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Topic 1: Epistemology

Section A

[Extract from **George Berkeley**: *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous in Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists:* Cahn, 737–738]

1   (a)   **With reference to this passage, explain Berkeley's argument that material objects cannot exist outside the mind.**   **[10]**

This section of the *Dialogues* is known as the *Master Argument*, and represents Berkeley's/Philonous' focal argument, since he claims that he is " ... content to put the whole upon this issue." It insists that even the *idea* of a material object existing outside the mind is (literally) inconceivable. It is not possible to conceive of an unconceived object, because in order to conceive it the object has to be conceived in the mind: it is not possible to have an object in mind without having it in the mind, so as soon as the challenge is addressed, one fails it. Philonous thus challenges Hylas to see an unseen object. Just as it is impossible to see a thing which is at the same time unseen, it is likewise impossible to talk about conceiving a thing which remains unconceived. We can conceive of a tree or a house existing independently of / outside minds only if we can conceive of the tree or the house existing unconceived; but the notion of conceiving of an unconceived object is a contradiction; so no tree or house or any other material object can be conceived of as existing independently of minds. Hylas counters that since we perceive that the moon and stars are in the far distance, surely we *can* conceive of mind-independent objects existing at a distance. Philonous responds that such perceptions occur also in dreams, but no-one supposes that dream perceptions are real. Candidates might broaden Berkeley's argument, for example to include Hylas' suggestion that material objects are the archetypes for our ideas: e.g. that there are trees in the world, and then there is the idea of a tree, which is a copy or snapshot, and that we perceive the copy and thereby come to know the original tree. The explanation might broaden still further.

     (b)   **'Berkeley's argument that material objects cannot exist outside the mind is nonsense.' Discuss.**   **[15]**

Answers to this might focus specifically on the *Master Argument* or more generally on Berkeley's line of thought in the *Dialogues*, that material objects do not exist independently of the mind, but are collections of ideas. Our concepts derive from sense impressions / ideas, so a blind man could have no concept of colour. Equally, if we cannot experience matter, then we cannot have a concept of it. Existence consists solely in being perceived, so matter cannot exist independently of sensation. An object, like an apple, is a cluster of ideas / sense impressions of colour, taste, smell, shape presented to the mind, and this is not the same as saying that we imagine the apple. Candidates might argue that such a view makes sense, even if it is not true. Candidates might, for example, compare how other theories of perception deal with issues such as hallucination and illusion, in which it might be judged that idealism offers a simpler / more sensible explanation. Some might argue that Berkeley's account of material objects explains too little, but the same allegation can be lodged against all theories of perception. The *Master Argument* itself might be deemed to be nonsense because it is perhaps a mere tautology (*we cannot have a material object in the mind without its being in the mind*); or else Berkeley can be accused of failing to distinguish the perceptual act from the perceptual content; or else (Mackie) Berkeley is right to reject the notion of conceiving of a specific tree that is supposed to be unconceived, but confuses that notion with what *can* be conceived, namely that there exists a tree that is unconceived. Some might argue that Berkeley returns so often to the concept of God as the guarantor of the consistency of sense perceptions that idealism becomes theological nonsense.

Section B

2   **Evaluate the claim that Descartes' method of doubt provides us with knowledge that is certain.** [25]

Descartes' method is to begin by doubting everything, so that if something survives such an attack, it can be regarded as indubitable. He does not argue that everything he knows is false, since his aim is to doubt his beliefs, not to reject them. Knowledge is understood in terms of certitude, so any dubitable belief cannot be knowledge. Candidates might argue that Descartes' method is initially unrealistic in requiring us to be *unable* to doubt knowledge, although by the time he gets to *Meditation III*, Descartes thinks that he knows whatever is *clear and distinct*, which is a lesser claim. On another note, the certainty Descartes requires appears to be psychological: a belief that *is* certain is not the same as a belief that *he sees* as certain, although Descartes appears further to think that he has the required level of prudence to distinguish one type of belief from the other.

