

# The Scientific Application for Studying Religion Using the Theological Approach

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## ABSTRACT

Students of religious studies use tools similar to those in other fields, including history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, and theology. They develop strong analytical skills and are encouraged to think originally, as well as to empathize with people with a wide range of lived experience. Religious studies draws upon methods from both the humanities and social sciences in exploring the complex phenomenon of religion-its history, arts, ideas, distinctive social institutions and the state of mind to which it can give rise to include: Archaeology, comparative method, history, linguistics studies, psychology and sociology are all employed within religious studies, therefore, religious studies is not founded upon the use of one characteristic method or approach of inquiring but uses a range of different methods to explore a particular area of interest, namely religion. Theological approach looks into the religion scientifically and seeks its application to understand what it means to the believer an adherent within its own terms and how that system works as a rational worldview to those within it. In religious studies, these subjective influences may be in the background of your work, but the emphasis and end result are more analytical and objective. Scholars compare various religious practices and identities, consider their historical significance, and aim to understand beliefs in relation to each other. In religious studies, the bases of inquiry are to examine these differences without showing preference to one particular belief system.

**Key:** Religion, Theology, Approach, Science

## INTRODUCTION

Academic work in religious studies involves methodologies similar to philosophy and literary criticism: critical thinking, discussion and debate, clear writing, and well-organized patterns of argument. As in anthropology, you consider community relationships, social storytelling, myth, ritual, and symbolism. As in sociology, you look at the impact of religion on social systems such as the family, law, or education. Your course of study gives you a depth and breadth of knowledge about religion without the expectation that you participate in—or advocate for—one particular form of faith practice.

The study of religion has become a global academic discipline, in which scholars make inquiries and research into religious beliefs, behaviours, phenomenon, and institutions. Mbon affirmed the provision of a place for religious studies in Universities curriculum, to make the subject of religion intelligible inquiries, outside any religious point of views (5). While Theology on the other hand, makes an attempt to present the nature of a transcendental or supernatural being that scholars seek to investigate and make it appealing, and attractive in the academic study of religion. It is systematized to look scientific in outlook as it involves the collection of data and its procession, (Mbon 5).

This work considers the application of theology as method in studying religion with the aim to deepen the understanding of religious truth and its implications on men and society. In explaining the concept of theology and religion, the relationship between the two are cordial in time of academic scholarship within the field of religious studies, they (religion and theology) stand to explain each other. Here, the researchers viewed theology as a science to unveil the approaches used by some scholars who

consented to the scientific study of religion academically. Conclusion and recommendations are made to sum up theology as a study method.

### **What is Religion?**

There are varying definitions of religion as are many scholars. The differences that exist in their opinions expressed are evidence of their non-consensus definition of religion. Few of the definitions to help view scholars varying opinions includes: The oxford dictionary definition of religion refers to the belief in and worship of a super human controlling power especially of God or gods (deity). A particular system of faith and worship and as well pursuit or interest followed with great devotion. Religion as an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate to humanity to an order of existence. And from their beliefs about the cosmos and human nature, people derived morality ethics, religious laws or a preferred life style.

Glock in Edet says “Religion means church membership, belief in religious doctrines, in the ethical way of life attendance at worship services and many other acts,” (2). Attfield ibid stressed that, “Religion has to do with shared attitude to nature, human nature and society as expressed in and reinforced by communal rites” (5). Hepburn ibid says “True religion essentially involves fellowship, the breaking down of barriers, and the sharing of public worship centered on a public parable,” (15).

Defined Religion as belief in God which culminates in continual worship of Him, strict observance of His words and rules making petitions before him, identifying with his people. “ and propagation is love. All these aspects are vital components in the religious life. Love itself is a vital link between man and God and his fellowmen. Practicing the word of God is also an integral aspect of religion. It is the life of God in us that wins adherents to our religion, (Edet 2)

These definitions have uniform common character, speaking about religion which portrays state of mind of the creator and about the observable phenomena. The varying definitions show how religion was understood variously on the bases of varying area, cultures and periods.

Sharpe giving reasons for the varying differences in the definition of religion says “The differences may serve different purposes, depending on the particular intentions and presuppositions of whoever formulates them” (35). This buttresses the difference to sound natural without surprise. Moreover, author’s interest variety of intellectual stimulation may necessitate the differences in definition. All views were shield by the ultimate power in control of things and how the influence of this power is being transmitted into demonstrate his decision in obedience towards God, gods, deity. One thing common in all definitions is that religions adherents actually believe in something-supernatural or spiritual elements abound in all.

