

Examiners' Report  
June 2012

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04 1J

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## **Introduction**

It is clear that some candidates worked hard in their preparation for this paper, including evidence of wider reading around the topics. Many showed evidence of commendable study skills. This included the ability to focus explicitly on the demands of the question, structuring their answers in a clear coherent manner and marshalling arguments into a critical evaluation.

Very few candidates attempted to fuse parts (a) and (b) together, in previous years this approach led some candidates to pay insufficient attention to the various demands of AO2 (Assessment Objective 2).

The main focus in all the AO1 (Assessment Objective 1) levels for the mark scheme relates to an understanding of the passage. Some candidates achieved this by working their way systematically through the extract and linking it to other scholars. Sometimes, however, a close analysis of the text became a simple and basic comprehension exercise, rather than placing Russell in any meaningful context.

It must be noted that there is no predictable pattern in the choice of selected texts, although over the lifetime of the specification all of the texts will be used.

## **Question 1**

### **AO1 features of good quality**

- Evidence of excellent work with confident understanding.
- Examination of the passage in breadth and detail.
- Specific ideas/points of view raised by Russell being addressed. For example, some candidates focused on key areas such as the superlative goodness of Christ and the Second Coming. In examining such topics it was good to see candidates using a range of scholars in their analysis.
- Creative use of their New Testament studies from units 6RS01, 6RS02 and 6RS03.
- Using the extract as a spring-board to showcase their wider biblical knowledge. This included material on Christology and notions of omniscience. These candidates wrote fluently about a wide range of scholarship.
- Clarity in the conclusion that cohered with the rest of the answer.

### **Examples of AO1 work that require improvement**

- Generalised views on whether or not Christ existed, or the Second Coming, without relating these to the Russell passage.
- Some candidates wrote quite extensively on a passage from a previous year by Morrison and then used this to discuss the historical evidence for the life of Christ. In approaching the passage in this manner, these candidates presented a limited and partial answer.
- Some launched too readily into Gospel material with insufficient attention as to how this might relate to the Russell passage.
- Some examples of AO1 were shorter than the AO2 material, although there are more marks available for AO1.

## **AO2 features of good quality**

- Good critical analysis, reflecting an evident ability to think through the implications of the passage.
- In response to the question *Do you agree with the ideas expressed?* strong responses presented their own opinions and located these within their wider areas of study. They referred to scholarly opinion, debating and constructing a valid and well-justified argument. These candidates showed a thoughtful understanding of alternative and challenging views and ideas.
- Some candidates debated views about the passage with reference to realised eschatology and eschatological verification.
- Ability to debate implications for understanding both religion and human experience.

## **Examples of AO2 work that require improvement**

- Some candidates answered AO2 in the same manner as AO1, with little evidence of evaluation.
- Part (b) was sometimes too short and descriptive, rather than evaluative.
- Some short answers omitted either implications for understanding religion or understanding human experience or both.
- A few candidates used AO2 as a platform to present their own beliefs without the academic scrutiny required at this level of work. Candidates should root these issues within scholarly debates, giving an understanding of the strength and persuasiveness of alternative approaches. It is, of course, creditworthy for a candidate to pinpoint their own stance, provided it is framed within an academic context.
- Sometimes using paragraphs not linked together.

This includes the AO1 part of this answer.

9.50

**(A)** - superlative → incarnate G - Trinity  
 'Christ' 'Son of Man' Trinity  
 - Kingdom 'as he appears' Tasker  
 cross Kyrie enthron  
 Hooker lifted  
 - Parousia  
 - kysar → paraclete/pneuma  
 - Early followers  
 - Paul  
 - 'not as wise' can we trust  
 teachings?  
 - faith - Hooker  
 - Martha Marsh  
 - Thomas Culpepper  
 - Sauartan 'many people from'

**(B)** - whose view?  
 - historical/theo  
 - Robinson  
 - science (across addition)  
 interpretations Prot.  
 - does evidence needed?  
 Science  
 Turin shroud  
 Dead sea scrolls  
 - do we live our lives  
 differently?  
 - faith strong even  
 through delay -  
 early Chr.  
 persecution.

