressure	Diagnostic burden	Bounded result
Peace may be intense, beneficial, and personally authoritative.	The feeling is said to identify a specifically Christian source and confirm Christian teaching.	Show an independently specified feature that favors that attribution over serious religious and ordinary rivals.	No such feature is presently established. Personal significance and possible divine mediation remain open.

The paper tests a public source-identification claim. It does not deny the experience, attempt to disprove theism or Christianity, or assume that divine action could not use ordinary emotional mechanisms.

Visual preview:

The illusion lies not in the feeling of peace, but in treating peace as a **public source-identifier for specifically Christian truth**.



The diagram locates the paper's governing distinction: an experience may retain personal significance while failing to identify its source publicly. Rival pathways make a diagnostic test necessary; only an independently validated differentiator could complete the specifically Christian inference.

Abstract

The illusion examined here is not the feeling of peace but the inference that the feeling publicly identifies a specifically Christian source. The paper separates emotional intensity and personal significance from evidential diagnosticity, then asks whether coarse peace-like affect distinguishes the Christian peace-as-sign claim from rival religious interpretations and ordinary cultural, social, and psychological pathways. Cross-cultural work on ideal affect and spiritual attribution, together with research on prayer, ritual, and religion-related emotion regulation, does not measure the required likelihoods or show identical experiences across traditions. It does establish that culturally shaped interpretation and ordinary eliciting mechanisms are serious competitors that a public source-identification claim must address. A three-way test then shows that uniqueness requires a demonstrated unique feature, a common divine source does not select specifically Christian teaching, and privileged inner discernment needs independent validation to avoid circularity. The central result is that current evidence supplies no independently validated feature that makes coarse peace-like affect publicly identify the specifically Christian source. This is an evidential limitation, not a metaphysical disproof: the experience may be genuine, beneficial, privately warranted, or divinely mediated, and a robust differentiator specified and tested independently could change the result.

Keywords: religious experience; divine peace; emotion regulation; diagnostic evidence; Bayesian confirmation; Christian apologetics

1. The Illusion Located

The illusion named in the title is not peace. It is the evidential promotion of peace: a person moves from “I feel profoundly reassured” to “this feeling publicly identifies a specifically Christian source.” A person may pray during grief and feel a stillness that had seemed impossible moments earlier. Another may experience joy during worship, reassurance while reading scripture, or a settled conviction after asking for guidance. The experiences can be sincere, consequential, and rationally important to their subjects. The disputed step begins when the feeling is asked to identify its source for someone who does not already accept the Christian interpretation.

That public use adds a comparative burden. Evidence does not support an interpretation merely because the interpretation can accommodate it. It supports one interpretation over another when the observation is more expected under the first, or when it bears a feature that relevant alternatives do not explain comparably well. An experience can therefore be powerful for the subject yet weak as public evidence. Intensity answers, “How strongly was this felt?” Diagnosticity answers, “How well does this distinguish the proposed source from its rivals?” The questions should not be confused.

The target is deliberately specific. A *God-concept* is a specified conception of a deity, including attributed capacities, intentions, and relations to human beings. The claim under review is not merely that some deity exists or that spiritual practices can benefit participants. It is the Christian peace-as-sign claim: a specifically Christian God-concept intentionally produces a recognizable state of peace or joy that functions as a sign confirming central Christian teaching. The relevant evidence is a coarse report of peace-like affect—calm, reassurance, secure joy, or relief interpreted religiously.

The audience is the apologist or believer who presents this experience as shareable evidence to an inquirer who does not already accept the Christian interpretation. This restriction matters. A first-person epistemology might allow an experience to have warrant for its subject without making it persuasive to outsiders. Likewise, a pastoral claim that prayer helps people regulate emotion may be true without establishing a creed. The paper addresses the stronger public inference and leaves those other projects intact.

The diagnosticity question

Suppose the experience is labeled E , the specific Christian interpretation C , and the relevant rivals $R_1, \dots, R_n$. The public question is not merely whether C can accommodate E . It is whether E , or an independently identified feature joined to it, is shown to occur more as expected under C than under the serious rivals. A vivid experience does not answer that comparative question by itself.

This standard is ordinary rather than anti-religious. A drug side effect is diagnostic only if it occurs differentially under the drug rather than under illness, expectation, or coincidence. A distinctive sound diagnoses an engine fault only against other causes of the same sound. Emotional evidence deserves the same comparative discipline. The conclusion need not be that the favored cause is impossible. It may simply be that the observed feature has not been shown to identify its source.