### **The Need for Studying Religion**

First and foremost, if the ultimate super human power that control all things by who’s power man became the victim of his influence to behave a particular lifestyle, it’s worth studying to do it better at all times. Moreover, man’s demonstrations of behavioural characters might be the bringing in into existence the “orderly system initiated at creation time. Ecclesiastes 3:10,11; explain God had already preoccupied man with instinct to desire, seek, yearn, to study, to understand religion for daily life practices. Hence the need to study religion for Daily life practices. Therefore the need to study religion became obvious for every human individual to operate in each day of his life. The study had to be continuous because humans have limitations to learning all things within a particular time, from the beginning to the end. After all, the genesis commission for man to subdue and subject things, takes life time to come by. Man’s lost of perfection at the fall is the reality cause for life trouble in human race.

Again the need for studying religion is scriptural. According to 2 Timothy 2:15, man must study to show self approved man that need not to be ashamed... and the whole ideas stopped at studying, but that which has been discovered should be disseminated (Rev. 1:11), should be made known for proper appropriation of mans daily life endeavours.

The span of man's life is filled with trouble and sorrow. Thus, man's search (study) and the hope of overcoming life challenges becomes the print on his mind continually. To study religion imply studying, the subject at the very least possess human interest, and if pursued with a measure of dedication, is capable of providing valuable insight into human motivation and human conduct in its totality. Another reasons why studying should be linked to the contemporary "critical times" hard to deal with. There seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel. But a truly satisfying life can be built on a relationship with God, for being the cause caused, unmove mover of all things, the ultimate controlling power by which mankind became victim of his influence has sanctioned and set the pattern order of its system.

Chryssides opined on why study religion sees the aim as to make sense of religious behavior; neither to endorse it, nor to criticize it, but to endeavour to understand it. "That religion is part of human behaviour, so understanding religion is important for understanding individuals and the societies in which they live" (1-2).

The scholarship enrolment might be done due to varying reasons could be based on a bombarded question of, "if" God exists and whether God can intervene in mankind affairs, is there life after death, why is man created and the like. Others scholars sees religion as an instrument for causing strife and division among humanities. Some scholars debated along the lense of it as a useful subject which proves knowledge that is pertinent in inter-personal and professional context within an increasingly globalized world.

Now, the issue is not of the need and why study religion only but as well, was considered as an academic field to studying religion and religions also. Chryssides and Geaves says, "Scholars agree that the study of religion should be as objective as possible". And since its understanding became oriented of the enterprise as the study of religion(s) or religious studies, and as a discipline in higher education, (1).

The relevance of academic study of religion(s) stirs spirit of tolerance and understanding and preventing adherent scholars from relying on unquestioned religious assumptions or an uncritical reactions to people of other faith. Tolerance in this capacity open up opportunity to think through critically, the complexities of the opposite faith religious affirmations.

Mbon stressed that, in the phase of a pluralistic society like Nigeria, academic study of religion is valuable to the realization of inter and intra religious tolerance so as to save our community from the costly socio-economic traumas resulting from religious conflicts as experience now. For studying other religious groups traditions believe and practice, can enable one to understand what in religion divides and what unite, and identifies sources of religious conflicts and how to avert it, (4).

The secular academic is a freedom for the study of religions where scholars were oriented beyond their counterpart in denominational seminaries, bible colleges, church or mosques or Islamiya high schools, where it is impossible to practice such studies. Scholars from such areas were made to consider their religion (denomination) of interest the only that exists or tat maters in a given society. This only enhanced intolerance, bigotry and fanaticism that gradually matured into religious conflicts and violence, an unhealthy situation for any society in terms of social and economic development and societal integration. Here, conducive environment is created for inter and intra religious dialogue and understanding.

Thus, the academy study of religion concerned mankind being ultimate, to Shape his experiences and sense of reality potently as soderlomis (1951:15). In Mbon rhetorical question affirmed: "...how are we to attain to any real understanding of the deepest secrets of human life in all ages and of the present day conflicts and

questions in the world without carrying up against religion (9)". So then, studying religion is most important, the paradigm of human existential problems – human suffering, moral evil or finite human ignorance.

