



Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4A Section A Life, Death and Beyond

June 2011 Examination Candidate Exemplar Work



2011 (June) Unit RST4A Section A Life, Death and Beyond

Examples of Candidates' Work from the Examination

Grade B

- 03 Examine the ideas of one or more religion(s) on the importance of the present life. (45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Hinduism is a way of life. It has a cyclical pattern following birth, death and rebirth. Whereas Christianity is considered to be a linear belief which focuses upon a relationship within this life.

Hinduism stresses the importance of this life through your dharma, your duty which allows you to reach moksha once fulfilled and escape the cycle known as samsara. (moksha is the liberation of samsara where the atman reaches Brahman). Hindus consider the importance of this life to fulfil ones dharma this can be done through the four types of yogas jnana the path of knowledge and understanding, karma where ones rids themselves of selfish deeds and worth, Raja is the physical and deep mental control followed by Ghandi and Bhakti yoga is complete devotion to God through meditation.

Another way in which you can fulfil your dharma is through the four Ashrams or stages of life like student, household, retirement. Each stage requires separate and specific obligations which are contained in the Upanishads. The caste system is another way in which the importance of this life is shown in Hinduism. As each caste has specific obligations to meet. There are four castes excluding the untouchables. For example the Brahmins, the highest class would be to fill becoming a religious teacher or for the shudras becoming a trades worker. The caste system has been likened to the body with each caste contributing to helping each other therefore there is not as such a hierarchy. The Atman is likened to the soul and is what continues after death. The atman is eternal. The importance of this life is to ensure that you reap good karma from good actions through completing your dharma. The atman leaves this body for the next as it says in the bhagavad gita 'as a man leaves his old coat for a new coat'. There is also an analogy which illustrates that people have a choice in how to treat their atman. It is like a farmer who can leave his plot of land to the predetermined weather. Or he can till, grow and nurture. This is similar to Hinduism and is why this life is so important as they have the choice to choose good actions to reap good rebirth for their next life.

Some Hindus believe certain funeral rites in this life will help their next life thus are important to be carried out in this life for example lighting a candle to guide the atman, cracking the skull so the atman is not trapped, cremating the body and scattering the ashes in a holy river such as the ganges.

Christianity also stresses the importance of this life and the importance of gaining salvation. This is shown by Jesus dying on the cross so that peoples sins could be forgiven. However there is a difference of opinion on how salvation is gained. Protestants stress that salvation is gained through faith, and Paul emphasises this by implying that you are not judged on your works this is so no one can boast.

Where as Roman Catholics a conclusive view stress that it is by works that help you gain salvation. This is thought to be believed by the seven sacraments such as marriage and confirmation. These acts are an outward sign of inner grace. These were started by Christ given to the church to enable salvation.

This debate is seen in the John in the parable of Nicodemus here it says 'No one will enter the kingdom except through me they must be born of both water and of spirit'. The protestants believed this to be your natural birth with the waters breaking and your acceptance of faith as your spiritual birth where as Catholics took your spiritual birth to be your baptism and the spiritual birth to be your confirmation.

This is linked to the idea of judgment where Christ will return to judge the living and the dead for many it will be a bodily resurrection. Thus the importance of accepting Gods grace as a gift in this life is important as it will mean heaven is more likely than hell a place of damnation and separation from God.

Another importance of this life is that those who accept Jesus will go to heaven where as those who don't will go to hell. This has been shown in the parable of the sheep and goats where the sheep are on the right, those that believe and the goats are on the left symbolising the non believers. This is said to be the final judgement. Therefore it is important for Christians to accept salvation. To avoid going to hell. Yet Roman Catholics believe that through the importance of this life we can help others which are in purgatory through saying prayers which will lessen their time in purgatory. It was believed that in early centuries indulgences could be bought to help people. Purgatory is a place between this life and the next where people are cleansed from venial sins. Hick claims that the importance of this life is to move from Gods image to Gods likeness.

