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Study of Religion as an academic discipline

Academic study of Religion is one of newest scientific disciplines, and today there are many chairs and departments in different universities all over the world concerning this branch of knowledge. We try, here, to describe the origin and situation of this field.

Why study Religion?

This is a fundamental question. Through history, religion has expressed the deepest questions human beings can ask, and it has taken a central place in the lives of virtually all civilizations and cultures. As we think all the way back to the dawn of human Consciousness, we find religion everywhere we turn.

This may be true of the past, but what about the present - and the future? In recent times, critics have suggested that religion is on the way out. Technology and science have changed our view of the world radically, leading some to say that we've entered a new stage of human existence, without religion. Soon, they argue, it will truly be a thing of the past.

In our day and age, rumors of religion's demise seem very premature - and perhaps there's no grain of truth in them at all. Religion persists and is often on the rise, even as scientific and non-religious perspectives have become prominent. We still find religion everywhere, on television, in film, in popular music, in our towns and neighborhoods. We discover religion at the center of global issues and cultural conflict. We see religion in the lives of the people we know and love, and in ourselves, as we live out and wrestle with our own religious faith. Why does religion continue to thrive?

There are many reasons, but one thing is certain: religious traditions are adaptable in important ways. For many, contemporary religion even has room for scepticism, science, and the secular, which allows it to keep going strong in our rapidly changing world.

Overall, religion is powerful and persistent, and it shows no signs of disappearing. It provokes heartfelt commitment, eloquent expression, forthright action, and intense debate. For both practitioners and observers - for everyone who wants to be informed about the world around them - religion is an intensely curious phenomenon that calls to better understanding.

In this paper, we will deal with these Issues from a historical point of view. Indeed, Present paper deals with the History and background of Modern study of Religion as a distinct scientific discipline. After this short description about the necessity of study of Religion, we represent information about the origin, development and present situation of Religious studies.

A Brief History of Religious Studies

Interest in other religions has a long history stretching back at least as far as the ethnographic and historical studies of Hecataeus of Miletus (fl. 500 BCE) and Herodotus (c. 384-425 BCE). More recently, during the medieval period, Islamic scholars studied Indian, Persian, Jewish and Christian belief and practice.

The book entitled “on the Religious and Philosophical Sects” (1127), was written by the Muslim thinker Muhammad al- Shahrestani. Also working around this time was the twelfth century Christian scholar Peter the Venerable who, for missiological reasons, studied Islam and commissioned a Latin translation of the Qur’an.

(a) The Nineteenth Century

Whilst there is this history of curiosity, the study of religions is a relative newcomer to the halls of academia. The first professorships were established as recently as the final quarter of the nineteenth century. The academic study of religions was understood by nineteenth century scholars to be a ‘scientific’ discipline based on observation and objective analysis just as the other sciences were. The following words are taken from what has been described as “the foundation document of comparative religion”¹, Friedrich Max Muller’s “Introduction to the Science of Religion” (1873):

A Science of Religion, based on an impartial and truly scientific comparison of all, or at all events, of the most important, religions of mankind, is now only a question of time... .it becomes... the duty of those who have devoted their life to

the study of the principal religions of the world in their original documents, and who value and reverence it in whatever form it may present itself, to take possession of this new territory in the name of true science.²

(b) The Twentieth Century

By the second half of the twentieth century the study of religion had emerged as a prominent and important field of academic enquiry. In a period of history in which the scientism and rationalism of the earlier part of the century had seen a decline and in which there has been a rise of interest in particularly non-Christian spirituality, there has been a growth in academic institutions offering courses and modules in the study of religion. Moreover, work done in the social sciences has increasingly converged with the work done by students of religion. These factors, amongst others, have made it possible for the study of religion in universities and colleges to gradually pull away from its traditional place alongside the study of Christian theology in order to establish itself as an independent field of enquiry. That is to say, whereas earlier in the century the study of non-Christian faiths was undertaken in faculties of Christian theology and studied as part of a theology degree, the study of Christianity having pride of place in the curriculum, the balance of interest has increasingly shifted towards religious studies.