### **What Is Meant By Religious Studies**

Religion as academic field of study imply an open forum for scholars to devote time to research into religious beliefs, behaviours and institutions, with effort to clarifies, compare, describe and interprets religion. In principles, religious studies or the study of religion excludes nothing identifiable as belonging within the categories of religion. Hence, as a field of study, it becomes a multi-cultural, non-confessional and inter-disciplinary subject, Capps (727) described purpose of the discipline as to provide “training and practices”... in directing and conducting inquiry regarding the subject of religion. And more to use the prescribed modes and techniques of inquiry to make the subject of religion intelligible.

Mbon (5) says “there is an immense and important difference between the way academic religious studies approaches religion and the ways other disciplines (like: anthropology, phenomenology, sociology, philosophy etc) approach it..” because academic religious studies examine religion directly while other disciplines as identified above studied religion indirectly. So the former with religion as subject matter, is easier to comprehend, than the later whose subject matter lies elsewhere outside the pursuit of religion.

There is no scholarly consensus over what precisely constitutes religion. But the study of religion encompasses a wide range of academic disciplines that includes; theology, comparative religion, social and scientific studies. Theories of religion offered various explanations for the origins and workings of religion including the ontological foundations of religious being and belief, (en.m.Wikipedia.org).

Religious studies or the study of religion is therefore characterized by the disciplines as a subject matter is open to other approaches and thus it does not require either a distinctive method or explanations to be worthy of disciplinary status.

Studying religion or religious studies as Neusner in Mbon rightly observed that, “...We study the subject which unifies all the other subjects of the humanities”. This imply that the study of religion or religious studies is the best tool that makes man complete whole, here and now, as a formative force on earth, (4).

There are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide but about 84% of the world’s populations were affiliated with one of the five largest religious groups: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or forms of folk religion (en.m.wikipedia). So what is meant by religious studies is the study of religions comparatively, to describe, interpret and enforce the mankind sound development in any human culture and the understanding of human history.

### **What is Theology?**

Theology (from Greek, discourse about God) is concerned with question relating to the relationship between God (gods) and humanity. It imply the interpretation of the substance (from sacred book or persons) and implication of a particular revelation. Hence, the Greek equivalent word “theologia derives from “Theos” meaning God and “logia” meaning utterances, saying or oracles, Edet, Augustine of Hippo defined the equivalent as reasoning or discussing concerning the deity. In its narrowest sense is a science or study of God and broadcast sense is a science or study of God and relationship which exist between God and His universe, Edet (2).

For Lyimo “theology is a conversation, a discourse, a dialogue and a communication in matters of daily life experience and faith”. This was intended that faith seeks for understanding (208). Theology is the

study of the nature of God and religious belief. In other words, it is an academic discipline that venture into knowing about God's existence and will. Hence, a systematic study of the nature of the divine, (Wikipedia).

In other words, digging the in-depth into God's word so as to discover about God as maker and sustainer of all things is based on religious faith and experience as regards to God's relation to the world in practicing theology. It is a concept term that means the studying of God or fundamentally about knowing God. Theology focused in making the scholar to think well and carefully about how best to understand, articulate and live out what is believed. It is the making inquiry into who God is – His nature and religious beliefs.

Theology is fundamentally the study about God. It is inherently practical and relevant in everyday reality in being human. So to study to know God to the extent that one become known by God to the level of influencing God and shaping life experience.

### **Theology as an Academic Discipline**

Theology as an academic perspective concerned an in-depth science of divinely related religious truths. It is being built upon the teachings of the Bible, (Edet 4). God formed the "core" of the study as well as the true nature of religion. Scholars enjoyed academic freedom whereby they no longer rely on unquestioned religious assumptions towards certain areas of belief and practices, each scholar has the privilege to think critically on complex issues of religious affirmation. The study armed to change the myopic idea in man seeing his own as the best that must be reckoned with.

As academic field of study religions knowledge were built by comparing, what, why, and how of the diverse religious traditions – beliefs and practices. Through this forum, knowledge on issues that can unite, divides or causes conflict and how to avert it among varying adherents of religious groups. The enabling elements that facilitate tolerance and make effort to appreciate those differences among tradition are secured through theological academic discipline in higher education.