Descartes' doubt is universal and hyperbolic, attacking the foundations of his beliefs. With regard to perception, for example, any particular judgement about the external world may be mistaken. Although perceptual illusions do not undermine our faith in perception generally (we do at least know that they are illusions), we nevertheless cannot be sure what the reality of the world is as opposed to its appearance. Dream experiences present a significant challenge, since if vivid dreams are indistinguishable from waking reality, I can have no certainty that the physical world is not an imaginary construct. Some might argue that dreams are qualitatively less coherent than waking perceptions, although a stronger argument might be that unless we do have a valid contrast between dream experiences and normal perceptions we would have no concept of 'dream and reality', whereas clearly we do. Candidates are likely to refer to Descartes' arguments about: the deceiving demon / the certainty of the *cogito*, clear and distinct ideas / the existence of a God who would negate the attempts of any deceiving demon. Evaluation might focus on some or all of these points.

3   Critically assess representative realism as a theory of perception.   [25]

Representative (Indirect) Realism [RR] appears to many to be a necessary revision of Naïve (Direct) Realism [NR], since it is very difficult to maintain that we perceive things as they really are. NR has notorious problems in explaining illusion and hallucination, particularly the latter, since with hallucination there is no material object at all, so NR has to admit that what is perceived must be sense data: but if sense data are in the mind, then RR, which sees sense data as mental/subjective, gives a better explanation of hallucinations.

RR, then, is based on the concept of sense impressions, or sense data: a sense datum is a mental image, perceived directly in the mind, that represents a material object, so giving us *indirect* knowledge of the real world of material objects: sense data are representations, or appearances of the world, hence RR can explain illusion and hallucination in terms of sense data. Candidates are likely to describe the argument for RR based on (Locke's distinction between) primary and secondary qualities. Primary qualities are in the material object itself, whereas secondary qualities are related to perceivers, so according to Locke, we perceive a material object indirectly, through our sense data, which 'resemble' the material object in its primary, but not its secondary qualities. Berkeley objected that our sense data of primary qualities do not resemble objects; moreover we cannot say that two things resemble each other unless we can compare them, and we can perceive only the datum, not the object. The answer from RR was to drop 'resemblance' in favour of 'representation' – sense data do appear to be caused by material objects: they represent material objects by being systematically related to them. If, however, we infer the existence of material objects with primary qualities only through our awareness of the secondary qualities of sense data, we still have the problem of how we can know how accurate the representation is. We cannot get outside our minds to observe both our sense impressions and the 'real' world – there is a 'veil of perception' between us and the real world. Some might counter that the representation must at least be reasonably accurate, otherwise no species could ever survive in the world. One major objection is that RR leads to scepticism, because if the only things we perceive immediately are sense data, then how do we know that the world of material objects exists at all? This might lead candidates to discussion of alternative theories, e.g. idealism and phenomenalism.

Topic 2: Philosophical and Theological Language

Section A

[Extract from **A.J. Ayer**: Language, Truth and Logic, 107–108]

4 (a) With reference to this passage, explain Ayer's view that ethical concepts are 'mere pseudo-concepts'.   [10]

Following his verificationist approach to language, Ayer argues in ch.6 of LTL that moral judgments cannot be translated into non-ethical, empirical terms and so cannot be verified. In addition to rejecting naturalism, he argues that appeals to ethical intuition are worthless as a means of determining moral truths, since it is obvious that ethical intuitions vary from person to person, so there can be no criterion for establishing a preference. Ayer thus concludes that ethical concepts are "mere pseudo-concepts". Hence Ayer maintains in this passage that the presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. If I say to someone, "You acted wrongly in stealing that money," I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, "You stole that money." In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. If now I generalise my previous statement and say, "Stealing money is wrong," I produce a sentence that has no factual meaning – it expresses no proposition that can be either true or false, so I am merely expressing certain moral sentiments. To say that 'x is good' simply means, 'hooray for x', which differs from subjectivism, where 'x is good' means 'I like x', which is a verifiable proposition and thus meaningful as a psychological claim. Expressions of feeling do not come under the category of truth or falsehood.