a) Throughout this extract from Russell's 'Why I am not a Christian', Bertrand Russell highlights a key fault in the teaching of Jesus and uses it to question the authority and wisdom of the preacher, Jesus. This key fault is the delay of the Parousia, or second coming of Jesus. In John we are led to believe, as many early Christians did, that the return of Christ would be 'imminent' (Russell) after Jesus' death. However, since no Parousia has yet been claimed, Russell argues that the foundations upon which Christianity is built - the belief in 'Jesus' word, may be unstable. Russell comments speaks of the 'superlative wisdom' of Christ which alludes to the Christian conception of Jesus as God incarnate. This idea is introduced during the Prologue to John's gospel where Jesus is portrayed as God in human form. Marsh describes Jesus

Question 1\_500193\_01.png

as 'a human embodiment of a heavenly reality' and it is certainly true that lines from the Prologue such as 'the Word was God' (1:1) and 'the word became flesh and dwelt among us' support this Christian view. However, in questioning the 'superlative wisdom' of Christ, Russell introduces a key issue of Christianity, the conception of this incarnate God. Bunker asks 'How can Jesus be so closely related to God and yet be so unequivocally human?' ~~They~~ For the Jews, this idea of God incarnate was the ultimate form of blasphemy (although ironically they later commit it 'we have no king but Caesar') and it is ultimately what Jesus is crucified for.

Having introduced the concept of wisdom, Russell then draws on the second, but equally important aspect of Jesus, his goodness. Turner argues that 'selfless love is the essence of the passion', <sup>\* see last page</sup> and this idea is certainly displayed in John. If we follow the original line of thought in describing Jesus as God ('I and the Father are one'), verse 3:16 makes ~~clear~~ sense: 'For God so loved the world he gave his only son, that all who believe in him would not die but have eternal life'. This is a clear demonstration of God's love and the sacrifice he makes. Russell later describes Jesus as the 'son of man' which again highlights the purpose of Jesus as a ransom

for the sins of the world. The idea of Jesus as a sacrifice is highlighted during the crucifixion: John alters the chronology, so that Jesus is crucified alongside the Passover lambs, portraying him as the unblemished lamb who was 'led like a lamb to slaughter'. (Isaiah 53). The cross is described by Kisar as the 'enthronement of Jesus as king,' and it is here that the Son of Man is 'lifted up, first in death (and later in glory)' Hooker Having introduced Jesus as a figure recognisable to many readers, Russell courageously rejects the historical question of Jesus, deeming it 'doubtful whether [he] ever existed at all.' It is certainly true that two thousand years is a long time to extrapolate, and whilst there are certain pieces of evidence to point towards Jesus, the underlying feature of the Christianity is faith. Russell explains that he is concerned with Christ 'as he appears in the gospels'. Importantly, Christ is portrayed by the evangelists as the Messiah and Bowker explains how the evangelists centred the gospels around Old Testament ideas, making it accessible to Jews at the time. Jesus came to welcome in the New Covenant with God, as explained in John 1:17 'For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.' During the Old Testament, God had upheld a relationship with the people of

Israel, however through their inability to follow God's wishes, this relationship had broken down. Tucker explains 'the fall of the first Adam took place in a garden; and it was in a garden that the second Adam redeemed mankind'. The key feature of Jesus' new covenant is the universality of his ministry, shown by the interaction with the Samaritan woman and the inclusion of Gentiles in the early ministry of Jesus. The New Covenant also describes a supersession of Israel. Through the 'true vine' discourse, Jesus explains that he is replacing Israel and by his incarnation, Jesus is superseding Judaism by becoming the personification of the relationship Israel held with God. However, most importantly, the New Covenant of Jesus provides a way for the ~~old~~ followers of Christ to spread his message and it is here that Russell turns next.