Indeed, many religious studies scholars would join with Ninian Smart in wanting to “rid religious studies of the grip of the Christian establishment” because, it is argued, the relationship between theology and religious studies “prevents an openness of approach, and means that interested agnostic, Jewish and other ‘outsiders’ are discouraged from taking up the subject.”³

(c) The 1960s and 1970s

Of particular note are the developments in the 1960s and 1970s when the term ‘religious studies’ became common currency. Whilst there had been, since Muller’s day, several chairs in the field of ‘comparative religion’ or ‘the history of religions’, student interest in the area had not been high. As such, it was difficult to establish separate departments of religious studies. The tide was to turn in the 1960s. (That the tide did turn during this decade is perhaps not surprising, bearing in mind the various cultural developments, not least the fact that many, mainly young, people spiritually ‘turned East’). The late-1960s and 1970s witnessed the founding of new departments of religious studies and also the founding of several important journals (e.g. *Religious Studies* in 1965, *The Journal of Religion in Africa* in 1967 and particularly *Religion* in 1971). As Ninian Smart recently commented, In the English-speaking world [religious studies] basically dates from the 1960s, although before then there were such fields as ‘the comparative study of religion’, the history of religion’, the

‘sociology of religion’ and so on.. Religious studies was created out of a blend of historical studies, comparative expertise, and the social sciences, with a topping of philosophy of religion and the like. It rapidly became a major enterprise in academia. It helped as a midwife to cultural studies.

The situation in Britain and America

By the beginning of the 1980s, although the study of religion in universities and colleges of higher education had progressed significantly and the future looked sanguine, things were to change. Cut backs and a shrinking volume of student applications led to the curtailment of religious studies courses and research. Whilst some departments, such as those at Leicester and Southampton disappeared, many adapted to the new environment in the 1990s by broadening the range of modules offered, providing evening classes and summer schools and seeking to be relevant by addressing contemporary cultural issues and developing interdisciplinary links with other departments.

According to some researchers similar trend in religious studies can be observed in the United States.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the rapid development of religious studies programs and the 1980s witnessed a decline. In the 1990s colleges have been looking for ways to respond to the forces of change.

By the early 1970s, religious studies programs could be found in nearly every kind of institution offering undergraduate liberal arts study: private non-sectarian colleges, church-related colleges, public colleges and universities, community colleges, and professional schools. In many church-related colleges, where religion departments had traditionally enjoyed a special importance, a number of factors combined to transform the nature of religious studies. Only the more conservative Protestant colleges retained an exclusively Christian focus in their religious programs. ⁴”

As in Britain, the decrease in student applications and diminishing resources in the 1980s led to cut backs affecting religious studies departments. Since the mid-1980s there has been much effort to cater for the needs of students, to ingrate religious studies with their other courses and to provide programs of study which have relevance to particular careers.

As to the future of religious studies in Anglo-American higher education, it is, as Thomas Benson argues, linked to the fate of the humanities and the changing fortunes of the university itself... the continuing health of religious studies programs will depend upon their ability to sustain demanding multidisciplinary research and teaching in an environment of increasing competition for limited funds. The rapidly expanding frontiers of research in religious studies and the

patterns of increased specialisation in the traditional subject areas are imposing difficult choices between depth and breadth on many graduate and undergraduate programs ⁵.”

Definition of Religion

We begin our overview of some of the key approaches, issues, and debates in religious studies with Smart’s seven-dimensional definition of religion which, whilst other models could be used, is a useful and Influential starting point when seeking to secure an adequate grasp of a religion.

Ninian Smart’s Seven Dimensions of Religion

- (1) The practical and ritual dimension;
- (2) The experiential and emotional dimension (conversion, enlightenment, visions, ecstatic phenomena, awe, mystical experience etc.);
- (3) The narrative and mythic dimension (sacred writings and stories);
- (4) The doctrinal and philosophical dimension;
- (5) The ethical and legal dimension;
- (6) The social and institutional dimension (the ways in which religions are historically manifested and in which systems of belief are lived out in social contexts);
- (7) The material dimension (e.g. architecture, art, music, iconography).

His most recent discussion of these dimensions can be found in his book, “Dimensions of the Sacred”: An Anatomy of the World’s Beliefs. A short account of his thesis in this book can be found in his earlier work, The “World’s Religions”: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 10-21. In his 1971 book “The Religious Experience of Mankind” (Fontana), he identified only six dimensions; the ‘material dimension’ was not included.

