1. **Sacrifice and types**

Sacrifice is the act of offering the life of an animal or person, or some object, to the divine power or powers. It forms an essential part of every religious ceremony and is fundamental to worship.

Sacrifice is primarily a means of contact or communion between the divine and man. Different things can be offered to a divinity, depending on his taste and the occasion of the sacrifice. Among other things, sheep, goats, cows, fowls, pigeons, eggs, yams, rice, porridge, and other food items can be offered as sacrifice.

Extremities and entrails of animal victims are usually exposed in a bowl before the shrine. They can also be placed on the ground in front of the temple or shrine. At times, they are laid on the emblems of the divinity.

It is believed that, primarily, all sacrifices belong entirely to the divinities. Also, the way certain sacrifices are treated depends on the prescriptions of the oracle.

In West African peoples know that whatever a person offers as sacrifice expresses his attitude toward God. They, therefore, usually take the cautious and reverent step of presenting to the divinities, or to the Supreme Deity through the divinities, only the most valuable offerings. To them, the most valuable offering is the life of that which is offered.

And this they find in the life of an animal or man. Since the life of an animal or man is symbolized by blood, West Africans regard blood offerings as the most precious offering they can give in honor of the supernatural to reverence the exaltedness of the spiritual powers.

The foregoing explains the phenomenon of human sacrifice in the past.

This was a practice found in every race and culture throughout the world.

Nowadays, the sacrificial animal serves as a surrogate for man, and it still represents the supreme act of total giving.

the 7 types of sacrifices are:

1. Meal and Drink Offerings
2. Thanksgiving or Gift Offerings
3. Votive offering
4. Propitiation or Expiation Sacrifice
5. Substitutionary Sacrifice
6. Preventive Sacrifice
7. Foundation Sacrifice
8. **Thanks offering:** This is a sacrifice made to the divinity in appreciation of blessings received from him or in soliciting his favors. The sacrifice of thanksgiving is also performed after birth, at harvest, when one has won one favor or national title, when one has been successful in an undertaking or when one has escaped some danger or misfortune.

What is offered also depend largely on the desire of the worshippers. However the offering may be an animal, bird, fruit, vegetable, or fundamental articles for use in the temple. The offering may be shared between the divinity and the worshippers. When the offering is given completely to the divinity, the priest as the representative of the divinity may appropriate the offering

1. **Notive offering:** This is a Kind of Sacrifice before the divinity as in which worshippers go before the divinity as supplicants, to ask for his favour blessings of money and material, and for childbirth., they may make a vow to offer something in return for the blessing of received. This vow will dictate what things to offer as Sacrifice because whatever is vowed must be fulfilled, for people believe that there have serious consequences for failing to fulfil the vow. In consequences of this, the person making the vow is often bold to think well before making it Because it is irrevocable once made.
2. **Propiation:** This is a Sacrifice of appeasement. It also a sort of atonement made to assuage the wrath of the divinity by self-humiliation and reparation. Through this sacrifice, the worshipper express regret for past wrongs and asks that his deeds be forgiven and forgotten. The worshipper who has provoked the wrath of the divinity is thus transferred from a state of defilement to one Of purity.

Most often than not, it is the oracle that reveals the offended divinity, the offender, and what the offence is. The oracle may also prescribe the sacrifice. This may be expensive when the whole community is involved. The Sacrifice is never shared. It is given wholly, to the aggrieved divinity-it may be buried or treated with oil and exposed at Cross roads or market place.

1. **Substitutionary sacrifice:** This as the name implies takes the same place of another person whose Life is being threatened, or is about to be terminated. The victim and other items of sacrifice are usually rubbed against the body of the person, and they are treated like a corpse and briried as if the person has been actually buried. Among the Yoruba, a sheep serves as a substitute for a man, but among the Igbo, a cows a substitute for a man.
2. **Preventive sacrifice:** As the name implies, it is to prevent a disaster misfortune or Calamity. It is to implore protection against enemies or to guard a Village town against an impending doom. Usually, it is the oracle that prescribes the sacrifice we know that it is through the oracle that people find out hidden things. Thus when a person is sick, when a Chain of misfortunes dogs his steps, when there is on epidemic, the orade is consulted. At times the oracle May indicate that a national disaster is coming. In each case, preventive Sacrifice is offered.
3. **three basic elements that are found in each religion**

**Introduction**

Throughout history, humans have been constantly questioning the mysteries of existence. Despite advancements in medical technology, death, natural disasters, and modern military technology, humans continue to question their happiness and well-being. Despite intelligence and reason, humans face limitations in finding answers to these problems. This led to the idea of a reality that could provide answers, security, and maintain cosmic order. This led to the development of religious beliefs, where humans look to a being outside themselves to hold the universe under their palms. Most religions consist of at least three basic elements: beliefs, cults, and morals or laws.