The argument proceeds cumulatively. First, the empirical record keeps multiple pathways to religiously interpreted affect in play. Second, none of the reviewed evidence provides a source-specific discriminator. Third, the main theological replies either make a testable uniqueness claim, broaden the source so that peace no longer selects Christianity, or relocate identification inside a framework that outsiders cannot assess independently. These strands converge on one conclusion: personal significance does not become public source-identification without a demonstrated differentiator.

2. What Cross-Tradition Evidence Can and Cannot Show

2.1 Recurrence is not phenomenal identity

The cross-tradition concern is well placed, but reports should not be described as indistinguishable or equally distributed. Existing research does not justify either assertion. “Peace” can cover low-arousal calm, relief after confession, secure attachment, energized joy, acceptance, absorption, or the cessation of anxiety. Translation and local teaching also affect how respondents divide and name emotional life. A responsible comparison must preserve those differences.

Research on ideal affect is especially instructive. Tsai et al. (2007) found differences between Christian and Buddhist ideals concerning desirable levels of arousal. That result warns against flattening traditions into one universal experience. At the same time, it shows that more than one religious setting cultivates valued affective states and teaches members which feelings to seek. The appropriate inference is not phenomenal identity. It is that an affective report comes already situated within a tradition’s emotional norms.

This is enough to create a rival problem. If Christian practice produces serene assurance while Buddhist practice cultivates a differently described calm, the states need not be identical for both to block a direct inference from “I experienced religious peace” to “therefore specifically Christian doctrine is true.” The evidential comparison concerns the coarse feature actually offered as the sign. To regain diagnostic force, the advocate must specify a finer feature and show that it separates the target from the rivals.

2.2 Culture helps shape perception and attribution

Cross-cultural work on sensed spiritual presence supplies a related caution. In a study of more than 2,000 participants across multiple societies and faith settings, Luhrmann et al. (2021) found that cultural models and individual differences associated with absorption and porous conceptions of mind related to reports of sensing spiritual beings. This study concerns sensed presence, not peace specifically. Its importance here is methodological: religious experiences are not raw inner objects whose interpretation begins only afterward. Attention, expectation, practice, and culturally available models can help shape what is noticed and how it is understood.

Studies of learning to discern unusual or spiritual voices make the point more directly. Communities teach participants how to attend, which features count as communication, and how to distinguish approved experiences from intrusive or deceptive ones (Luhrmann et al., 2023). Again, a voice is not a feeling of peace. The comparison shows how source-attribution can be trained within multiple metaphysical frameworks. An interpretation felt as immediate may still depend partly on learned categories.

Ann Taves’s building-block approach recommends separating an event or feeling from the process by which people mark it as special and attribute religious significance to it (Taves, 2009). This separation does not debunk

the event. It makes the evidential chain visible. The subject experiences calm; the calm is marked as unusually significant; the significance is attributed to a particular divine source; and that attribution is then used to confirm the doctrine that licensed it. Each transition needs support when the argument is offered publicly.

3. Ordinary Pathways and the Limits of Mechanism

3.1 Emotion regulation is a live rival

Religious involvement can aid emotion regulation. A 2025 systematic review located 15 eligible quantitative studies involving 6,148 participants and reported small-to-moderate associations across diverse religious and regulatory measures (Brandão, 2025). Most included work was cross-sectional and the measures were heterogeneous, so the review does not warrant a universal causal claim. It does, however, support a modest point: religious cognition and practice can participate in ordinary processes by which people reinterpret distress, direct attention, connect socially, and manage emotion.

The relation also varies. Vishkin (2021) reviews both consistency and variation in links between religion and emotion regulation, including differences across religions, situations, and strategies. This is exactly what a diagnostic inquiry should expect if practices, teachings, and social environments matter. It gives no license to say that religion is merely self-regulation. It does make self-regulation a serious component of the rival composite.

Consider several pathways available without deciding the metaphysics:

- **Reappraisal:** suffering can be redescribed as temporary, meaningful, supervised, or redemptive.
- **Attentional structure:** prayer, repetition, breathing, music, and liturgy can narrow or redirect attention.
- **Attachment and social support:** a perceived caring presence and an actual community can reduce threat and isolation.
- **Expectation and practiced association:** familiar words, postures, places, and narratives can become cues for reassurance.
- **Ritual coordination:** synchronized participation can heighten affiliation and shared emotional salience (Whitehouse & Lanman, 2014).