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(b) Critically assess Ayer's emotivist view of ethics. **[15]**

Ayer's emotivist view derives from his contention that literally meaningful propositions are either analytic or else verifiable empirically. Ethical statements are not empirically verifiable / reducible to statements of empirical fact and are clearly not true by definition. Ethical claims fall under the same category as religious claims in so far as they are meaningless metaphysical statements. Since there are no objective moral facts, ethics as a normative discipline is doomed to failure. Ayer's agenda in LTL was meta-ethical – to understand the function of ethical language and not to advocate any position regarding what people ought to do morally. Ethical claims are emotional statements amounting to expressions of approval or disapproval. Ayer's approach has the advantage that it is based on the observation of human behaviour, and so at least avoids speculative judgements based on ideas such as God or the Platonic Forms, and avoids positing the existence of non-natural properties like 'goodness' which cannot be discovered empirically. People do undoubtedly have an emotive and persuasive element in their moral judgements and discourse, and sociological analysis gives us some reason to suppose that goodness and immorality relate to human preferences. The simplicity of the theory does away with the complex machinery of theories such as Kant's categorical imperativism, and gives credence to the general (non-Kantian) view that emotions are important in our moral judgements. Candidates are likely to question the legitimacy of the verification principle from which Ayer's view is articulated, for example by claiming that the principle itself appears to be synthetic but is not empirically verifiable, so must be meaningless, with the result that Ayer's emotivist theory is based on false assumptions. In particular, some might argue that emotivism does not account for the prevalence of moral dispute in human discourse. If moral judgements are no more than expressions of emotion, then we cannot reason about them, so what explains the general view that our moral disputes are real and substantive? We do habitually treat moral judgements as propositional. It seems very odd to dismiss murder, rape and genocide as being anything other than moral atrocities. When we do decide to label things as being atrocities, Ayer would have it that we are reasoning about the *meaning* of our moral language and not its *application*, which seems far-fetched. In response, supporters of emotivism might point out that however substantive our moral disputes appear to be, they seem incapable of resolution, perhaps simply because they are indeed meaningless and metaphysical. In childhood, it does seem true that moral opinions are often formed in order to gain approval or to avoid disapproval. Again, this seems to belittle people's conviction that their moral views are objective or absolute and that some things are intrinsically right or wrong. Moreover it *is* surely possible to formulate moral judgements unemotionally. Some might argue for an updated version of emotivism, e.g. that of C.L. Stevenson.

Section B

5   'Religious language is true.' Discuss.   **[25]**

This could be answered in any number of ways, probably in relation to verificationist / falsificationist claims about meaning. The truth of religious language might be defined, for example, using cognitive or non-cognitive approaches, or a combination of these. Some might argue that religious language is meaningful cognitively, and thus its claims are factually true or false: for example Hick maintains that the truth of religious assertions is verifiable eschatologically, *post mortem*. This suffers from the objection that verification *post-mortem* would be an asymmetrical claim, since normal truth claims are bivalent, and if one does not wake up in any resurrection, then neither the truth nor the falsity of religion can be confirmed. Another cognitive claim comes from Mitchell: that belief in God is true, cognitive and verifiable, on the analogy of trust in a Stranger, but this seems to suffer from the same problem of *post-mortem* verification (or lack of it). Some might want to claim that language about God is logically true on the basis of some version of the Ontological Argument, but no version of the argument is particularly convincing. For such reasons, some might modify their understanding of 'true' to include a non-cognitive view, e.g. Hare's conviction that religious truth-claims are *bliks* – views of the world that are not explanations but which are the basis by which the *blik*-holder judges further evidence about the world. Alternatively Braithwaite argues that religious truth-claims are conative, and express ethical intention, so 'truth' reduces to a common agreement among religions about verifiable moral behaviour. This might well turn out to be true, but religious believers do not usually take kindly to reductionism in any form. Some might appeal to Wittgenstein's alternative theory of meaning, language-game theory, often characterised as an anti-real view of truth, although this is often rejected as advocating a fideistic understanding of religious truth-claims. Indeed some might go further and argue on the basis of Reformed Epistemology that religious truth-claims are valid purely on faith, without evidence, since no form of epistemological approach has yet succeeded in showing that knowledge of any kind is properly basic. Others might argue for the virtues of analogical, mythopoeic, or symbolic language as expressing truths about God. Whatever approaches candidates use, the focus needs to be on the understanding of "true". Some might take the line that it depends on the kind of religious language being used, which would be a fruitful approach.