Russell's main focus of the article is that of the 'second coming of Jesus' (Parousia). Russell argues that many followers believed that Jesus would return to conclude his ministry and create the Kingdom of God. This would be a time of judgement, when the good would be raised from their graves. Jesus, as the 'light of the world', testified by John the Baptist in the Prologue, would raise the righteous and as Tucker comments,

'it is by this light that he is able to look inwardly upon himself.' ~~However, this issue~~

However, this issue of the delay of the Parousia is for Russell, an indication that Christianity is not as trustworthy or reliable as some may believe. The second coming of Jesus was used at the time by Paul to give faith to early believers during their persecutions. Paul was a serious early supporter of Jesus and it is through his writings that <sup>many</sup> much of the activities of the early church are known. The promise of the Parousia would have provided an incentive for early followers and was therefore an important part of faith. Kysar believes the problem is solved through the gift of the Paraclete, (something Russell does not mention). The Paraclete was the Holy Spirit in the form of a teacher and was a concept unique to John. Marsh describes it as 'the presence of Jesus when he is absent' and it was given during the resurrection of Jesus. It can solve the problem of the delay of the Parousia by suggesting that it has already begun, and that Jesus is among us in the form of the Holy Spirit. This highlights a key aspect of John's theology, that of 'inaugurated eschatology'. Frequently, Jesus implies that salvation is a present experience, such as during the raising of Lazarus and when Martha

misunderstands, 'You believe you will raise him at the last day.' Bultmann argues that salvation and eternal life are 'readily available' and it is through this idea that perhaps the Gospels saved after Russell's criticisms. Kysar even highlights the inclusion of traditional ideas concerning eternal life by the evangelist, which act to integrate the ideas of the fourth gospel within the Bible. (He calls this the 'preserver theory').

Russell summarises his argument through the anecdote of the trees planting, and concludes by arguing that Jesus was not so 'superlatively wise' as we may believe. This is in direct contradiction with 'many displays of faith' made in the Bible by Jesus' disciples. A key component of discipleship is witness and Brown argues that 'Discipleship is the primary Christian category for John'. Examples of this witness are Martha in chapter 11, whom Marsh comments 'Martha has perceived that Jesus has a special relationship with God and that no bounds can properly be set upon what this relationship may effect in the world one which the Lord is king.'

In spite of this Biblical 'evidence', Russell rejects the authority of Jesus. By completely neglecting to consider the historical faults, he implies they are

too great. Russell was a revolutionary activist and by criticising the wisdom of Jesus, he makes it clear that he holds ~~not~~ no respect for the teachings of the Bible.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate was very good indeed at highlighting significant points. The answer was well-structured and showed a clear understanding of the key ideas in this passage.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

The candidate made effective use of a wide range of scholarship. There was a proficiency in the various references to Biblical passages, with appropriate detailed analysis when required.

This contains the AO2 part of the candidate's answer.

1.6) Russell raises what is clearly an extremely important issue for Christianity. If Russell's view is correct, that Jesus was wrong in his statements and prophecies of the Parousia being imminent and the high ~~many~~ presently study to people in that lifetime, then clearly, many will conclude that Jesus was not superlatively wise, therefore, if Jesus was not superlatively wise, then arguably, he was not the son of God and the Messiah. This causes huge problems for Christians as it leaves open the question of, are we still waiting for the Son of God to come? or likewise, was it all an apocryphal and the son of God never came, nor will he ever come. If the latter is to be believed, then arguably, Christianity is meaningless and there is no basis for Christianity, whilst Jesus' moral teachings would also

be seen as an apocryphal and therefore no longer valid. Therefore, Russell clearly raises an extremely pivotal issue for Christianity that has major implications for Christianity and it's basis for belief if Russell is correct.