These pathways are not mutually exclusive, and none entails deception. A person can be helped because a practice recruits reliable human capacities. For the public inference, their availability matters because they keep live explanations in the comparison even when the specifically Christian source-attribution is not granted. Availability does not establish equal probabilities; it establishes that a source-identification claim must do more than point to the feeling itself.

3.2 Prayer and ritual findings are not metaphysical assays

Neuroscience is often made to do more work than it can bear. In a functional imaging study of highly religious Danish Christians, improvised personal prayer recruited regions associated with social cognition more than matched secular conditions (Schjødt et al., 2009). The result fits the participants' treatment of prayer as communication with an intentional agent. It does not reveal whether that agent exists, whether a response occurred, or whether the neural activity is unique to Christian prayer.

Likewise, Konvalinka et al. (2011) observed synchronized arousal between fire-walking performers and spectators who were socially related to them. The study concerns physiological coordination in a demanding ritual, not a measured duration of mystical euphoria and not an endorphin assay. Its relevance is that ritual participation can organize bodily and social responses through observable relations. One should not leap from that finding to a complete explanation of religious peace.

Predictive-processing accounts propose ways that expectations, perception, agency detection, and ritual may interact in religious experience (van Elk & Aleman, 2017). The authors themselves emphasize that much of the underlying neuroscience is inconclusive. Such models show conceptual and empirical possibilities; they do not establish that every religious experience has been explained, still less that divine action is absent.

That limitation cuts both ways. Finding a neural correlate does not defeat a divine interpretation, because a deity could act through ordinary neural processes. But if the same process is compatible with both divine mediation and no special intervention, the correlate does not discriminate between them. Mechanism can make a rival available without settling the ultimate source.

Availability is not elimination

Ordinary psychological and neural pathways do not prove that religious peace is non-divine. They matter because they can generate or shape the relevant observation without the specific doctrinal attribution. The paper therefore uses them as live rivals in a comparative test, not as a metaphysical veto.

4. An Evidence Ledger

Table 1 separates what the cited evidence records from what the argument may responsibly infer. This prevents a suggestive finding from silently becoming a source-identification result.

Evidence stream	What is recorded	Comparator relevance	What it does not establish
Ideal affect	Christian and Buddhist samples differed in the arousal level of preferred positive states (Tsai et al., 2007).	Multiple traditions actively shape desirable affect; coarse “good feeling” categories conceal differences.	Identical phenomenology, equal prevalence, or the falsity of either tradition.
Sensed presence	Reports varied with cultural models and person-level absorption or porosity across several societies and faith settings (Luhmann et al., 2021).	Learned attention and concepts can help shape spiritually interpreted experience.	A direct result about peace, or a complete causal explanation of presence experiences.
Personal prayer	Improvised prayer by highly religious Christians engaged social-cognition regions relative to secular comparisons (Schjødt et al., 2009).	Ordinary social-cognitive processing is compatible with felt interaction in prayer.	Whether a divine interlocutor exists or whether Christian prayer is uniquely veridical.
Collective ritual	Arousal covaried between fire-walkers and related spectators (Konvalinka et al., 2011).	Social relation and ritual structure can organize bodily experience.	Endorphin release, lasting peace, or a verdict on religious truth.
Emotion regulation	A limited and heterogeneous quantitative literature links religious variables with regulation strategies and outcomes (Brandão, 2025; Vishkin, 2021).	Reappraisal, attention, attachment, and community are plausible components of peace-like affect.	One effect size across religions, universal benefit, or metaphysical source-identification.

Table 1: Evidence ledger. Each row records a constrained empirical result, its role in the rival comparison, and the inference it cannot carry.

No row measures the likelihood ratio for the Christian peace-as-sign claim. Taken together, the rows justify a more limited cumulative statement: the observation is culturally shapeable, ordinarily elicitable, religiously interpretable within more than one framework, and not accompanied in this literature by a validated Christian discriminator. That makes source-identification incomplete. It does not establish equal likelihoods, and it does not require every cited study to concern peace directly.

5. The Three-Way Source Test

The apologetic inference now faces a structured choice. The alternatives are not every imaginable theology; they capture the main ways an advocate can relate Christian peace to comparable affective states elsewhere.