Whereas, historically, studies have tended to focus on doctrine and the historical development of a religion (its founder, key figures, splits etc), studying ‘the dimensions’ of a religion—common in contemporary work which utilises a variety of methods taken from the social sciences and humanities—enables scholars to understand religions as they are lived out in particular contexts. Too often people, not least Christians, have operated with caricatured understandings of the world religions, wrongly assuming that because they have grasped several key doctrines of a faith they have grasped the totality of that faith and are therefore in a position to judge it and to evangelise its adherents. Contemporary

approaches to the study of religion, such as that developed by Smart, whilst problematic in certain ways (as we will see), lead to a firmer grasp of other religions.

Religious Studies is Interdisciplinary

Whilst there is admittedly a lack of precision regarding the definition of ‘a discipline’, and whilst religious studies is ‘a discipline’ in the broad sense, not only does it concern a very broad field of enquiry (dealing as it does with the belief systems of the world, past and present), but also it encompasses a range of disciplines and methods, such as, for example, anthropology, phenomenology, philology, sociology, and psychology. Indeed, the contemporary term ‘religious studies’, whilst not greatly different from the older terms ‘comparative religion’ or ‘the history of religions’, does indicate more directly the ‘polymethodic’ (i.e. it makes use of several methods) nature of the enterprise and the greater range and combination of disciplines involved. This means that usually scholars are only able to gain an adequate grasp of a single religious tradition and expertise in a couple of disciplines.

That religious studies is not what it was in the early years of the twentieth century can be demonstrated by looking at the definition of religious studies provided by Louis Jordan in 1905. For Jordan, the study of religion is that Science which compares the origin, structure, and characteristics of the various Religions of the world, with the view of determining their genuine agreements and differences, the measure of relation in which they stand one to another, and their relative superiority and inferiority when regarded as types. ⁶”

(a) The first thing to note is that the idea of a ‘science of religion’(Religionswissenschaft) is not popular nowadays. ‘Science’ has always been a broader term in German, the language in which ‘science of religion’ was originally coined. In the English-speaking world, being closely linked with the natural sciences, the term is narrow and misleading. Moreover, influenced by the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer (as many were in the early years of the century), Jordan basically understood religion to have progressed from simple, ‘primitive’ beginnings into the complex, historical manifestations that are the major world religions.

The ‘science of religion’ tended to chart the progress of religion, trace its origins and, for many, end up explaining it as a human phenomenon. Whether this was done from a psychological perspective, from a sociological perspective, or from an anthropological perspective, the conclusion was often an explanation of religion on the basis of a theory of its origin. Today, few would be happy with such naive evolutionary presuppositions.

(b) Furthermore, unlike Jordan, contemporary scholars tend to be less concerned about the origins of religion and, as we will see, more cautious with regard to the structures and characteristics of particular religions.

(c) Finally, it would be very unusual for contemporary scholars to speak of the ‘relative superiority and inferiority’ of religions. The argument is that, since different faiths develop in, and are appropriate to, particular cultural and geographical contexts, it is simply inappropriate to speak of “their relative superiority and inferiority”.

The Phenomenological Method in Religious Studies

Phenomenology is arguably the most influential approach to the study of religion in the twentieth century. Not only is it still a very important methodology, but many of the key issues in religious studies have been faced and raised by the phenomenologists.

The term “Religionsphenomenologie” was first used in 1887 by the Dutch scholar Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye in his work “Jahrbuch der Religionsgeschichte” to refer to the fact that his ‘handbook’ brought together a variety of groups of religious phenomena.

This might be described as ‘descriptive’ phenomenology, the aim being simply to gather information about the various religions and, as botanists might classify plants, identify varieties of particular religious phenomena. This classification of types of religious phenomena is one of the hallmarks of the phenomenological method and can be seen in the works of contemporary scholars such as Smart and even Mircea Eliade. Not surprisingly, such typologies (certainly in earlier works) tend to lead to an account of religious phenomena which reads much the same as a botanical handbook. That is to say, various species are identified (higher religion, lower religion, prophetic religion, mystical religion and so on) and particular religious beliefs and practices are then categorised and discussed.

However, in more recent years the term has come to refer to a method which is more complex and claims rather more for itself than did Chantepie’s mere cataloguing of facts. This later development in the discipline is due, in part, to the inspiration of Edmund Husserl’s philosophical phenomenology. The foundation of knowledge is, Husserl argued, consciousness, in that consciousness is the one fact of which we can really be sure. without going into the details, whilst Husserl recognized his connection to Descartes’ method of doubting until he reached what he felt to be a sure foundation of knowledge beyond doubt (cogito ergo sum), he was critical of Descartes for not attending to his

presuppositions rigorously enough. This was particularly evident in Descartes defence of the idea of God, which Husserl argued was simply a presupposition, rather than an idea he had established philosophically. The point is that, recognising how easy it is for prior beliefs and interpretations to unconsciously influence one's thinking, Husserl's phenomenological method sought to shelve all these presuppositions and interpretations.