**BELIEF.**

Religion inherently involves the concept of the supernatural, encompassing the extraordinary and infinite beyond human sensory perception. This supernatural aspect, which cannot be detected by scientific means, forms the foundation of religious belief, offering individuals confidence and security in the face of the unknown. Belief, which involves accepting a proposition as true, is primarily intellectual but can also be influenced by emotions. Regardless of whether a belief is based on factual evidence or misleading perceptions, it can strongly influence human actions. As John L. Gillin notes, people act with equal conviction based on both true and false beliefs, demonstrating the powerful role belief plays in shaping human behavior and values.

Beliefs influence an individual's lifestyle and social interactions, often creating divisions between those who share the same belief system and those who do not. This exclusiveness can lead to intolerance and conflict among different religious groups. In addition to belief in the supernatural, religion often includes the concept of the sacred, which can apply to various aspects of life, including beings, objects, and abstract ideas. The sacred is distinguished from the profane and commands both reverence and awe, possessing a dual nature that attracts and intimidates individuals simultaneously. This duality highlights the profound and complex relationship humans have with the sacred, which influences their perceptions and behaviors in significant ways.

**CULT**

Beliefs are not passive in a person's mind; they manifest through actions and shape one's values and attitudes. Human belief in a transcendental reality drives the desire to form a relationship with the invisible Supreme Being. This dependence on the divine cultivates a subservient spirit, prompting humans to seek to please the Supreme Being, as one would please a master. Since humans rely on the divine for protection and existence, they show respect, veneration, and loyalty. Cults arise from this relationship, serving as a way for humans to reciprocate divine goodness through rituals and worship.

Cult has been defined as a body of religious rites and practices associated with the worshipos propitiation of a particular divinity or group of superatural beings. It stems from humans' dependency on the Supreme Being, which necessitates worship or propitiation. Worshipers are confident in their actions, demonstrating this confidence through sacrifices and prayers. This belief in the Supreme Being as their sovereign Lord is a virtue of religion that is only understood through faith. Rituals, prayers, and sacrifice are key components of cult.

**Ritual:** Rituals are ways in which people communally celebrate the meaning that give them their identities. In this way, rituals function is to provide social Solidarity. Humans are not just rational beings, but also bodily, feeling, and acting beings. Ritualistic drama and breaking through are essential aspects of religious cults and social existence. Rituals, particularly rites of passage, provide social solidarity and facilitate identity transformation. For example, initiation rites involve undergoing a death, such as being sent to the desert or inserted into a grave, symbolizing burial. At the end of the rite, the initiate is "reborn" into a new life and identity. Although these rites have significant psychological and spiritual importance, they do not hold the same significance for us today as they did in the past. Some psychologists have lamented the absence of powerful rites of passage in modern lives, but recognize their power in bringing purpose and commitment.

**Prayer and sacrifice:** Prayer is both petition and expression of gratitude to the Sacred powers that are believed to govern nature and human life. Sacrifice is a word derived from the Latin, "to make holy", it is at the heart of both petition and thankful. Sacrifice is also a gesture indicating a people's gratefulness of the gifts of life as belonging to a wider world than just self interest Elements of this sacrificial impulse are witnessed today in Christian sacrifice of the mass. In remembrance of the death and sacrifice of Christ on the cross for the redemption of mankind.

Sacrificial rites are also ways in which religious peopole break out the circle of the purley human to commune with the divine. Since prayer and sacrifice are so much a part of religion, it could be argued that religiousness is most distinctiveley human characteristics.