5.1 First option: the peace is uniquely Christian

The advocate may say that the relevant peace occurs only in an authentic Christian relation to the divine. This answer would be evidentially powerful if supported. It makes a risky prediction: properly measured instances of the target state should differ from those arising in rival traditions or ordinary practices.

The difficulty is that the target state is usually described in broad terms—peace beyond circumstances, secure joy, release from fear, felt presence, or inner assurance. Reports under other religious and nonreligious settings occupy this same coarse territory, even when their phenomenology and interpretation are not identical. The advocate must therefore identify what is unique, measure it without building Christian truth into the scoring rule, and show that it tracks the Christian source-attribution rather than expectation, selection, or retrospective description.

Appealing to superior intensity is insufficient. Extreme intensity can arise from many causes, and retrospective testimony is vulnerable to memory and community norms. Appealing to a distinct “quality” can work only if independent raters or a reliable procedure can recognize that quality without first being told which experience is Christian.

5.2 Second option: one divine source grants peace widely

The advocate may instead say that the same deity extends comfort or common grace beyond explicit Christianity. This response is theologically coherent and protects the reality of rival reports. It also changes the evidential prediction. If peace is expected across doctrinal boundaries, then peace does not by itself confirm the specifically Christian content at issue.

The point is comparative, not hostile. An observation that a theory predicts everywhere cannot, without further structure, identify which community has correctly described the source. A common-source account may support broad theism if it outperforms nontheistic rivals, but it does not automatically select incarnation, atonement, resurrection, scriptural authority, or any other specifically Christian claim. Additional evidence must do that work.

Nor does a common-source reply remove ordinary mechanisms. A divine actor could use those mechanisms. The evidential model must then say what the divine-source account predicts beyond the outcomes already expected from regulation, expectation, and social support. Otherwise the accounts remain observationally entangled at the level of peace-like affect.

5.3 Third option: only the correct believer can identify the source

A final reply grants that similar states occur elsewhere but claims that an authentic Christian can discern the true source through an inner witness, spiritual faculty, or the experience’s self-authenticating character. This moves the case from a shared observation to a privileged source-identification.

That move may support a first-person epistemology, considered below. It cannot serve as public confirmation unless the identifying faculty has a track record that can be assessed without assuming the Christian conclusion. Members of rival traditions also interpret some experiences as self-authenticating and learn practices for distinguishing approved from deceptive states. If each framework validates its own verdict by its own inner mark, outsiders receive no noncircular way to choose among them.

The evidential defect is not that inner discernment is necessarily false. It is that the proposed discriminator is not independent. “The Christian experience is genuine because it carries the Christian mark, and we recognize the Christian mark because it accompanies the genuine Christian experience” gives the same claim both jobs.

The source test’s result

If peace is unique to Christianity, the advocate owes an independently scored demonstration of uniqueness. If peace comes from one divine source across traditions, it does not by itself select Christian doctrine. If only the correct believer can identify its source, public confirmation requires independent validation of that faculty or feature. Every branch can preserve a theological possibility; none yet turns peace itself into a public source-identifier.

6. The Strongest Replies

6.1 Religious experience can have first-person warrant

William Alston defended the rationality of a socially established Christian doxastic practice in which subjects form beliefs about divine manifestation; Alvin Plantinga argued that Christian belief could possess warrant through properly functioning cognitive faculties if a specifically Christian epistemic model is true (Alston, 1991; Plantinga, 2000). Neither account is fairly reduced to an inference from a pleasant feeling. Both allow experience-based belief to have epistemic standing that is not derived from neutral premises accepted by all parties.

The present argument should therefore not claim that a Christian is irrational whenever peace contributes to belief. Its target is narrower: the use of peace-like affect as public evidence for someone who does not already accept the relevant practice, design plan, or inner witness. Alston’s defense must address rival socially established practices and defeaters; Plantinga’s model is conditional on the truth and proper functioning specified by the model. Those projects may vindicate warrant from inside a true framework while leaving comparative public confirmation unresolved.

This distinction also blocks an unfair demand. Not all rational belief must be proved from universally shared evidence. Yet when an apologist voluntarily presents an experience as evidence for outsiders, comparative standards become appropriate. Private warrant is not refuted; it simply cannot be counted as an independently demonstrated public likelihood advantage.