Theology as academic discipline is an initiated conducive learning environment where the knowledge gained enhances intellectual growth that would liberates and enlighten scholar's experience. The emergence of other academic discipline in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century featured argument or deliberations as to the place of theology in higher institutions of learning as to whether theology's method are appropriately theoretical and scientific or requires a pre-commitment of faith by its practitioners, such that it conflict with academic freedom, (Edet 3). Thus, theology is the critical study of the nature of the divine and is taught as an academic discipline typically in universities, seminaries and schools of divinity.

### **The Relationship Between Theology and Religious Studies**

Theology and religious studies, when looked at, at a distance it seemed the two concepts are in tension. Sometimes it is denied that there is a clear boundary between them. Religious studies and theology in some contemporary contexts, a distinction is made between them as involving some level of commitment to the claims of the religious tradition being studied and religious studies by contrast is normally seen as requiring that the question of the truth or falsehood of the religious tradition studied be kept outside its field.

Religious studies involves the study of historical or contemporary practices or those traditional issues using intellectual tools and frame works that are not themselves specifically tied to any religious tradition and that are normally understood to be neutral or secular. In contexts, where religious studies in this sense draws upon multiple discipline or is focused on primary forms of methodologies of study which are likely to include: Anthropology comparative, phenomenology, philosophy, psychology and sociology of religion and "religiouswissenschaft" (the history of religions), which stands out to be the modern method of studying religion, (104).

Theology attempts to understand the nature of the transcendent or supernatural forces (deities), religious studies tries to study religious behavior and belief from outside any particular religious view point. Religious studies has a significant role to play, since its role is inherently wider than that of Christian theology and the search for a global theology has arise as much within religious studies circle as within the theological circles.

In most of areas of study, religious studies encompass various methods and approaches and therefore have a wide remit of knowledge. While theology too seeks to extend intellectual interest into wider areas of knowledge and to help in the rethinking process even though the framework of their particular tradition makes this more exacting than in the case of religious studies, (Whaling 232).

Both theology and religious studies occupied a vital position in the axes of learning about the transcendental a more preferred term than God in most discussion, human beings and nature are becoming of more concern to both theology and religious studies. The religiousness of theology cannot be balance by focusing on God alone, neither can religiousness of religious studies be balance by focusing on humanities alone; nor can afford not to focus upon the world of nature and ecological crisis that now threaten the natural world. It is not surprising that in the circles of liberation and ecological theology, the determination to set upright humans and earth as more important. There have to be deliberate quickening interest now in transcendence in both its human and ultimate sense among scholars of religion. In many circles, there is a slowly growing awareness of the complementary between theology and religious studies globally.

A clear indication of inter-connectedness between theology and religions can be visible by analysis of the various models of religion. For instance: the concept knowledge of the transcendence in each religious tradition takes different forms. God in the sense of God the trinity, Allah and Yahweh for Christians, Muslim and Jews; using Christ, Koran and Torah as mediating medium of the transcendence, (Whaling 233). All religious communities (Church, Ummah, Sengha etc) bring their followers together in a social context. Rituals and worships varies considerably in frequency nature and significance. All ethics of traditions of each have the desire to conceptualize to lead the good life. Social and political life involvement as they view it to influence and reform or adopt to it. Scriptures, myths and sacred stories are set as canon books while doctrine formed the most important matters. Aesthetics – music dance, sculpture painting etc, catered for the learned and the unlearned persons and finally element spirituality for lavish devotion on part of spiritual masters and the ordinary people are equally important.

Other vital element of significance which conveyed some nuance that human striving for are “faith and intentionality” which point to believers life, holding everything, including the eight elements mentioned above together and makes life meaningful. It is present in all religious traditions and the faith is in transcendence through a mediating focus which activates and inspires human lives, (Whaling 231).

At any level, the eight models as listed below are important for both theology and religious studies for the following reasons:

Only one concept in the eight models is important in theology while religious studies deals with the whole eight elements – they are; religious community, ritual, ethics, social and political involvement, scripture, myths, aesthetics and spirituality without giving primary to any of them. The transcendence notion in theology that focus in faith and intentionality, faith in transcendence rather for particular religious tradition through mediating focus is more important and is brought out in particular theologies. However, this model can give into the general structure and meaning of particular religious traditions, assumptions that are of general interest. They can show that religions are radically different when we compare them closely in the light of this mode. In other words, the model can be seen to point in the direction of faith and transcendence as universal theological categories and therefore show direction of a general theology of religion. By and

large, explanations shows theology's interest notion of transcendence while religious studies is on the believer's experience or faith than object of faith. In other terms, theology has a vested inherent in transcendence parse that is not true in the religious studies milieu. There are other differences too, but the man ones have been intimated already. In a nut shell, religious studies are generally wider, more comprehensive and less focused than theology (231).