There are many scholars who would agree with Russell; ~~leave~~ that Jesus was wrong over the Second coming and kg 6. one of the major scholars for this would be Schweitzer who argued that the 'cry of dereliction' in Matthew's Gospel; "Father why have you forsaken me?" is Jesus admitting defeat and the fact that he was wrong, but hoping that God would present himself. Therefore, Schweitzer believed that many of the teachings Jesus presents on the kg 6 are just part of the kerygma (Early Church's teachings) as they were left in confusion over what to do next. Another scholar who would agree with Russell is R. Funk who argued Jesus was "nothing more than a wandering sage" who gave moral teachings. Likewise, liberation theologians such as Trochimae argue "the most important part of Jesus' life was his moral teachings." However, Russell goes even further than this as he feels a great deal of Jesus' moral teachings were based upon the

Second coming and are therefore, meaningless. As the story of the parable growing plants shows that Jesus left them confused ("let the dead bury the dead" yet, "the ~~son~~ son of man will come at the time you least expect him") meaning that his teachings were so centred around the second coming, which Russell feels was evidently wrong, that his moral teachings have no validity as Jesus was "clearly not superlatively wise" and therefore, not the Messiah. As mentioned before, the implications of this being true are huge, as if Jesus' moral teachings have no validity then why should we pay attention to any of his teachings, love our neighbour, always forgive, grow plants like the parable did and so forth. Even more importantly though, if Jesus was not the Messiah then it leaves Christianity in uncertainty as we arguably, can no longer have faith in something which Russell argues, was totally wrong.

However, there are a great deal of scholars who disagree with Russell's view and argue that faith in Christianity still has validity, as they feel Russell has missed certain elements of Jesus' teachings.

Firstly, we should consider what the kingdom is in the old Testament. This was prophesied as a ~~new~~ realm which God would rule over almost militarily, as the Jews were God's "chosen people". This is the concept of a Davidic kingdom, which many Jews were expecting Jesus to bring. Hence, references such as; "There are some standing here who will not taste death till the Son of Man comes into His kingdom" (Ch.9) imply apocalyptic imagery and the idea of God presenting himself for all to see, which Russell clearly ~~the~~ argues did not happen, therefore, Jesus was wrong and not the Messiah. However, scholars such as N.T. Wright believe that Jesus intended to bring with him a Davidic kingdom (from Daniel Ch.6) which is far more of a spiritual realm that God rules over. Hence, in Luke ch.2 when John says "the child who would liberate Jerusalem" echoed by John the Baptist in ch.3 "make way for God's deliverance" this is realized in Luke 23 when "the temple curtain was torn in two". Morris ~~the~~ asserted; "This suggests a paradoxical shift in the temple." It is arguably, when Jesus said in Ch.21 "your liberation is near... the kingdom is near"

it's because he knew that through his death on the cross as the innocent suffering servant (Ezekiel 53) he would "re-open the kingdom that had been closed for so long due to Adam's sin" (Neyrey). Therefore, many use this to show that Jesus was superlatively wise as he prophesies his death in ch. 9 and then in ch. 21 by saying "the kingdom is near" however, in a spiritual sense rather than a Davidic kingdom as Russell was expecting so, when Jesus said "there are some standing here who will not taste death till the son of man be come" many feel he was not wrong, as the prophecy was fulfilled through Jesus' death on the cross.

Another view, which contradicts Russell is over the timing of the kingdom. Russell felt that Jesus expected it to be imminent, and was therefore wrong when it didn't come in the Davidic way that Russell expected.

However, scholars such as Weiss, believe in a "future eschatology"; that Jesus intended for the ~~kingdom~~ parousia to come in the future.

Whilst Culmann believes in the "imperial eschatology" that through Jesus' ministry we

saw the stone of it, but more is  
left to come. Evidence for this could be  
the Parable of the Mustard Seed where  
Jesus said; "It is like a Mustard seed  
which grows". Whereas Ritschl argued the "moral  
eschatology" that the Kingdom is present through  
loving actions. Hence "the Kingdom is among  
you" and the Great Banquet are true as  
the Kingdom is there if we are loving.  
Most importantly though, in Luke ch.17  
Jesus said: "You cannot say look, here it is,  
for the Kingdom is among you." Showing it is  
not an event you can pinpoint to a  
particular time. Also, Schweitzer's "imminent ethics"  
support the idea of stewardship.