Thereby the importance of this life for Christians is to gain salvation which Jesus enabled by dying on the cross. How you gain this salvation is dependant on your view to whether you are protestant and stress faith or are catholic and stress it is gained through works. Hinduism stresses that the importance of this life is to carry out good dharma and karma so that moksha can be achieved through the liberation of samsara.

Commentary

This is a level 5 answer, represented by a mark of 32/45.

It is mostly accurate and relevant and reflects a diversity of views.

In places, but not throughout the answer, it does more than simply state the information it presents. For example about the choice people have about how they treat the Atman, the use of the idea of 'born of both water and spirit'. Material such as this, and the general focus on the question, makes the answer more than a level 4.

This approach to the topic has ensured that the candidate makes connections with other elements of the course of study, including other elements of the topic of 'Life, Death and Beyond'. As always, this is an integral, not an additional, demand of the question, and candidates will make those connections as a natural part of a well-informed answer.

**04 'Religious and secular ideas about this present life are essentially the same.'
How far do you agree? (30 marks)**

AO2

Candidate Response

Religious and secular views about the present life are not essentially the same as religious views stress a purpose for this life whether that is to gain salvation or good karma for your next life. This is a purpose for influencing the belief of an afterlife.

However secular thinking expresses the belief that there is no importance as there is no purpose. For example an antinomian viewpoint would suggest the quote 'eat drink and be merry' as nothing significant. Other views expressed which are of similar meaning was seen by Dawkins who posted the quote 'probably no God so enjoy life' on buses thus suggesting we are a stage of nature and development.

Humanist believe similarly however to religions in that although they don't believe in an afterlife it is important to leave a legacy and therefore make an impact on your present life therefore they do have a purpose.

The reason why religious and secular views are different rather than the same is because religious people believe in afterlife whereas secular ideas do not. Certainly because there is no evidence and proof which people rely upon for today's beliefs. Therefore as there is no belief there is no importance. A religious view which shows the difference between the secular view is the idea expressed by Hick where God created us to grow from his image to his likeness. We were made imperfect so that he would continue this process. However Darwin who Dawkins supports would say we are at a stage in development of the 'survival of the fittest', where only the strong characteristics will survive and be passed down.

Yet some may argue that viewpoints are the same for the importance of this life as traditional views effect those that are secular in belief as for many will not like the antinomianist as many have a moral code and value for life similar to the religious view. Where by they will be influenced by culture and society in the importance of their life.

Karl Marx would suggest that it is wishful thinking on behalf of religious people to think there is an importance to this life. Moreover it is out of fear that people believe there is an importance to this life. For example Pascal uses the wager as an example by implying by believing in importance of this life will not miss out on perhaps the afterlife or other rewards. Yet Karl Marx refers to this as the 'opium' similar to Hares Blinks of religious people to say there is an importance to this life but wont except any evidence against it.

Materialists is another secular belief who argue that the mind and body are separate and both die therefore there is no purpose if they cease to exist. Another difference in view points especially in Christianity and secular is that Christians believe we were made to have a relationship with God in this life thus we have purpose along with a value and the evidence of God lies in nature. However secular ideas completely dismiss this view as there is no evidence or proof of God.

Therefore there is a huge difference in the ideas about the importance of life where religious beliefs are that we have a purpose, this life will lead us somewhere, we may be given duties. Which is completely different from there is no purpose, we are simply a stage in development thus we cease to exist at death as there is no afterlife. There are very few similar views of which will most likely to be influenced by traditional beliefs and the idea of morals and human values as to the importance of this life. One of this views may be that of the humanists who think we should make a difference so that we can be remembered yet the links are known as it is not stressing the present life merely once they have died. Therefore I hardly agree with the statement and am more likely to dismiss it.

Commentary

This is a top level 4 answer reflected by a mark of 19/30.

The answer opens with a clear statement of a point of view and states the key idea that for religious believers, life has a purpose.