**MORAL LAWS:**

Moral law is one of the 3 majorelememts of religion. No religion is without morals. Man believes that God is the overseer of the entire universe, hence he wants to be in goo relationship with him always, so that God would not eithdraw his care on him.

Man formulates moral law that checks and balances for harmonious interaction between man and God.

The major characteristics of religion is to provide the definition as to what is moral and immoral, good or bad. Morality of an act derives from religion if the ground is religious, if its obligation is imposed by religion, if an action evokes a religious sanction or if it is an indication that its ground is religious.

With religion understood as providing moral judgement, it follows that religion will be inveolved in a given societies definition of progress. Religion typically enters into the discussion as to “where society should be going”

**Conclusion**

1. **Competencies of religion**

**Introduction**

These capacities of religion, as Nadel conceives them, are four in number, namely: first, the cosmological aspects, i.e., “the capacity of religion to furnish certain supplements to the view of the world of experience”; secondly, its capacity to announce and maintain moral values; thirdly, its competence to hold together societies and sustain their structures; fourthly, its competence to furnish individuals with specific experiences and stimulations.

**the cosmological aspects**

The cosmological aspect of Religion plays a crucial role in providing meaning and reassurance to humans in the face of life's uncertainties and natural disasters. It supplements our understanding of the universe and human place within it, helping to relativize risks and challenges posed by natural forces. Religion does not seek to answer existential questions about the universe's nature, but instead offers solace and a framework to view these challenges as part of a greater purpose.

One of the most profound ways religion fulfills this role is in addressing the experience of death, particularly the loss of loved ones. Death brings feelings of despondency and creates a void that is difficult to fill. Religious teachings, such as St. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, encourage believers to endure loss with resilience, offering hope and a future reunion.

Religious traditions across cultures and faiths place significant emphasis on death and the afterlife, developing rituals and beliefs that provide closure and assurance. These rituals serve not only religious purposes but also social and psychological ones, helping individuals and communities cope with the loss of loved ones. The idea of an afterlife offers comfort against the fear of extinction and helps individuals endure the pain of bereavement. Ultimately, religion reassures believers that life has a higher purpose, and that the soul's final destination is with God.

**capacity to announce and maintain moral values**

Religion plays a significant role in establishing and upholding moral values across various cultures and belief systems. Christianity and Islam, for example, strongly connect faith with morality, with the Ten Commandments serving as a moral foundation that can be translated into secular law. Adherents of these religions believe in divine rewards and punishments based on their adherence to moral principles. Buddhism, while lacking belief in a deity, emphasizes ethical conduct as a path to inner peace and detachment from worldly stress. Hinduism presents a complex relationship between belief and morality, where actions and their moral implications are tied to one’s caste, and rewards or punishments manifest through the cycle of rebirth.

Similarly, traditional African religions maintain a moral framework, though the connection between religion and morality is not always explicitly stated. Contrary to certain scholarly claims, African traditional beliefs uphold the idea that good conduct leads to rewards, while misconduct results in punishment, reinforcing moral behavior within communities. Ultimately, religion serves as a crucial vehicle for morality, ensuring that ethical practices are adhered to within society. Without the guiding influence of religion, the pursuit of morality may become superficial or ineffective.

**competence to furnish individuals with specific experiences and stimulations**

The competence of religion to furnish individuals with specific attitudes and stimulations involves examining these competences from an individual psychology perspective. Nadel was influenced by Michael Argyle's study of British and American Studies, which found that those who undergo a religious experience of conversion mostly do so in adolescence. This stage of adolescence in western countries is marked by growth in religious doubts and attendance, which is usually encouraged by institutionalized religious teaching. However, there is a steady decline in religious activity, such as church attendance or saying of private prayers, which lasts till young adulthood.

American studies show that certainty of an after-life increases sharply in old age, with more women than men attending church, saying private prayers, and believing in God. This evidence suggests a need for ritual in the crux of life, which is derived from and intelligible in the light of belief or faith. This need for ritual is common to all but is more strongly expressed by those who are likely to be satisfied by a rational or naturalistic view of the hazards of life**.**

**competence to hold together societies and sustain their structures**

The competence of religion is argued to hold together societies and sustain their structure, as described by Emile Durkheim in his work, Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. Durkheim believed that society's structure rests on patterns of behavior developed from commonly held beliefs and values, which become institutionalized in the social system and are reflected in the personalities of individual members. This sense of unity derived from social integration is known as the conscience collective, and social solidarity depends largely on the degree to which individuals feel a sense of commitment to the society and their readiness to conform to institutionalized patterns of behavior.