Husserl thus sought to place philosophy on a descriptive and scientific basis. This, he argued, can only be accomplished by the application of "a phenomenological epoch", the "bracketing out" of all the metaphysical questions and focusing on the phenomena of experience in and of themselves. Hence, whereas we have seen that previously it was felt that one could simply observe and catalogue religious facts, following Husserl, the later phenomenologists became acutely aware of their own consciousness in the process of understanding and interpreting religious facts. A related concept of Husserl's which was also used in religious studies as 'eidetic vision', the capacity of the observer to see beyond the particularities of a religion and to grasp its essence and meaning. Whilst we often see only what we want or expect to see, eidetic vision is the human ability to see a phenomenon without such distortions and limitations.

Although the extent of the influence of Husserl in this area has been debated, and although few religious studies scholars "were willing or able to follow the philosophical phenomenologists into the obscure hinterland of their thought"⁷, Husserl did provide phenomenology with the twin principles of 'epoch' and 'eidetic vision', terms which have since gained a wide currency in religious studies.

These can be clearly seen in the most systematic and thorough example of phenomenology, Gerardus van der Leeuw's "Religion in Essence and Manifestation" (1933).

Firstly argues van der Leeuw, the student of religion needs to classify the religious phenomena into distinct categories: e.g. sacrifice, sacrament, sacred space, sacred time, sacred word, festivals, and myth.

- Secondly, scholars then need to interpolate the phenomena into their own lives. That is to say, they need to empathetically (*Einfühlung*) try and understand the religion from within. He quotes the following extract from G. K. Chesterton's "The Everlasting Man":

"When the professor is told by the barbarian that once there was nothing except a great feathered serpent, unless the learned man feels a thrill and a half temptation to wish it were true, he is no judge of such things at all."⁸ The life examined by the religious studies scholar, insists van der Leeuw, needs to "acquire its place in the life of the student himself who should understand it out of his inner self."⁹

- Thirdly, van der Leeuw stresses perhaps the fundamental phenomenological principle, namely epoch, the suspension of valuejudgements and the adoption of a neutral stance.
- Fourthly, scholars need to clarify any apparent structural relationships and make sense of the information. In so doing, they move towards a holistic understanding of how the various aspects of a religion relate and function together.
- Fifthly, this leads naturally to a stage at which “all these activities, undertaken together and simultaneously, constitute genuine understanding [Verstehen]: the chaotic and obstinate ‘reality’ thus becomes a manifestation, a revelation” (eidetic vision).¹⁰
- Sixthly, having thus attained this general grasp, there is a continual need to make sure that it tallies with the up-to-date research of other disciplines, such as archaeology, history, philology etc. For van der Leeuw, as for other phenomenologists, the continual checking of one’s results is crucial to the maintenance of scholarly objectivity. In order to avoid degeneration into fantasy, phenomenology must always feed on facts.
- Finally, having gone through the above six stages, the phenomenologist should be as close as anyone can be to an understanding of the ‘meaning of the religious phenomena studied and be in a position to relate his understanding to others.

Although phenomenologists such as van der Leeuw are aware that there will always be some distance between the understanding of the believer and that of the scholar, the aim of phenomenology is to eschew all subjective input and to testify only to what has been observed. It aims to strip away all that would mitigate an unbiased presentation of the facts. As van der Leeuw puts it: This entire and apparently complicated procedure... has ultimately no other goal than pure objectivity... It desires to gain access to the facts themselves; and for this it requires a meaning, because it cannot experience the facts just as it pleases. This meaning, however, is purely objective: all violence, either empirical, logical or metaphysical, is excluded.. It has, in fact, one sole desire: to testify to what has been manifested to it¹¹.

Van der Leeuw thus argued that, whilst phenomenology constantly observes instances of religious experience, it is not in a position to provide a theological evaluation of what is going on. All the phenomenologist can do is report that a person claimed to have a religious experience. To go further than that is to leave religious studies and to enter into theology or philosophy. Indeed, whilst van der Leeuw, a Christian, understood himself to be a theologian doing religious studies, he was clear that theology and religious studies are distinct disciplines. Theologians need to bracket their beliefs when studying religion. They may want to reflect theologically on their conclusions afterwards, but whilst engaged in the study of religion their theology must remain bracketed.

