2.2 Religion and change: secularization and revival

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

KEY WORDS secularization • religiously unaffiliated • revival • switching • desecularization

Objective

Study **religion and change** with real data: the **secularization** thesis, its critics, religious **revival**, and why patterns differ across countries.

You must be able to:

- explain the secularization thesis and its critics
- interpret data on the world's religious composition
- distinguish believing, belonging and behaving
- explain revival and new movements
- evaluate whether the world is becoming less religious

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ Secularization and its critics

Secularization: the idea that religion loses social importance as societies modernize (Max Weber's "disenchantment"; many sociologists in the 1960s). Peter Berger supported it in the 1960s but by 1999 argued that the world was "as furiously religious as it ever was", with secular Western Europe as the exception: **desecularization**.

Grace Davie described Britain as "believing without belonging": many hold beliefs but rarely attend services. Scholars distinguish **believing**, **belonging** and **behaving**.

■ Data

The Pew Research Center estimated that in 2020 about 29 % of the world's people were Christian, about 26 % Muslim, about 24 % religiously unaffiliated, about 15 % Hindu and about 4 % Buddhist. The Muslim share grew between 2010 and 2020, partly because of a young population with higher birth rates. The unaffiliated share grew mainly through people leaving religion ("switching"), especially in Christian-majority countries.

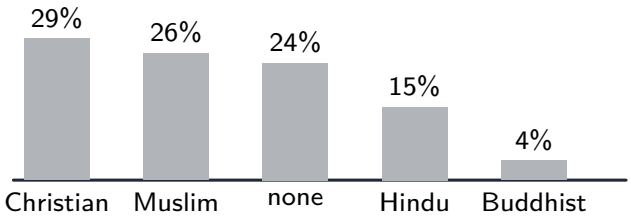
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Worked example. World population in 2020 was about 7.9 billion. Muslims at about 26 %: $7.9 \times 0.26 \approx 2.0$ billion people.

2 Practice

2.1 Explain what is meant by "**believing without belonging**". [2]

2.2 In 2020 the world population was about 7.9 billion and about 24 % were religiously unaffiliated. Calculate the number of unaffiliated people, and explain **one** reason why "unaffiliated" does not mean "atheist". [3]



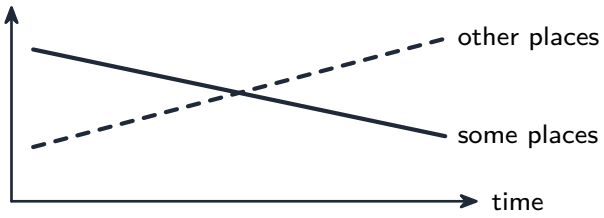
2.3 Explain **two** reasons why the Muslim share of the world population grew between 2010 and 2020. [4]

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2.4 Explain why Peter Berger changed his view on secularization, and evaluate his later view. [6]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 *(Preparation essay.)* "The world is becoming less religious." Evaluate this claim with data and examples from **three** traditions or regions. [15]



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Solutions

Marking: **M1** a correct method, **A1** the correct answer, **B1** an independent mark.

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

2.1

people hold religious beliefs, e.g. in God or prayer; but do not regularly attend or belong to a religious institution (Grace Davie, on Britain)

2.2

$7.9 \times 0.24 \approx$ **1.9** billion; "unaffiliated" means no religious identity, not no belief; many unaffiliated people believe in God or a higher power, or practise some rituals

2.3

a young population: more people at the age of having children; higher average birth rates in many Muslim-majority countries; fewer people leaving Islam than leaving some other religions (low net switching); so growth is mainly demographic, not mainly conversion

2.4

1960s: Berger expected religion to decline with modernization; by 1999 he argued the world was "as furiously religious as it ever was"; evidence: growth of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity and of Islam in many regions; Western Europe as the exception; evaluation: data show growth of the unaffiliated in some countries, so both trends exist; a judgement

3.1

Mark with the markbands: [13-15] clearly focused on the question, accurate knowledge of at least three traditions, the four concepts applied, different views and sources evaluated, well-developed critical analysis, different perspectives evaluated, a reasoned conclusion; [10-12] focused, mostly accurate knowledge, analysis with some evaluation; [7-9] some focus, relevant knowledge, mostly narrative or description with limited analysis; [4-6] little focus, limited knowledge, mostly narrative; [1-3] little understanding of the question. Points that may be included: explains secularization and the claim; data: share of the unaffiliated grew, mainly by switching in Christian-majority countries; Western Europe: falling attendance; "believing without belonging"; against: Muslim and Christian populations grow in Africa and Asia; Pentecostal growth; Berger's desecularization; believing, belonging and behaving measured separately; examples from three traditions or regions; limits of the data: definitions and surveys; a reasoned conclusion

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