Durkheim's concept of anomie, which he discussed in his famous work, Du Suicide, suggests that personal goals can only be meaningful when they are in conformity with the norms and values of society. This leads to a state of 'normlessness' or anomie, which results in both economic buoyancy and depression. Durkheim's conservative view of religion is unquestionable, but it should be noted that religion brings about social change, such as changes in literary, modern education, and medical methods.

**Conclusion:**

1. **Sociology of religion as a science**

The first question to be adressed here is wether sociology of religion is a science and then if it is a science, we now look at what type of science it is.

In addressing the question “is sociology of religion a science?” we can see if we look cleary that sociology of religion is a science. Reasons being that sociology has been defined as science of the human society. Sociology of religion which a sociological investigation into religion, must also be a science.

Having proved that sociology of religion is a science, we go further to look at what type of science it is. Every discipline focuses on a particular area of study in order to examine the various phenomena that exists there in. In the same way sociology of religion focuses on human society in order to find out the functions that religion performs in the society and in doing this, it looks into the relationship between religion and the society and the importance of religion in the society.

Sociology of religion is an investigation geared towards the exposition of the social aspects or components of religion. This investigation is carried out with an understanding that religion is not only purely spiritual, devoid of social characteristics, but also has its foundation on social behaviour of people. Hence, it has both spiritual and social dimensions.

Sociology of religion as a science employs systematic methods to study religious beliefs, practices, and institutions. Researchers use both quantitative (e.g., surveys, statistical analysis) and qualitative (e.g., ethnography, interviews) methods to collect and analyze data about religious phenomena. This structured approach aligns with the scientific method.

Science relies on observable and measurable evidence. The sociology of religion studies the social impact of religion, the behavior of religious groups, and the relationships between religion and other social institutions. These observations are based on empirical data rather than purely speculative or theological interpretations.

Like other sciences, the sociology of religion develops theories to explain religious phenomena. For example, theories of secularization (e.g., Max Weber’s rationalization thesis), social cohesion (Émile Durkheim’s functionalist perspective), and conflict (Karl Marx’s critique of religion) provide frameworks for understanding religion in society.

Man, in his sojourn on earth, often suffers from political, cultural, socio-economic, spiritual and even psychological problems. For example, those who are ‘osu’(outcast) by virttue of birth are considered to remain so till death. These people are referred to by sociologists as “social closure”. this term is introduced by Max Weber to explain the process of preserving priviledges.

Social closure, as conceptualized by Max Weber, refers to the process by which social groups maintain their privileged status by restricting access to resources, opportunities, and advantages to outsiders. This is done to preserve their social, economic, or political dominance and to prevent competition from other groups. Social closure can be used to support the argument that sociology of religion is a science, as it demonstrates how sociologists systematically analyze religious groups and their behaviors using empirical and theoretical frameworks.

The scientific nature of sociology of religion is also observed in the social phenomenon that baffles a stranger. In some societies, `in some societies, materials and objects are consiedered social whereas in some other societies, this is not so.

Certain animals are regarded as social in some societies, while in others they are not. Just like snake is respected in Idemili (Anambra State) and if killed, a proper burial will be conducted, whereas they are killed by Abakiliki people. Also trees like iroko (oji) is often held in high regards in igbo land, odum in Ghana, and others. They have high significance to the people.

As a science also, sociology of religion studies various phemomena and its influence in the society and also how it changes. For instance, the socio-religious ceremony of placing a band on the plucking of apple fruits (udala) in Igbo Land is nowadays no longer maintained. However, now, it is being commercialized and sold in various markets which was an unthinkable thing during the old days.

Similary, the Osu-cast system dosen’t seem to be trending anymore nowadays, whereas, before now, the system was so strong that nobody would even want to associate himself with an ‘osu’.

In making these analyses, sociology of religion is surely engaging itself in scientific method, because it contains observation and discoveries about the phenomenon in the sociery

**Conclusion**

Sociology of religion is a science.