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6   Critically assess the claim that to understand God we must use symbolic language.   [25]

This asks candidates to consider the specific claim that symbolic language is the main route to understanding God. In support of this, candidates are likely to consider Paul Tillich's view that religious language is fundamentally symbolic; that there are different levels of reality beyond the empirical, and these can be accessed through symbolic language. For example where the New Testament refers to Jesus as the *Lamb* of God, this is best seen as a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice to atone for human sin. Symbols open up levels of reality to us which otherwise would be closed, so they give us at least some understanding of God: they open up dimensions of the soul which correspond to those levels of reality. Analogously, so do art, poetry and music. With religious symbols, we can gain a new perspective on life: when the New Testament talks about the *Kingdom of God*, the Kingdom is a symbol of God's power and rule, so thinking about earthly kingdoms allows us to go beyond them to the ultimate reality of power in the universe – God. God can be understood non-symbolically as 'Being-Itself', and symbolically as a person. To encounter *the Holy* is to encounter God as 'Being-Itself'. 'Being-Itself' is the ultimate, the unconditioned, that on which everything else depends for its being: it is the ground of existence itself, thus is cognitive and non-symbolic. To refer to God as a person is only a symbol for 'Being-Itself', so everything we understand about God's attributes is said in a symbolic sense, and language which talks about God as acting spatially, temporally or causally, is symbolic, not literal. Encountering 'Being-Itself' is to be understood in terms of our 'ultimate concern', and is the real meaning of one's life. Candidates might look at other symbolic approaches to understanding God, e.g. J.R. Randall.

Critically, the problem with claims that to understand God we must use symbolic language is that all such claims have a basic assumption that such language has a real object. Symbols are no doubt emotive and powerful, but they are understandable through empirical extrapolation. As Hume might say, understanding the symbol of a sacrificial lamb derives from the sense contents of lambs and sacrifice, and the application of that to some different level of reality is gratuitous. Tillich's assumption that God as the ground of being is to be understood cognitively, and not symbolically, makes sense if there is such a being, but we do not know that there is such a being. Sections of Tillich's work lack clarity: how exactly does a symbol 'participate' in the reality to which it points? None of the language of symbol is *literally* true, so what likelihood is there that religious doctrine is true in any meaningful sense? According to W. Alston, for example, Tillich's view of religious language removes all substantive content from it. By contrast with Tillich, 'God' in J.R. Randall's thought appears to symbolize human ideals and values rather than the existence of a real God. If God is not something real, then to call God 'good' is nothing more than symbolic either, since it tells us nothing at all about God or how to lead a morally good life. Aside from supporting or rejecting the use of symbolic language to understand God, candidates may use any comparative approach they like, e.g. suggesting that God might be understood through analogical language, through myths, normal everyday language, and so on.

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Topic 3: Philosophy of Religion

Section A

[Extract from: **John Hick:** *Evil and the God of Love*: 341–342]

7 (a) With reference to this passage, explain Hick's argument that Christian theodicy should abandon belief in hell in favour of the belief that eventually all people will come to God in faith and love. **[10]**

Hick's view is expressed in the context of his belief in the *infinite future good* – that life after death constitutes an important crux between naturalism and historic Christianity. It stands out as a *stubborn pocket of belief* over against the concept of "man himself as an intelligent animal, uniquely valuable in his own eyes but nevertheless destined to perish with the beasts and plants" (338). Belief in an afterlife is no less crucial for theodicy, since too often in this life we see wickedness multiplying, good turned to evil, kindness to bitterness, hope to despair. If, then, there are unredeemed sinners in this life, any eventual resolution of the interplay between good and evil must lie beyond this world and beyond the enigma of death. Theodicy cannot be content to look to the past, seeking an explanation of evil in its origins, but must look to a triumphant future resolution in the perfect fulfilment of God's purpose based on God's infinite love for his children. In that context, there can be no suffering that has not eventually become a phase in the fulfilment of God's good purpose. If this is so, then Christians must question the validity of belief in hell. The suffering of the damned in hell conflicts with the motives that lead to theodicy, since such suffering can never lead to any constructive and. Such pointless anguish would in fact constitute the largest part of the problem of evil. It is no better to rephrase the endless sufferings of hell in terms of the damned being in a state of unending sin: this would simply mean that God's creation is permanently spoiled by evil, which is incompatible with God's sovereignty and His perfect goodness. Even if we supposed that the "finally lost" were annihilated or else that they simply dwindled out of existence, that also would constitute the failure of God's good purpose. There is an alternative: that God will eventually win all men to Himself in faith and love. We can see this aim in the revelation of Jesus Christ, in whose life we see God's desire that all men should be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Augustine and Calvin made the grave mistake of assuming that God *wanted* to predestine the majority for damnation. The possibility that God will bring all men to salvation is not a *predetermined* issue, which is why some rule out the idea of universal salvation. Rather, universal salvation is grounded in God's nature, since He will never abandon any as irredeemably evil. Theodicy compels us to assert that our whole fulfilment works through Him, and He can influence us both through the world and through the Holy Spirit within us in ways that preserve freedom of the human spirit. There is a "logical possibility" of failure; nevertheless the probability of His success seems "a practical certainty". Our Christian hope must be for salvation of the whole race.