The answer includes a range of ideas, but the way they are handled means that they are being listed and not, on the whole, being explained, which is what the level 5 descriptor requires. In fact, much of the answer consists of a series of statements which needed development, qualification or critical analysis to make them effective.

The organisation of ideas also means that the answer contradicts itself in places – for example it is stated that secular views give no purpose to life, and then that humanists do have a purpose.

The final paragraph draws the answer together, largely by summarising ideas that have already been stated, and the answer as whole is generally relevant. The quality of expression varies but meaning is generally clear.

Grade A

03 Examine the ideas of one or more religion(s) on the importance of the present life (45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Hinduism is a highly diverse religion referred to as a 'perifilating jungle', due to its abundance of variation. This variation arguably comes from the fact that there is no main Holy Book of teachings in Hinduism. However there are many universal beliefs about the afterlife and this present life's importance of determining this. Hinduism is a cyclical religion, believing in a cycle of death and reincarnation known as samsara. Samsara is seen to be a cycle of suffering and thus the goal of Hindus is to achieve liberation from this cycle. Escape is known as Moksha in which one becomes completely at one with Brahman.

In order to understand the importance of the present life one must first understand further the beliefs of Hinduism. Hindus believe that a human being consists of two realities that of the physical body and that of an immortal soul named the atman. This eternal atman is the reality which takes place in the cycle of samsara, for it is written 'as a person takes off worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so does the atman take off worn-out body and replace it with a new one' (Bhagavad and Gita). The atman is believed to be part of Brahman and thus in Moksha it is seen to be become 'a drop in the ocean'.

Moksha can only be achieved through the occurrence of good karma. This good karma is why this present life is so important in Hinduism. Hindus believe there is to be three ways in which one achieves good karma: fulfilling the duty (dharma) of one's caste level, fulfilling the duty of one's time of life, and through yoga.

In Hinduism there is seen to be a hierarchal system known as the caste system, within this their lies duties (dharma) for each individual to fulfil. Too there are duties defined by one's time in life, for example student or later a teacher. Through actively attempting to achieve the correct dharma one is said to build good karma.

Yoga is another way in which good karma can be achieved. There are three main karmas all with different purposes. Jhana yoga is the path of knowledge, in which one seeks deeper understanding Bhakti yoga is the yoga of devotion to God (Brahman), in which one is expected to purely devote themselves (their mind) to God. Lastly karma yoga is the yoga of good actions, in which one purposely attempts to go about doing self-less good deeds.

All of these paths to achieving good karma are achieved in one's present life. If a Hindu acts through these means, they are believed to be reincarnated to a high caste or with better circumstances. If a Hindu acts against these paths, they are believe to continually re-enter the cycle of samsara, never finding peace and unity with God. This is why this present life is so important.

Christianity, similarly, puts high importance on the present life. Christians take a soul-deciding understanding of the present life (much like Augustine). This is the idea that one's afterlife is determined purely by the actions done in this life.

Christianity is a diverse religion with many different ideas on the means by which one can achieve salvation in the after-life. Most Christians believe that everyone has the potential to be saved, as it is written 'For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, that all who believed in him do not perish for eternity'. Thus it is believed that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ along with God's grace are the reason why humanity can achieve salvation.

Protestants believe that this salvation is achieved in the present life through 3 means: sola scriptura, sola gracia and sola fides. They believe that the only authority is the Holy Bible and that everyone is given the grace of God. They also believe that it is only through faith and belief in God that salvation can be achieved: 'Through me is the only salvation' (Jesus Christ).

Roman Catholic believers have an alternative view of which actions are important in the present life. They believe that there should be a balance between scripture, the Holy Bible, and the teachings of the Church, the Catechism. They also believe that salvation is achieved through works. Works are actions and rites of passage performed by a believer, for example baptism. One of these works is the sacrament of confession. By the example of Jesus Christ, Catholics believe that priest have the ability to perform abolition of sins, in which one's sin that carry eternal consequences are forgiven.