Neutrality in Religious Studies

Bearing in mind the above discussion of phenomenology, we turn now to some of principal issues and concerns in contemporary religious studies. To begin with there is a problem with phenomenology (particularly the earlier forms which included little personal fieldwork). In that it relies heavily on the findings of other disciplines.

It then takes the “facts” uncovered by archaeologists, sociologists, historians and so on, and applies the phenomenological method. The obvious problem is that insufficient account is taken of the ‘unbracketed’ presuppositions of the scholars working in those disciplines.

Having said that, the lack of neutrality is a problem for phenomenology per se. Whilst many contemporary religious studies scholars would want to defend the notion of epoch as an ideal to which one should aspire, there is a question as to whether this ideal entails a certain hermeneutical naïveté. Firstly, the very process of selection and the production of typologies assumes an interpretative framework. To select certain facts rather than others and to present them with other facts as a particular type of religion presupposes an interpretative framework in the mind of the scholar. Indeed, even were a scholar able to attain a state of pure, unadulterated objectivity, it is arguable that the very belief that this is a desirable position to strive after is a value judgement arising out of a particular Western worldview. Hence, the belief in objectivity and the claim to be purely ‘descriptive’ are now considered to be hermeneutically naive.

Pure neutrality is not possible. Indeed, because all accounts of religion are filtered through minds formed in particular contexts, with particular worldviews, it is often not too difficult to discern what theoretical direction the author of a particular study is coming from. Hence, for example, although Smart has called for religious studies scholars to adopt ‘methodological agnosticism’ and an ‘open mind’, there is some question as to how far this can ever be the case. It is, for example, difficult to believe that a scholar’s atheism will make no difference to his or her study of say Christianity, or even that van der Leeuw’s Christian beliefs made no difference to his studies. In calling for an ‘open mind’, Smart may actually be calling for an ‘empty mind’ something which is not an option, nor, I suggest, desirable.

Insiders / Outsiders question

Another debate in contemporary religious studies is the ‘insider / outsider’ problem. To what extent can a person who is not a believer (an outsider) understand¹ faith the way a believer (‘an insider’) understands that faith?

Although this has been a recognised issue for many years, it has become a matter of considerable debate in recent years, not least because of the increased interest in contemporary religion. Because earlier scholars tended to focus on religions of the past, the study of which was limited to an examination of texts and ruins, the force of the insider / outsider question was not as acutely felt as it is today.,

1. It is argued that outsiders, simply because they are outsiders, will never be able to grasp fully the insider's experience. Experiences evoked within other persons are interpreted within the context of their particular individual history, environment and personality.

Even people who experience the same event at the same time will (because of their contexts and personal histories) interpret that experience in different, sometimes very different, ways. The point is that personal experiences will always be, in some profound sense, personal and thus inaccessible to others.

2. Some scholars insist that there is a definite advantage to being an outsider. Since members of a religion tend to be conditioned by and often pressurised into accepting a particular and usually narrow understanding of their faith, the outsider is in the important scholarly position of not being influenced by such forces and conditions.

Impartiality and disinterest allow greater objectivity. However, whilst there is undoubtedly a value to scholarly detachment and whilst the scholar may have a greater knowledge of the history, texts, philosophy, structure and social implications of a particular faith than the average believer, not to have experienced and grasped that faith from the inside is surely to have a rather large hole in the centre of the one's understanding. Indeed, many insiders will insist that such scholarly 'head-knowledge' is, in the final analysis, peripheral to the 'meaning' of their faith.

Hence, bearing the above issues in mind, *empathy* and *imagination* would appear to be important scholarly attributes in order to allow some understanding of the worldviews of others. For example, although Smart tends to be too optimistic about the scholar's ability to bracket presuppositions and fly above and away from our own commitments and assumptions", his stress on empathy and imagination is helpful. There is a necessity, he says: if we are truly to understand other people's beliefs, of not interpreting their behaviour as if it implied an identical worldview to our own. The exploration of another's worldview involves empathy and imagination. It needs empathy so that we can... feel our way into other people's worlds... it needs imagination so that we can fly above and away from our own commitments and assumptions, and is freely explore the feelings and commitments of others. ¹²

Furthermore, we might also want to argue that, ideally, empathy for a particular religion should arise naturally in the scholar. That is to say, for a variety of personal reasons, an individual will find it easier to empathise with one faith or type of religion rather than another; it is that faith and type of religion that the scholar will, in the final analysis, most comprehensively grasp. Indeed, to take this line of thought a step further, without underestimating the differences between religious experiences and faith traditions, there is surely a sense in which a religious believer can understand something of what another religious believer feels. In other words, non-religious people are at some disadvantage to religious people when it comes to the study of religions. This is part of the reason why Joachim Wach, the important German- American historian and sociologist of religions, himself a Christian, insisted on the value of a scholar's personal religious experience. Dry, academic objectivity can never adequately empathise with religious feelings.