(b) Critically assess Hick's view that Christians should abandon belief in hell. **[15]**

Hick's reasoning is consistent with the concept that God is a God of love, in which case the concept of hell in any shape or guise must be morally repellent. Where suffering is endless and serves no useful end purpose, then its prolongation by God would be an act of evil, and would constitute, as Hick claims, *the* primary problem of evil. The concept of hell is inconsistent with that of free human moral choice, since negative choices that are suspected to end in hell are hardly free and unconstrained. The reverse of its logic is what Nietzsche termed the *wounded monstrosity* of Pascal's wager, where one might as well believe in God and obey divine commands through an act of will merely in order to gain the benefits that might accrue from appeasing a barbaric deity. Such a God would be unworthy of worship. Those who support the Augustinian theodicy might retort in all sorts of ways, for example by claiming that the choice to obey or disobey is indeed a choice, although it is difficult to see how that logic copes with Augustine's concept of predestination to hell. The logical inconsistency with the problem of evil lies chiefly in God's omniscience, since an omniscient creator who foresaw the full extent of evil would hardly have bothered to create the universe in the first place if it included the end-product of hell.

Candidates might raise a number of issues with Hick's views. Why, for example, should an act of atonement for human sin such as that of Jesus be either necessary or desirable? If salvation is universal, what is the point of the exhortations of the prophets and the martyrdom of the saints? Why would an omnipotent God need or require such adjuncts to his power and persuasion? Hick has no answer to the problem of animal pain, and in this section of EGL classifies it as an incidental occurrence along with the permanent perishing of plants, and shelves the patent fact that humans are another species of animal sharing nearly its entire DNA with apes. Since the most intelligent animals can demonstrate more intelligence than the least intelligent humans, some find it difficult to give credence to an argument that singles out the human animal as alone worthy of universal salvation. In the Gospels, in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus ends the parable with the categorical command that the wicked *will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life* (Matt. 25:46). Hick endeavours to explain this by suggesting that the Greek *Aiónios* (eternal) might be an approximation to a different original in the Aramaic spoken by Jesus. Hick also hints at the possibility of an "intermediate" state or states after death which might correspond to different states of further development required to become 'fully human'. Some might think that this is so speculative that the end-product – belief in ultimate salvation for all God's children – might be as speculative as anything else. On balance, some might conclude that Hick is right to insist that the concept of hell is incompatible with belief in an all-loving God.

Section B

8   **'To accept the ontological argument is to abandon common sense.' Evaluate this claim.**
                                                                                        [25]

The Specification refers generally to 'ontological arguments', so candidates are at liberty to refer to any version or versions they like, although one clear line of approach would be to argue that one particular version of the argument might be more or less sensible than the rest. Some outline of the argument might be expected, but this depends on candidates' critical approaches, which might focus on aspects of ontological arguments in general rather than any particular argument. The standard objections to ontological arguments come from Aquinas, Kant and Hume. Aquinas regarded it as common sense to say that we do not have an agreed definition of God; others might argue that the commonly-used Cartesian attributes of God at least constitute a generally-accepted basis to start the argument. Hume regarded it as common sense that all existential propositions are synthetic, although Mackie retorted that it is not simply obvious and indisputable that there cannot be analytic existential truths (as perhaps in mathematics), although Mackie was not at all persuaded by the ontological argument. Kant saw it as a matter of common sense that existence is not a predicate, so we can reject all of God's supposed predicates. Some question this, suggesting that it is not completely clear that existence is not a predicate (Stephen Davis). Alternatively Norman Malcolm suggests that *necessary* existence *is* a predicate, and then claims that grasping the truth of this conclusion is like grasping Euclid's demonstration of the infinity of prime numbers as being an analytic existential truth: once it is comprehended, no question remains, so once the concept of God's necessary existence is grasped, no doubt remains. Malcolm then concedes that this does not convince atheists, and retreats to a Wittgensteinian *blik* that the concept of an eternal and necessary being is really a language game which makes perfect sense to believers. He then suggests that we ought to compare the force of the ontological argument with the Judaeo-Christian concept of limitless forgiveness from a guilt greater than which cannot be conceived, so the force of the ontological argument is emotional and not logical. Candidates might suggest that this is taking the argument in a different direction.