Therefore, many feel that Russell is wrong in  
his justification of not being a Christian  
as he selects only certain passages on the  
parousia and misses the idea of the  
Kingdom. Hence, if Russell was true  
there are huge implications for the Christian  
faith, as arguably, ~~so~~ Jesus cannot be the  
Messiah if he was not supernaturally wise.  
However, many agree that Russell is wrong  
in certain areas and therefore, Christianity and faith <sup>is</sup> valid.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate displayed a clear understanding of the significance of the implications of the Russell passage. The candidate put forward clear ideas and arguments both for and against Russell. There was a clear line of reasoning, coupled with an understanding of the strength and range of alternative stances.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

The candidate used a good range of Biblical references alongside an exposition of key scholars.

This is the full answer to this question.

Russell's arguments for why he was not a Christian were written in 1927, ~~and~~ but are still used by atheists today. The majority of this article is biased with little factual evidence. At first glance, there are four main issues that are brought to attention when studying and reading this article.

The first, and most complicated, issue is christology. Christology refers to the study of Christ: his identity and his mission on Earth. For Christians, much of what we know is based on the writings of the New Testament writers. For the New Testament writers, establishing an official teaching of Jesus's true nature was very important because they needed to separate their ideas ~~from~~ and beliefs from Jewish law. Obviously, ~~they~~ they concluded that Jesus was fully man and fully divine, and the two natures ~~seem~~ create a paradox. Russell makes it clear that he does not fully believe the ~~idea~~ idea that Jesus was superlatively wise. He criticises Jesus and questions the extent of Jesus's wisdom.

Christians believe that this wisdom was not given to Jesus by the Father as Arius suggests, but that this wisdom <sup>is present</sup> ~~exists~~ because Jesus is of the

the same nature, which we call homousios. Being of the same nature as God means that Jesus was God, equal to God with a unique relationship with the Father. Russell, as an atheist, does not believe that this is possible, and indeed, belief in the idea requires a leap of faith. Russell states that he is concerned with Christ "as he appeared in the Gospels". This causes a problem: the New Testament writers ~~must~~ needed to give their teaching on Jesus' true nature authority and substance which means that parts of the Gospels were written to encourage belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

The Christ depicted in the Gospels is clearly ~~&~~ of a divine nature and the evangelists are not afraid to explicitly state the identity of Jesus. In John's Gospel, the nature of Jesus is shown through signs. ~~As~~ Kasemann, quite rightly, highlighted that the Jesus depicted in the Fourth Gospel was so divine that "his feet barely touched the ground". John, and the synoptic writers use the issue of salvation as evidence for the divinity of Christ.

Jesus' death brought salvation to humanity. God

sent his son because humans cannot achieve salvation on their own, we are 'fallen people'. Salvation means ~~being~~ free of sin and being able to enter eternal life. As Russell clearly knows, eternal life will come with the parousia.

Russell uses the doctrine of eschatology to express his reason as to why he is an atheist. In his opinion, the doctrine of the Second Coming is flawed and weakened by the fact that we do not know when the Second Coming will occur. There is such confusion on the event because Jesus himself did not make it clear to his followers. He said that "only the Father" knew when the parousia would happen. This is why Russell doubts Jesus' divine nature. It is hard to believe that the incarnation of God, a man who is equal and one with the Father ('The Father and I are one' [Mark 10]) would not know when judgement day would happen. Russell provides examples of when Jesus told his followers it would happen in their lifetime but he also told Martha that the way to eternal life was through him 'now'. (The raising of Lazarus).

So, it is clear that Russell has some valid points to make in this passage. It is easy to question Jesus' identity when he does not appear to have divine nature. ~~But~~ ~~because~~ This would lead to some concluding that Jesus must have been a purely historical figure. As shown in the old Testament and the belief of Muslims, God sent many prophets to communicate with his <sup>chosen</sup> people. It could be possible that Jesus was just a man who interpreted the Law in a "deeper and inward sense" (WARD). Russell, however, takes this a step further and suggests that even the historical figure, the purely human, Jesus did not exist. This is somewhat forgivable when taking into account the date of publishing. This idea is not relevant today because since Russell, evidence has been found which shows that a 'Jesus of Nazareth' existed and was crucified by the Romans.

Overall, I find it difficult to agree with the ideas expressed by Russell. The more rational ideas which are not ~~expressed~~ purely opinion do force us to question Jesus.