6.2 The fruits reveal the source

Another reply shifts from the immediate feeling to its fruits: durable compassion, courage, freedom from addiction, reconciliation, or moral transformation. This is a promising move because longitudinal outcomes can provide information unavailable in a momentary report. It also changes the evidence. The target is no longer peace alone but peace together with a pattern of later conduct.

The fruit must still discriminate. Religious and secular practices can produce moral reform, social commitment, and recovery; communities can also selectively publicize successes while failed transformations disappear from testimony. A serious test would define the outcome in advance, include appropriate comparison groups, measure baselines and attrition, and use assessors blind to the participant’s religious label. If a specifically Christian intervention then produced a robust and distinctive pattern, that pattern could become the needed differentiator. The present critique welcomes that possibility.

6.3 Ordinary mechanisms may be instruments of divine action

This reply is correct as a possibility. Neural, social, and cognitive mediation is compatible with divine action; a theology need not predict an experience without a brain. The paper does not infer “neural correlate, therefore no deity.”

The cost is evidential rather than metaphysical. When the same observed process is expected whether a specific divine intervention occurs or ordinary regulation proceeds without it, the process has little power to identify the ultimate source. To restore discrimination, the advocate must specify some additional pattern expected under the divine-action account and not comparably expected under the rival.

6.4 Rival peace is counterfeit, partial, or permitted

An advocate may classify peace in other traditions as deceptive, incomplete, psychologically produced, or permitted as a test. Any of these auxiliary claims might be true. Used after every rival case appears, however, they make the peace-as-sign thesis difficult to test: Christian peace confirms the doctrine, while non-Christian peace is redescribed so it cannot count against it.

A responsible version should state before examining outcomes which observable features distinguish authentic from counterfeit cases. It should also allow the rule to fail. A classifier that cannot misclassify the advocate’s favored examples because doctrinal identity fixes the label is not independent evidence.

7. A Better Test of the Claim

The needed improvement is not a laboratory verdict on the existence of a deity. It is a test of the narrower claim actually used in the argument: that Christian peace carries a detectable feature favoring the specific Christian source-attribution. The test matters because it marks the exact boundary between personal significance and public source-identification.

A credible study would include the following elements:

1. **Specify the target before collecting data.** Define peace-like affect and the proposed differentiator D without using doctrinal identity as part of the definition.
2. **Choose serious comparators.** Include matched participants using Christian prayer, at least one non-Christian contemplative or devotional practice, and a nonreligious regulation practice. Match expectancy, time, social support, and facilitator attention where possible.
3. **Measure more than testimony after success.** Use baseline and repeated measures, record null and adverse responses, retain dropouts in the analysis, and distinguish immediate calm from durable change.
4. **Blind the decisive assessment.** If D is a qualitative signature, raters should classify anonymized reports without knowing the participant’s tradition. If D is behavioral or physiological, the analysis plan should be fixed before group labels are opened.
5. **State the discriminating prediction.** Report how much more frequently or strongly D is expected under the Christian claim than under the rival composite, with uncertainty rather than a schematic equality.
6. **Replicate across communities.** A feature trained and tested in one congregation may capture local language or practice rather than a source-specific signal.

This design would not settle every theological question. It could nevertheless transform the apologetic claim from an interpretation protected by flexible auxiliaries into a claim exposed to comparative evidence. If no independent D is proposed, the honest conclusion is that the experience may have personal and pastoral significance while it does not publicly identify a specifically Christian source.

Bayesian language clarifies the same point without requiring invented numbers. Let E be the coarse peace report, C the Christian peace-as-sign claim, and R_i one relevant rival. The pairwise Bayes factor is

$$BF_{C:R_i}(E) = \frac{P(E | C)}{P(E | R_i)}. \quad (1)$$

Current evidence does not measure these pairwise ratios or justify weights for a single composite rival. The defensible claim is therefore not numerical parity; it is that no strong, rival-robust margin has been established for E alone. Adding a preregistered differentiator changes the evidential object:

$$BF_{C:R_i}(E, D) = \frac{P(E, D | C)}{P(E, D | R_i)}. \quad (2)$$

If reliable studies showed these ratios to be robustly greater than one across serious rivals and reasonable assumptions, the present conclusion would need revision. Bayesian comparison disciplines the burden without pretending that the literature supplies probabilities it does not contain (Sprenger & Hartmann, 2019).