Some might defend the argument by redirecting its force, perhaps seeing sense in Malcolm's argument in an anti-real sense. This might be extended to Barth's approach, that the force of the argument was not intended to be a logical proof of the existence of God but was intended by an Anselm as a testimony to his faith, since any proof of the existence of God, logical or empirical, would merely define God as a thing. This might be acceptable to reformed epistemology in particular or to faith in general, but does not deal with post-Anselmian versions of the argument that are about logic as opposed to faith. Alvin Plantinga attempted to resurrect the argument in modal form, using the modal concept of world-indexed properties to suggest that God exists as a being of maximal greatness (possessing maximal excellence, through the Cartesian perfections, in all possible worlds) who therefore has necessary existence, although Plantinga admitted that the logic of the argument can also be used to establish the non-existence of God in every possible world, including the actual one. Candidates might raise all sorts of issues: whether the ontological argument is in some way tautologous; whether it is sensible to write unconvincing arguments for believers; whether the argument can be accepted in an anti-real sense, and so on.

9 **Critically assess the implications of sociological understandings of religious belief.** **[25]**

Some might refer to more contemporary figures in sociological analysis, although candidates are perhaps likely to focus on Durkheim, Weber and Marx. These three figures essentially saw religion as illusory: culture and location exercise so powerful an influence over religion that it seems the height of improbability that collectively or individually religion offers any fundamental truths. Durkheim's functionalist analysis saw the purpose of religion as maintaining social stability by removing the tensions that disrupt social order. Its regular rituals and ceremonies strengthen commitment and group solidarity and allow individuals to escape from mundane existence to some form of higher experience, for example during ceremonies of birth, marriage and death. Having a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things maintains social cohesion: societies bind themselves together by the regular affirmation of common values and beliefs. The implications of this for understanding religious belief are that religion is held to offer access to metaphysical truths, so its presuppositions are false and ultimately ephemeral. Hence Durkheim assumed that scientific advances would eventually lead to the decrease of religious influence and the rejection of belief in God. Religion would eventually take on a form where civic celebrations would replace religious ceremonies. Durkheim's expectations have perhaps materialised in part. In Western societies, it seems true that religious morality has been superceded by non-cognitivist/teleological ethical approaches. This has not been particularly beneficial for Western society, since the kind of morality that the likes of Nietzsche envisaged would replace that made redundant by the 'death of God' has not emerged in constructive forms.

Weber's research and data were vastly more detailed and pervasive than those of Durkheim. Weber emphasised the inter-relatedness of religion and economics: he saw the root of capitalism in the Protestant Work Ethic, contrasted with factors in the eastern religions which emphasise spiritual rather than capitalist values. For Weber, rather than being a social glue, religion provides an ethical framework for social change and adaptation. Weber traced what he supposed to be the evolutionary path of religion from societies based on magic to societies where the concept of a single, universal God became preferable. His ideas again imply that religion possesses no transcendent truths, and that religion will continue to evolve in a variety of forms to complement changing societal patterns. Marx developed his views on sociology from Hegel and Feuerbach, predicting that society would finally be happy only with the abolition of the illusion of religion, implying that in the utopian future religion will disappear along with the class system that fuels it. The implications for religion according to Marx are therefore rather dire, although it is commonly held that Marx's vision of people working for a religion-less utopian society is far more of an idle hope than any religious eschatology. Candidates should focus on the critical analysis of social understandings of religious belief as opposed to merely detailing who says what.