One implication of what Jesus is saying is that the reliability of the New Testament writers is questionable. The writers needed the early Church to become established on its own, away from the ideas of Judaism. It is possible that much of the evidence they use could have been fabricated. What if the writers had twisted the real facts of Jesus to fit with Old Testament ~~prop~~ prophecies? An implication of this would be that believers would be following ~~a~~ ~~set~~ ~~of~~ wrong ideas. It is blasphemous to put anything above God, ~~and~~ but isn't that what believers would do ~~it~~ by putting Jesus on par with God?

~~The~~ Another implication of Jesus' teachings is that an organised religion has been established. An implication of that is that societies now use the religious ideas as a basis for the ~~wide~~ ~~social~~ moral code and law. This means that Jesus has an impact on all people in Christian countries, even if

They do not believe in him as a divine figure.

As a result, many atheists now use flaws in the social moral code to ~~per~~ highlight flaws in Christianity and its official beliefs and teachings. Certainly, at the moment, many people - religious and atheists - are criticising the Church of England on their stance on homosexual marriage. An implication of this is that ~~for~~ it causes a debate on how much influence religious ideas should have on our moral code. ~~It~~

The Church of England said ~~it~~ ~~negative~~ redefining 'marriage' would be a threat to the Church <sup>which is an implication</sup> ~~It~~ is likely that it would lead to the weakening of the church by causing a decrease in members.

However, the ideas of Russell and other atheists, have not been able to knock organised religion. ~~The Church is~~ ~~still~~ Religious organisations are greatly powerful; and remain to have an influence over morality all over the world. Dawkins believes that ~~as~~ an implication of this is that many children do not choose the religion they are born into. ~~rather~~ To him, society and parents 'brainwash' their children into faith by promoting eschatological ideas on life after death.

The focus on eschatology and judgement day does mean that some ~~peo~~ believers live in fear of damnation. Is this true ~~probably~~ moral behaviour? An implication for those who believe in a judgement day is that they must always be prepared. ~~as~~ "stay alert! ~~&~~ You do not know when the parousia will happen." ~~CONTRADICT~~ humans are flawed and it is difficult to maintain a readiness for judgement. Moltmann disagrees with the idea that it is fear-based. He believes that <sup>an</sup> implication of eschatology is more positive. He labels the ~~&~~ Christian doctrine of eschatology as ~~as~~ a "doctrine of hope". An implication of this would be that believers are comforted by the promise of eternal life and salvation.

So, in conclusion, I think it is fair to question the reliability of the writers who are used to ~~show~~ prove the divine nature of Jesus, and that ~~his~~ ~~teachings~~ <sup>eschatology</sup> do have implications for believers and religious experience. It does mean that believers follow the moral code set out in scripture in the hope of salvation. This is positive for individuals who ~~may~~ seek eternal life but has ~~&~~ had a negative impact on the morality in society. Russell's ideas can be

credited because his ideas have been developed into  
stronger ~~idea~~ arguments. Russell seems to  
forget, however, that belief in the parousia  
and the divinity of Jesus requires a leap of  
faith. ~~It is~~ foolish of him to think that beliefs  
~~can~~ can be wrong. & As a believer, I find it  
difficult to agree with all his ideas because  
faith ~~can~~ does not require evidence.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

In part (a) the candidate selected some important themes and structured the answer around these topics.

To the candidate's credit, this resulted in a presentation of the range of important ideas in Russell's passage.

In part (b) the candidate structured the answer around prominent themes from the selected passage. As with AO1, this method enabled the candidate to pay attention to the complexities within Russell's passage.

Much of the material was of a high quality. There were some areas that could have been improved. For example, the conclusion could have been better supported by argument and reasoning rather than a brief comment at the end.

## **Paper Summary**

One of the purposes of this unit is to enable candidates to develop skills in textual analysis. There are important outcomes for candidates, including transferable skills across a range of enterprises, involving careful attention to detail, evidence and reason and preparation for University work. In addition, this unit provides an opportunity for candidates to reflect upon and debate the implications of their studies of religion.

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