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UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (SOE)

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN EDUCATION

RES 231: COMPARATIVE RELIGION

DATE: 28TH JULY 2026

DURATION: 2 HOURS

MAXIMUM MARKS: 70

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Write your registration number on the answer booklet.
2. **DO NOT** write on this question paper.
3. This paper contains **SIX (6)** questions.
4. Question **ONE** is compulsory.
5. Answer any other **THREE** questions.
6. Question **ONE** carries **25 MARKS** and the rest carry **15 MARKS** each.
7. **Write all your answers in the Examination answer booklet provided**

QUESTION ONE

Read the Case Study below carefully and answer the questions that follow:

COMPARISON OF WORLD RELIGIONS

The word Religion is derived from a Latin word 'religio' which means awe or fear in the presence of a supernatural being or God. Religion is a range of social-cultural systems, including designated behaviors and practices, morals, beliefs, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations, that generally relate humanity to supernatural, transcendental, and spiritual elements—although there is no scholarly consensus over what precisely constitutes a religion. Different religions may or may not contain various elements ranging from the divine, sacredness, faith, and a supernatural being or beings.

There are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide, though nearly all of them have regionally based, relatively small followings. Four religions—Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism—account for over 77% of the world's population, and 92% of the world either follows one of those four religions or identifies as nonreligious, meaning that the remaining 9,000+ faiths account for only 8% of the population combined. The religiously unaffiliated demographic includes those who do not identify with any particular religion, atheists, and agnostics, although many in the demographic still have various religious beliefs.

Many world religions are also organized religions, most definitively including the Abrahamic religions Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, while others are arguably less so, in particular folk religions, indigenous religions, and some Eastern religions. A portion of the world's population are members of new religious movements. Scholars have indicated that global religiosity may be increasing due to religious countries having generally higher birth rates. Religion involves beliefs and behaviours that

fulfil the requirements of a society. Religion is also cultural as well as universal as it is found in all communities in one form or the other.

Religion's existence in human civilisation is one of the most persistent social phenomena that stimulate sociological analysis, it is intertwined with the fabric of daily social life. Religion appears to have a stabilising effect in society, yet it has also been used to foment hatred and commit crimes against humanity. It has been a primary source of justification for inequality and exploitation. Religion exists as an institution in every community. Sociologists have attempted to comprehend the different meanings that religion provides to humans. Its importance in the organisation of social life is enormous. It appears to assist people in approaching and dealing with life's crises.

The world's primary religions fall into two categories: Abrahamic religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam; and Indian religions, which include Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and others. Of the world's major religions, Christianity is the largest, with more than two billion followers.

The origin of religious belief is an open question, with possible explanations including awareness of individual death, a sense of community, and dreams.^[8] Religions have sacred histories, narratives, and mythologies, preserved in oral traditions, sacred texts, symbols, and holy places, that may attempt to explain the origin of life, the universe, and other phenomena. Religious practices may include rituals, sermons, commemoration or veneration (of deities or saints), sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, matrimonial and funerary services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance, or public service.

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Due to pluralism in the world religions, comparative religion endeavors to systematically compare the doctrines, practices, themes and impacts including migrations of the world religions.

In the seventeenth century, antiquarians such as Athanasius Kircker along with Sir Thomas Browne were pioneering scholars of comparative religion. In 1655, Dara Shikoh authored the 'Majma - ul- Bahrain a Sufi text on Comparative religion.

Social scientists in the 19th Century took a strong interest in comparative and 'primitive' religion through the work of Max Muller, Edward Burnett Tylor, William Robertson Smith, James George Frazer and Rudolf Otto. While Nicholas de Lange, Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Cambridge University says that 'The Comparative Study of religion is an academic discipline which Christian theology faculties should embrace.

Required:

- a) Evaluate five reasons early researchers endeavored to study Comparative Religion
(10 marks)
- b) Assess **five** elements in African religion which are related to Christian teachings.
(5 marks)
- c) Examine **five** factors responsible for the fast spread of Islam.
(10marks)

QUESTION TWO

- a) Assess any five dimensions of world religions.
(10 marks)
- b) Examine five major practices in Confucianism.
(5 marks)

QUESTION THREE

- a) Evaluate any five challenges of interfaith religions.
(5 marks)
- b) Propose any **five** functions performed by religion in contemporary societies.
(5 marks)
- c) Analyze five similarities of Christianity and Zoroastrianism **(5 marks)**

QUESTION FOUR

- a) Examine any five characteristics of Egyptian religion.
(10 marks)
- b) Propose five similarities in the Bible and Koran.
(5 marks)

QUESTION FIVE

- a) Examine the concept of salvation in Hinduism. **(5 marks)**
- b) Analyze **five** beliefs and practices borrowed by Christianity from Greek philosophy.
(10 marks)

QUESTION SIX

- a) Explore **five** core beliefs of Sikhism.
(5 marks)
- b) Examine the concept of ancestors in Traditional African religions.

**(10
marks)**