Participant Observation and Problem of Language

Whilst there is still a great stress on the importance of the more traditional areas of endeavour in religious studies, such as, for example, philological research (studying the meaning of texts, symbols and Language). It is now recognised that all symbols, including words, derive their meanings from their total context. This point has been made particularly strongly by anthropologists. Beliefs, practices, texts and indeed all aspects of culture should be studied together as they are lived out. Although phenomenologists such as van der Leeuw would agree with this, anthropologists have gone a step further in stressing the importance of 'participant observation'.

This method, pioneered by the important Polish-born, English anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, requires living with the community being studied, learning its language and participating in its life without seeking to alter it. As a participant, the scholar simply observes and tries to get as close as possible to seeing a religion from the 'inside'. As such this approach represents a move away from phenomenologists such as van der Leeuw and the armchair anthropologists of an earlier generation who tended to overly rely on the findings of others. Furthermore, the influential anthropologist Clifford Geertz has developed what he calls 'interpretative anthropology' which aims to interpret beliefs and actions as 'insiders' do. This, he argues (quite reasonably), is only possible if the scholar is a participant observer.

Geertz, however moves beyond Malinowski in distinguishing between 'thick' and 'thin' descriptions. 'Thick' descriptions describe, for example, not merely what a person is doing, but also, as far as is possible, what the person thinks they are doing. A 'thin' description is simply a description of a practice without

indicating how the practice is understood from the inside. In other words, Geertz is rightly concerned with meaning. For example, during worship, believers regularly eat bread and drink red wine. Simply to provide a thin description of this practice could easily lead to a misunderstanding of a central Christian rite. For an outsider unfamiliar with Christianity to adequately understand what is taking place, there needs to be some thick description, some understanding of what the practice means to the believers involved.

The Importance of Dialogue

The move towards the study of contemporary religions and towards participant observation has led to consideration of what has been called the 'response threshold' in religious studies. Again, because van der Leeuw and many of the early scholars studied texts and ancient beliefs, it was fairly easy to develop theories which tended to engender a Procrustean approach to the study of particular religions.

This in turn led to erroneous theory and the misinterpretation of beliefs and practices. This is mitigated in contemporary religious studies when the 'response threshold' is crossed. Quite simply, the crossing of the response threshold happens during the study of contemporary and recent religion when insiders question the scholar's interpretations. The insider's interpretation, which may conflict with scholarly interpretations, is felt to carry equal if not more weight. For example, Wilfred Cantwell Smith has argued that no understanding of a faith is valid until it has been acknowledged as valid by an insider. Religious studies are thus carried out in the context of a dialogue. Although dialogue can have several purposes, this form of dialogue is not a common search for ultimate religious truth or some other questionable enterprise, it is rather about seeking a deeper and firmer understanding of the other's worldview, and may eventually develop into introducing the other to a greater understanding of one's own worldview.

¹ Quoted in E. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Duckworth, 1975), p. xi.

² *ibid*

³ N. Smart, *Concept and Empathy: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986). P. 158.

⁴ N. Smart, Foreword, in P. Connolly (ed). *Approaches to the study of Religion* (London: Cassell. 1999) P.ix

⁵ T. L. Benson Religious Studies as an Academic Discipline, in M. Eliade (ed), The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 14 (New York: Macmillan . 1987), PP. 88-9.

⁶ Ibid, P.92.

⁷ E.J.Sharpe, Comparative Religion: A History, P. 224

⁸ G. van der leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation (Princeton : Princeton University Press. 1986) , P.675.

⁹ G. van der Leeuw, quoted in C. Erricker, Phenomenological Approaches , In P. Connolly (ed) Approaches to the study of Religion , P. 78.

¹⁰ G. van de Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, P. 676.

¹¹ Ibid., PP. 667-8.

¹² N. Smart , Foreword , in ibid., P. xii