Walter, purpose to explore the relationship between theological studies and religious studies in a manner that might enable the two fields to establish close working partnership within a coherent liberal art. To rekindle light on relationships among methods scopes and intensions, the two disciplines sought a clear identification of some available categorical schematic by which the distinctiveness and possible interdependence of religious studies and theological studies could be delineated in programmatic reconstructed. The constitutional distinctions were translated into disciplinary distinction, which though they may have made good legal sense, left religious studies and theological studies standing as if "never the twine shall meet" (727).

There are manifest signs today that the fundamental disciplinary distinctions are being reconsidered, persons involved in religious studies recognize that they are uncovering matters of paramount theological significance and persons involved un theological studies are aware of having gained access to some of the dynamics of religious.

Laurence, recognizing the fundamental compatibility of theological religious studies with the context of higher education hoped for more open doors to a more comprehension. The interest here is in exploiting the curricular implications of what might be characterized as the current rapprochement between theology and religious studies (730).

Although understandable differences exist between theology and religious studies, when they meet as mutually supportive dimensions in the general humanities curriculum. Together they afford a depth of insight and a potential for practical cooperation which far exceed their individual capacities. Both are essential ingredients in any well-balanced humanities curriculum. Indeed, one or the other might under certain circumstances be acceptable, but both are definitely desirable. The extent that we exploit the respective strengths of both disciplines will be more or less adequate addressing our responsibility to described and interpret a dimension of human experience which has been influential in virtually every age and society in human history. Considering religious studies through eyes sensitive to the methods and substance of theological studies, while at the same time, considering theological studies through interest trained by religious studies. By elaborating a framework that does justice to the complementary and mutual support of religious studies and theology we hoped to increased the scope and effectiveness of our curricular offerings and capacities. Theology and religious studies cannot be neatly separated within the context of humanities. Curriculum Out of intense concern for making religious studies a tolerable academic science has led to religious studies courses which have lost their humanistic center.

### **What is Meant by Theological Methods/Approach**

Theological methods/approach refers to a scientific method of studying religion. By using this method, the theological approach is not just confined to reading the scriptures but also involves studying them and analyzing implications and nuances as well as questioning its doctrines (commentary magazine.com). Theological approach looks into the religion scientifically and seek to understand what it means to the believer within its own terms and how that system works as a rational worldview to those within it. A source form the internet it state that, in contrast, it does not mean a confessional approach where teachings of a one school, tradition or sect within religion are taught as the true or correct understanding of that religion. Rather about understanding the internal terms within which a religion will seek to explain itself, it's teaching and its formulations. It means engaging in questions of meanings as they would make sense within the religious world view with a sense of empathy, so it goes beyond reasoning and relates to a

way of life, (commentary magazine.com).

Religious studies draws upon methods from both the humanities and social sciences in exploring the complex phenomenon of religion-its history, arts, ideas, distinctive social institutions and the state of mind to which it can give rise to include: Archaeology, comparative method, history, linguistics studies, psychology and sociology are all employed within religious studies, therefore, religious studies is not founded upon the use of one characteristic method of inquiring but uses a range of different methods to explore a particular area of interest, namely religion, (commentary magazine.com).

Unlike theology, the interest and methods of religious studies are not rooted within the framework of a particular religion. In separating the study of religion from the scholar's personal religious faith or lack of faith, religious studies has justified its existence in the grounds that religion is a sufficiently distinctive and wide spread aspect of human activity as to warrant its own form of inquiring, it does not depend upon assumption made about either the truth or falsity of religion, (Mbon 15).

### **Theological Approach to the Study of Religion**

As theologian or scholar of religious studies, the knowledge acquired is but within one of the groups of global religious traditions. The use of varying approaches and methods can serve as an introduction to the study of the groups of the global religious traditions. The grist to the mill for religious studies and subordinate methods use in theological studies has often been centered upon matters to be discussed under this unit topic. This falls under two categories: theological interest in transcendence and the religious studies concerned with humanity (believer).