8. Conclusion

The illusion is not peace. It is treating peace as though the feeling carried its own public label of origin. Peace can be profound without being diagnostic. It may console, reorient attention, deepen commitment, or contribute to a person's warranted belief. Those possibilities are distinct from the claim that peace-like affect publicly identifies a specifically Christian source and thereby confirms Christian doctrine.

The comparative evidence presently available does not support the stronger claim. Religious traditions cultivate different ideals of affect; culture and practice shape attention and attribution; prayer and ritual recruit ordinary social and bodily processes; and religious involvement can participate in emotion regulation. None of this proves that the experience is non-divine or establishes equal likelihoods. Together, these findings keep a live set of rivals in the comparison and reveal no independently validated feature that identifies the Christian source.

The three-way test shows why familiar replies do not yet discharge that burden. Uniqueness requires a demonstrated unique feature. A common divine source preserves rival experiences but surrenders specifically Christian discrimination. Privileged inner discernment may ground first-person warrant, but public confirmation requires validation that does not presuppose the conclusion. Appeals to fruits and divine use of ordinary mechanisms can improve the case only when they generate risky, independently assessable predictions.

The conclusion is accordingly one of evidential restraint: coarse peace-like affect alone has not been shown to publicly identify the specific Christian source rather than its religious and ordinary rivals. This does not disprove theism, Christianity, private warrant, or divine mediation. It identifies what a stronger argument must add: an independently specified feature that survives serious comparative testing.

A. Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

A.1 Plain-language reconstruction

- P1.** A coarse report of peace-like affect publicly identifies a specified Christian source only if the report, or a feature joined to it, is shown to occur more as expected under that Christian claim than under serious relevant rivals by a justified and robust margin.
- P2.** Religious interpretation, cultural learning, and ordinary social, cognitive, and emotional pathways keep serious rivals in play for peace-like affect.
- P3.** Current evidence does not establish an independently validated feature of the coarse peace report that supplies the required robust margin across those rivals.

C. Therefore, coarse peace-like affect alone is not currently established as a public source-identifier for the specified Christian peace-as-sign claim.

This conclusion concerns what the present evidence establishes. It does not entail that the Christian claim is false, that a deity does not mediate the experience, or that the experience cannot warrant belief for its subject.

A.2 Symbols

Let the symbols mean:

- P : the probability measure used for each conditional likelihood;
- C : the specified Christian peace-as-sign claim;
- R_i : one member of the serious rival set, including other religious interpretations and ordinary psychological or cultural processes;
- E : the coarse report of peace-like affect;
- D : an independently specified and validated differentiator.

A.3 Comparative form

For E alone to identify C rather than a serious rival R_i , the comparative evidence must establish, with appropriate uncertainty,

$$BF_{C:R_i}(E) = \frac{P(E | C)}{P(E | R_i)} > 1 \quad (3)$$

by a margin sufficient for the public claim being made, and the result must remain robust across the serious rival set. The empirical record reviewed in this paper does not estimate these pairwise likelihoods or justify weights for collapsing the rivals into one composite. It therefore supports only the weaker premise

$$\neg \text{Established}(\forall R_i, BF_{C:R_i}(E) > 1 \text{ by a robust margin}) . \quad (4)$$

Accordingly,

$$\neg \text{Established}(E \text{ publicly identifies } C) . \quad (5)$$

The conclusion is defeasible. If a candidate differentiator D is specified independently and validated, the relevant comparison becomes

$$BF_{C:R_i}(E, D) = \frac{P(E, D | C)}{P(E, D | R_i)} . \quad (6)$$

A robust empirical margin for E together with D across the serious rival set would undercut P3 and require reassessment.

A.4 Validity and support

The inference is valid when “currently established as a public source-identifier” is kept fixed. P1 states the comparative requirement for source-identification; P2 identifies serious rival routes; and P3 denies that the literature has supplied the independent margin required by P1. The conclusion restates the resulting evidential insufficiency. It does not move from “not established” to “false.”

P1 is methodological: public source-identification requires comparative evidence, though not one mandatory numerical threshold. Table 1 supports P2 by establishing rival availability and cultural shaping, not exhaustive causation. P3 remains revisable because its support is the absence, in the examined evidence, of a preregistered feature that independently identifies the Christian source and discriminates it from serious religious and ordinary rivals. The conclusion is only as durable as that empirical assessment.

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