These differences in the actions which make life important lead to a difference of opinion on the afterlife. Most Christians believe in a heaven referred to as a 'Kingdom of God' and many in a hell, said by Jesus Christ to be a 'lake of fire, the outer darkness'. Hell is seen by many to be a state of non-existence or eternal separation from God, rather than eternal punishment. It is the fear of this seperation which is why Christians put so much importance of this life.

Some Christians believe in inaugurated eschatology, in which they believe that salvation is given when one actively turns to God. This makes the present life highly important as they believe that during ones present life, providing they completely turn themselves to God and have total faith in him, one will be in the Kingdom of God. They believe that this kingdom will later be fully realised in death, however this life is highly important as it is where God begins salvation.

In conclusion the present life in both religions is important and this is shown by the Ten Commandments in Christianity which forbid murder, thus the shortening of this preset life and in the doctrine of AMHISA the action of non-violence in Hinduism which too could lead to the shortening of the present life.

Commentary

This is a level 6 answer, represented by a mark of 37/45.

It shows a commendable focus on the question. It takes a breadth approach which always means that there is a risk that the answer will reflect partially accurate generalisations, and while it does reflect diversity within both Hinduism and Christianity it is occasionally at the expense of accuracy.

The answer is mainly relevant – it refers back to the question at various points;

It is 'almost all accurate' and alternative views are 'satisfactorily explained'. The level of understanding shown is, however, clear rather than thorough – see for example the paragraph on 'soul deciding' and the contrast between Protestant and Catholic views.

As a well-informed answer naturally would, this draws on other aspects of the course of study – e.g. a background knowledge of Hinduism. In this easy there is also material relevant to another topic in this section – eschatology.

There is a clear and coherent organisation of information and while the spelling is not always accurate the meaning is clear. Candidates only penalise themselves when they fail to get their meaning across.

04 'Religious and secular ideas about the present life are essentially the same.'
How far do you agree? (30 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

There are a seemingly infinite amount of different religious and secular ideas about present life and therefore it logically follows that some will be similar and some will be very different dependant upon one's world view being explored.

Christians believe present life to be highly important because it is soul-deciding. They argue that your action in this present life directly affect one's afterlife. The idea of cryogenics, the freezing of the human body at the point of death for resuscitation later, also take this view on present life. However though they have the same view on the fact that one's actions can secure one's afterlife, they are not the same in their understanding on what this afterlife entails nor in the actions which should be taken.

Roman Catholics argue that it is through faith in a classical theist God along with works which ensure salvation in the form of bodily resurrection for eternity. Cryogenetics believe it is the actions of enrolling in a paying for the action of freezing in this life which determines one's afterlife as a resuscitated human being.

Materialists believe that all things are made of matter. Thus from our experience of matter being finite, all things must be finite. Therefore they believe there to be no eternal soul. A group of materialist known as existentialist have very different ideas about present life compared to that of many Christian believers. They state that the present life has no value, that there is no afterlife and that every person is solely alone. Existentialist argue that 'essence proceeds existence' without essence (a soul) human beings have no existence after death and thus there is no importance to this present life.

Similarly a religious view put forward by Irenaeus argues that the present life has little importance. This is no, as materialists would argue, because there is no after life, but because salvation is evitable for all. Irenaeus argues that this present life is soul-making, everyone in the world is made 'in the likeness of God' and therefore has the potential to be saved. Whether this salvation occurs in this life or in death does not matter for he argues that all will come into the likeness of God in the end.

Richard Dawkins, an evolutionary biologist has very different ideas to that of religious believers on the present life. He takes an atheist view of the present life and thus believes that there is no afterlife. Unlike Irenaeus Dawkins believes that due to the lack of afterlife, the present life is highly important. He argues that one should 'live life to the full' rather than fearing the consequences set out by the 'nonsense' which is religion. Similarly Karl Marx a German philosopher and founder of communism argues that this life is highly important. He believed that religion was the 'opium of the people' which caused people to become quietist and suffer oppression due to the promise of the afterlife. He had very different ideas on the present life as he argued it should be lived to conquer oppressors rather than to find one's own salvation (as religion teaches).