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Answer Question 10 **and** either Question 11 **or** 12

Section A

Passage = Luke 23:13–25

10 **(a) With reference to this passage, examine who was responsible for Jesus' crucifixion.**
[10]

Answers are expected to examine the relative responsibility associated with Pilate, the chief priests, Jewish leaders, the Jewish crowds. There should be clear links made to the passage. Credit may be given to relevant, supported comments about the role of others e.g. Judas, God, the failure of the disciples, Jesus' own actions etc, but the bulk of the answer should be directed to the evidence in the set passage.

e.g. The chief priests twisted the evidence against Jesus to present it in the worst possible light to ensure Jesus received a full Roman execution. They and the leaders worked together on the crowd to ensure that Pilate was pressurised into giving way to their demands or else he would face a riot. The leaders were mainly Pharisees who wanted to get rid of the "law-breaker" who was undermining their authority. These put aside their differences with the Sadducees among the chief priests to ensure that Jesus was removed totally from their lives. Without the support of the Jewish leaders, the chief priests would not have been able to act against Jesus. The crowds were volatile and fickle. They had greeted Jesus vocally when he entered Jerusalem and probably looked on him as the one who could remove the Romans. Now, they turned against Jesus in order to get the freedom fighter, Barabbas, released (v.18). The crowds now were not bothered what happened to Jesus; he was a good price to pay for the freedom of Barabbas. The fact that the leaders were able to work the crowd effectively means that the crowd shoulder some responsibility for the results of their actions and demands. Pilate was convinced of Jesus' innocence and had the support of Herod for this opinion. However, he was weak and indecisive. If Jesus was innocent, there were no grounds for having him flogged (v.16). Pilate could have asserted his authority, even in the face of the pressure from the chief priests, but he did not do so. He gave into the pressure from the crowd (v.24), releasing the greater threat to the Roman Empire, in order to prevent a riot in his jurisdiction.

(b) Critically assess the claims made about Jesus' death.   **[15]**

This question is open to a range of approaches. There could be some examination of the reality of Jesus' death, with exceptional candidates bringing in heretical ideas e.g. Simon of Cyrene being the one who died while Jesus escaped. Some focus might be on the theology and understanding of the nature and purpose of Jesus' death, e.g. in obedience to God, enabling all people to escape the bonds of death etc. Some candidates could bring in the idea of Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies as Suffering Servant and Son of Man, examining to what extent the passion narratives were worked to enable the reader to make comparisons with the prophecies. Some might compare the ideas from the Synoptics and John about Jesus being the Innocent Man, the sacrificial lamb, the one who was always in control (as in John) etc. Answers need to be assessed on the breadth versus depth approach.

e.g. John portrays Jesus as the person who is in charge of the events surrounding his death. In the arrest and before Pilate, Jesus leads the timing and the nature of the conversations. On the cross, Jesus deliberately "gave up his spirit" (Jn 1930) after fulfilling the scriptures. John shows Jesus' glorification as the moment he mounted the cross, when he is raised up to draw all men to God (Jn 3:14). John's timing seems to be deliberately structured to show that Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of the true Passover. All this type of information brings out the question: how valid is this material? Did John just phrase things to bring out the symbolism of what happened or did he change the order of the events to make his own points? If the latter, can any value be put on his account? The same questions could be raised about the portrayal of Jesus as the Innocent Man in Luke or the Son of Man in Mark or the Suffering Servant in all the Synoptics. Do the echoes of Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 really reflect the theological truth? Were the accounts of the death of Jesus deliberately structured to counter the claims that Jesus was simply a trouble-maker who was executed as a rebel rouser by the Romans in order for them to assert their authority and to keep Palestine peaceful?

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Section B

11 **Critically assess the view that Jesus' teaching only related to the outcast and the oppressed.** **[25]**

Candidates should include some detailed references to the Gospel to support any statements they make. Vague generalisations will not score highly. Expect candidates to bring out the different types of relationships that Jesus had with the wealthy and powerful, e.g. Nicodemus, as well as outcasts. There should be some inclusion of the nature and importance of Jesus' teachings about wealth, status and the love of God for all people. Credit answers that focus more on the content of Jesus' teaching e.g. teaching about himself as challenging the view that Jesus only related to the outcast and the oppressed.