Theological approach concerns the making provision of accurate and clear data of the conceptual framework of different traditions to scholars bearing in mind the role and purpose of concepts and theology differs from tradition to tradition and are normally on the basis of core doctrines presented. The knowledge from theological approach is based upon three archetypes of humanity, transcendent reality and nature giving rise to the modes of knowledge of humanity that is called: "Humanities", theology and the natural sciences. How did religion model influence theology and religious studies? There are separate theologies emanating from separate religious studies "Theologies of religions", applying theological approaches. Theology of religion is bent towards the construction of a universal theology of religion by focusing upon transcendence. To handle every moral human and natural global complexity through global theology of religion to conceptualize particular religious traditions to shade light on every evolving global situation that affects everyone. Some fast theological convergences and comparisons might emerge under a new heading as "comparative theology of religion" (Whaling 221).

Theology from this standpoint is vital in the study of religious and the outcome from "theos" – "logos" – the study or knowledge of God (gods) was as a result of the application of theological approaches. The presupposition order will normally differ from that of human and social sciences. To divorce religious studies within Christian theology will not be feasible, hence they are to be considered as complements of each other. So to dismiss theology that harbours concepts of transcendence or religion as human effort could be a hindrance of religion. The degree of greatness or lesser focus on God (gods), however cannot be the prerogative of particular community rather of general education. This is an attempt at identifying transcendence in a convergent way to be viewed as world reason "Being", "the divine" (God). Theology that is of Christian origin concept not found in scriptures but used in Christendom as Christian tradition by apologists and early fathers. Its consistent usage later encooperated all doctrines making theology as systematic doctrine. This became an open advantage for theologies of other religious tradition – Jewish, Islam, Hindu – to develop their theologies (Whaling 228).

The interlog of disciplines in humanities, theology and natural sciences which formed the key framework with historical origin from Greco – Roman model of humanities rested on literature and human beings –



their philosophy ethics, geography, language, culture and religion centered on human being. But people like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas being fund of theology than humanity, some elements dialectic etc, as a kind of preparation for theology, as Aquinas described it as queen of science (Whaling 231).

The recent change of the axis into natural science with dominant focus on experiment upon nature directed to scientific research on specialization in particular area. Theology and religious studies remained with humanities but were prone to adopt scientific world view in their approach to knowledge. This was to reintegrate knowledge to serve global world. The new situation is no longer purely western rather global in nature. This implies the acknowledgement of the historical background of a particular religious tradition applies to all traditions. This begins with the concept of the transcendence with varying positions in each tradition, for instance God in the sense of God the trinity, Allah and Yahweh for Christians, Jews and Muslims. Also the mediating focuses where transcendence presence among human beings: God through Christ, for Christians, Allah – Koran for Muslims and Yahweh – Jews are equivalent in their role (Whaling 233).

Whaling (233) outline eight observable models to analyse the level of people's experience belonging to the tradition concerned. And each has the entire eight models, viz;

- Community – Each tradition has community – Church, Ummah, Sengha etc, with district binding social contexts.
- Ritual – Worship, sacraments and festivals with varying date and forms in all religious tradition.
- Ethics – To conceptualize by living good like by agreeing on matters such as stealing lying murder, love, truthfulness to God and mankind. And to some extent the western prone to ethics of nature.
- Sound and political involvement – When necessary to influence reform and adapt the context agree upon with the religious tradition.
- Scripture – Most religious most traditions are normally contained in written books which serve as canon – Bible, Koran, Vedah.
- Concepts of doctrine – Tradition of concept matters very much however do varies from one tradition to another like the theology of God as trinity or not.
- Aesthetics – Involves the use of images to inspire adherence though in Islam they reject representing God image in any form.
- Spirituality – Stress the inwardness of religion though there was no consensus agreement that it's is present in all religious tradition. For instance: Christian mystics, Jewish saints, Hindi Yogis.

Two other element not mention here were striving faith and intentionality; visible in believer's life that held to the eight elements to make life meaningful. For the basis of this is in (God) transcendence, through the mediating focus which activates and inspires lives.