Humanists follow many Christian rules in terms of how one should live their present life with their golden rule reading 'live life respecting and loving 'one's neighbour'. Essentially the same words spoken by Jesus Christ. However unlike religious teachings which are often theocentric, humanism is anthropocentric. Thus this life is important in order to further humanity. Mark Twain a famous humanist wrote 'Endeavour to live life so that when you come to die even the undertaker will be sorry'. They believe that the only afterlife which can be achieved through the present life is through a legacy left by someone in the memories and hearts of their friends and families. Thus the importance of this present life is anthropocentric rather than theocentric.

In conclusion it appears that though there are made overlapping features within the ideas of both religion and secular groups, there are no two ideas which are exactly the same.

Commentary

This is a level 5 answer, represented by a mark of 23/30.

The answer offers a number of comparisons and contrasts between religious and secular views – a good tactic, and the point being supported by the evidence is sometimes clear. For example, the answer opens with contrasting examples of religious and secular ways of preparing for death and the conclusion, or view, being supported by the evidence is clear ‘they have the same view...actions can secure the afterlife’.

The sections on existentialism and Irenaeus are rather muddled, and how far the candidate understands them is unclear. Only some existentialist writers argue that the absence of an afterlife makes this life pointless, and the Irenaean theodicy does not dismiss the value of this life by arguing that it is not our only opportunity to achieve the likeness of God.

Positive secular views of the importance of this life from Dawkins and Marx are outlined and briefly contrasted with a religious view, and secular humanist views are outlined and shown to be both similar to and different from religious views.

The overall conclusion, given what has gone before, is a little weak. It would have been useful to include in the answer some analysis of the claim presented for discussion and to decide in this context what it would mean for religious and secular views to be ‘essentially’ the same.

Grade A*

- 01 **Examine the main religious and secular eschatological and apocalyptic teachings.**
(45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Eschatology is the study of the end of times. It is a part of the theology or philosophy concerned with the final events in the history of the world and the ultimate destiny of humanity. Apocalyptic teachings are those which 'unveil or uncover' that which is hidden and is of importance.

From a secular viewpoint beliefs about eschatology can be separated into three categories; the end of the universe, the end of the world and the end of life on earth. When assessing the end of the universe scientists believe there are three possible scenarios for the destiny of the universe. Scientists claim that the universe has been continually expanding since the Big Bang which occurred 15 billion years ago. If the universe continues to expand forever it will gradually be pulled apart into a cold desolate wasteland of dying or dead stars and black holes. This is called the big freeze. If the universe stops stretching and springs back on itself it will shrink until galaxies begin to collide, causing the Big Crunch which will be terminated in a huge black hole. Finally if the universe gradually slows down to a halt, a state of precise balance will be achieved and cosmic catastrophe will be generated. Space will be saved for a period of time. Eventually the universe will succumb to the big freeze.

When talking of the earth and life upon it, scientists believe that in four billion years the Sun will expand and engulf the earth. At the same time our nearest galactic neighbour Andromeda will begin to crash in to our galaxy, the Milky Way. If life on earth is to survive it will have to escape into space.

Frazer Cain illustrates his view upon eschatology in his article 'will the earth survive when the Sun becomes a red giant?' He claims that the Sun will expand to a size large enough to be a red giant, in the future. It will consume the earth and its orbit. Astronomers Schroder and Smith claim the earth will not survive this as once the Earth is in the Sun's atmosphere it will collide with gas particles, its orbit will decay and spiral outwards.

There are many scientists who claim that climate change will be the result of the end of life on Earth as if the average temperature of the earth increases by 6 degrees Celsius it could cause mass migration and most of the earth will become uninhabitable. Such scientists include Nick Brooks a research associate at the university of East Anglia. He claims at the end of this century it is likely that the amount of greenhouse gases will have doubled and the average temperature would have increased by 2 degrees Celsius. This could lead to global food insecurity, collapse of current social systems, mass migration and conflict over resources. He claims that the risk of this occurring within the next 7 years is high. The causes of climate change are both manmade and natural.