e.g. Jesus, from the start of his life, was connected with the poor and the outcasts. No room at the inn, his birth in a stable, the message to shepherds. His early disciples were fishermen, whom many regard as being of the lower order in society and uneducated. However, the sons of Zebedee worked in their father's own boat and had other employees, suggesting they were not poor. If the evangelist is John the fisherman, he was well educated. People in the countryside to whom Jesus preached and among whom he worked were not outcasts and oppressed, even though some of Jesus' teachings did stress the need to help the poorer members of society e.g. the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The call for his followers to commit themselves to God and to Jesus' work did not mean that they were oppressed. It meant that they had to turn away from the established norms and take a new approach to life. The teachings of the Beatitudes etc. reflect the need to be poor in spirit. Jesus accepted many outcasts as his followers, including tax collectors and prostitutes. However, he also had people like Jairus accepting his teaching. Some of the outcasts like Zacchaeus were not oppressed but were wealthy people who responded to Jesus' teachings. Even the women who followed Jesus like Mary of Magdala, provided for Jesus and his followers from their own resources (Lk 8:3) showing that they were not poor and oppressed. Jesus' care for the blind, the lepers, the disabled, the widows and other despised groups shows that for him all people were of equal value. With this in mind, his teaching was for all people who were prepared to open their hearts to him. It is just a fact of human nature that those who have wealth and power tend to find it harder to open their hearts to other standards, not that they are not called to be open.

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12 Examine the issues surrounding the authorship, date and purpose of one of the gospels.

[25]

Candidates should present the evidence for different opinions about the authorship, date and purpose of only one of the Gospels. If the candidates only deal with the synoptic problem, they have not really addressed the set question, so they should only be awarded a lower level. However, material from the synoptic problem can be used, especially in the examination of the authorship e.g. why does "Matthew" include Marcan material, if Matthew was present at the events himself? All three areas need to be addressed for the top levels.

e.g. Mark – Traditionally the interpreter of Peter. Probably written for Roman Christians in a time of persecution and before the fall of Jerusalem e.g. Mk 13, so more likely to be about AD 65 than later. Written to encourage Christians during persecution and because eye witnesses were dying out. Written for lower class people e.g. slaves due to poor quality of the Greek used. Some say there is lack of sophistication in the content, pericopes are "pearls on a string", while others say there is great skill shown in putting the pericopes together to get forceful messages across e.g. Peter's confession and rejection of Jesus' teaching on suffering immediately after the healing of the blind man in two stages (Mk 8:22–26) – what might this suggest about the author? Question of the validity of the sources used e.g. the reliability of Papias. Suggestions about a later dating with an examination of the reliability of this suggestion compared to the more commonly accepted interpretation of the material.

Matthew – What suggestions are made about the author being the apostle of the same name? How reliable is the evidence for this? What material suggests that this Gospel was written for Jewish Christians? How important in the Gospel are the references to the Old Testament? What do these suggest about the purpose of the Gospel? How may the use of Marcan material and Q challenge old presumptions about the authorship and dating? Is the idea of proto-Matthew feasible? What might the material about the fall of Jerusalem suggest about the dating? What does Matthew's presentation of the person of Jesus suggest about the purpose for writing the Gospel?

Luke – The author claims to write an ordered account? Why is this? What does this suggest about the dating in light of other writings? Who is Theophilus? Is it one person or are the suggestions about it is a symbolic reference to the Christian community justifiable? How reliable is the evidence about Luke offered by the second century fathers? Is Luke the same person as the companion of Paul mentioned in the Pauline writings? If so, what might this suggest? Are these suggestions sustainable? What does the quality of Luke's writing suggest about the author and the purpose? What does the material about the fall of Jerusalem imply about the dating? Is this valid? How does Luke's presentation of Jesus indicate the purpose of the Gospel? Do modern commentators read too much into limited material?

John – What is the evidence for the author being the same person as the son of Zebedee? How reliable is the material on which this is based or is it pure conjecture? Is the author the same as the beloved disciple? What difference would it make if he is or isn't? How do the issues raised by the authorship impact of the possible dating of the document? How valid are the different suggestions? What do the contrasts in style and content with the Synoptics suggest about the dating? Are these suggestions acceptable or is an early dating to be preferred? What do the long discourses in proximity to a few signs suggest about the style and purpose of the author? Are these suggestions over-interpretations?