While theology uses one of the eight elements, religious studies uses the whole eight elements of model, however, notion of transcendence focus and faith intentionality in theology are as will. Islam stress on Allah as the transcendent (God) mediated the Koran through Mohammed as medium, channel upon the five pillars of Islam and the Shari'a (Muslim law) as the key to right living have remained constant. All religious traditions have varying areas of stress, (Whaling 234).

The continuous changing of the axis of theology and religious studies focuses from challenges of incompatibility to complementary or dependency in one another. The scientific nature in theology makes use of other element that are necessary if it must be conceptualized. Religious studies on the other hand consider the global religious tradition irrespective of their variation to find common link in all. Thus theologies of religions comparative theologies of religion and the global theology of religions towards a global ethic.

## Problem of Methodology in the Study of Religion

Christian theology's pre-eminent place in University began to be challenged during the European enlightenment, especially in Germany. Some subject gained independence and prestige and questions were raised about the place of a discipline that seemed to involve commitment to the authority of particular religious traditions in institutions that were increasingly understood to be devoted to independent reason.

Theologians studying religion by examining experience of faith and how different people and cultures express it, examining the varying religions of the world and their impact on society. Then, studying theology means taking challenging questions about the meaning of religion. It would be taught as an academic discipline typically in university and seminars. An attempt to understand God as revealed in the Bible.

Our understanding of the exact revealed concept helps in our understanding of the laws, wars, traditions and morals of our own society and that of other study, therefore, is part of philosophy, history and anthropology. It is being able to compare religious in a knowledgeable balance way scholars can study any religion apart from religion he professed.

No theology can fully explain transcendence and his ways because he is infinite and eternally higher than we are (Rom. 11:33-36). Nevertheless, we are to know him as much as are able. Theology is the art and science of knowing what we can know and understand about God in an organized and understandable manner.

Sharpe opined that methodology in any field of scholarship is confronted with challenges which seems to prove the method existing is inadequate. Thus, in methodological affairs, the apparent failure of method existing can be prelude to fresh enterprises. However, this is not to say the outsider or the casual observer can dismiss with impatience the whole methodological challenge in the field of religious studies. Largely the history of conflicting methods or hypotheses, and it is imperative that we should have at least some impression of how these methods came to be formulated. Not, as a rule, by the idle and incompetent, but the pioneer scholar who generally has worked out his method in the heat of the first-hand research, (1).

It is natural for pioneer of such method to inspire others to follow the method and in so doing creates a school. But that is in a sense the heart of the problem. With respect to the problem of method, there is a need to analysis in terms of the history of ideas, something of the genesis of the present discussion, historical inquiry into the relationship between history of religion "Religioussgeschichte", on the one hand, and what is variously known as comparative religion, "religious wissenschaft" on the other.

Viewed slightly in different perspective, there are two major alternative approaches to the study of religion – one dominated by presupposition and techniques of historical method, the other employing a variety of methods in order to attain a synoptic vision and understanding of the field of religion as a whole (Sharpe 2) combination of factors ignite the question on method – not all are academic, some are historic, others national or personal yet others are semantic. More so, other conflicting methods may be to some extent be accounted for in terms of background and temperament.

One mighty western method scholar's use was to measure all religious phenomena against the yardstick of the Christian revelation. This fitted certainly every conceivable case provided that one accepted the major premise of the argument, viz; that "God was in Christ" But already one of the motives for the comparative study of religions has always been a degree of detachment from one's own religious tradition, and few scholars of the subject were able to accept the major premise of the Christian argument at least as traditionally formulated. One possible methodological pitfall was the assumption of historical method as all sufficient, while it is known that historians of religion are the sole offenders in their regard, anthropologists and social scientists are equally culpable and sometimes more so.

## CONCLUSION

The study of religion or religious study and theology are concepts that have scaled through changes in understanding by scholars. These changes were necessitated by the inadequacy of the existing study method. Nevertheless, the shift was moving toward the realization of global theology for global ethics and diversity of religious traditions of the world religions and the academic study of religion.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- In view of the surrounding problems in all method of study is a prove of man's finite nature limited in understanding need to further research on how to retain religious truth than just trying to avoid falsity or truthfulness of all matters handled.
- Research to be acquainted with information is good, for scripture says, "my people perish for lack of knowledge". This does not mean literarily so, because some discoveries and information's are misleading, therefore scholars should guard against that so as not to destroy self and others.

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