When talking of apocalyptic teachings from a secular viewpoint, climate change also plays a primary role. It is believed by many scientists that we are already experiencing events of the apocalypse. Many in the over developed countries such as the UK and the USA may not have felt the extreme effects of this yet however those in third world countries believe they are living through events of the apocalypse today. Such people may include the sufferers of the earthquake in Haiti and more recently the sufferers of the tsunami in Japan. In addition to this secular viewpoint on the apocalypse appear to have crept in mainstream thinking and is illustrated in the increasing production of movies on the issues such as 'the day after tomorrow', the 'dark age' and '2D years after'. Many believe the increase of these films of an apocalyptic nature are due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 in which the USA noticed their vulnerability and that they were no longer invincible. Hence this event could have acted as the catalyst for the production of these subsequent movies.

In religion Christianity when talking of eschatology it must be stressed are focused with the fate of humanity rather than any particular individual. They claim that the son of man will act as an 'eschatological judge'. The Christian Church reflects many varying opinions on this. The Bible suggests there will be a second coming of Christ 'parousia' and even Jesus himself speaks of his return. The Bible suggests that prior to this the Gospel should be preached to all nations. There is reference to the conversion of Israel however many do not think this implies that all Jews must convert to Christianity. When the end times are approaching there will be an increase in sin and many will fall away from the Church. It will be a time of 'great tribulation'.

The antichrist will come and this is believed to be an individual, who through, the ages has been associated with various different people. There will be signs and reminders when the end times are approaching (famines, wars and droughts). Although many think the second coming is innate the Bible highlights how even the Son of Man does not know when this event will occur. When Jesus returns it will be a bodily resurrection so he can be seen and truth be a glorious and triumphant return in which the clouds of heaven will be the chariot. Jesus will return to introduce the future age through the resurrection of the dead and the final Judgement.

In the Bible there is also reference to a millennium which will either proceed or follow the Second Coming of Christ. There are several views upon this including pre-millennialism and post-millennialism. Post-millennialists believe the second coming will occur after the millennium and in this period the Gospel will be more effective than it is now. It will be a time of great blessing, peace and righteousness. Post-millennialism claims that Jesus will return and re-establish the kingdom of land and rule in Jerusalem for a thousand years. The need to be prepared for the second coming is reflected in the parable of the foolish virgins and the parable of the faithful servant which has been the basis of many hymns (Philip Doddridges hymns).

There will be a resurrection of the wicked and the glorious and after this Jesus will judge all on the day of Judgement. All will stand before the seat of judgment and there are different views about the state of the wicked and state of the glorious. Generally it is thought that the state of the wicked entails eternal separation from God causing pain and anguish, whereas the state of the glorious or righteous is a new creation of heaven in which one will have perfect communion with God.

In Christianity, Apocalyptic Literature plays a large role in beliefs and teachings. It was particularly written in the 1st and 2nd centuries by the Jews, when they were encountering persecution. It acted as a means of communication through symbolic language in which they could talk freely.

The characteristics of such literature is that it is written, it is about the future, it contains many riddles and it is pseudonymous. The two main forms of apocalyptic literature in the Bible are Daniel from the Old Testament and Revelations from the New Testament. The book contains a lot of symbolic language numbers such as 10 which represents completeness and 3 ½ representing incompleteness as well as 6 including the biblical number of evil. Colours are also included – red being war, green/grey being death and black being lack of something.

Revelations was written in the time where Christians were being persecuted by the Roman Empire, referred to as Babylon throughout. The temple at Jerusalem was destroyed and Christianity lost the protection of Judaism. This could have been under rule of Emperor Nero or Emperor Domitian.

The beliefs of the apocalypse with regards to Christianity primarily depends on your interpretation of such literature. If you take it as a literal account you could approach it in a quietest or actual way. Many believe it was literature only relevant to those of the time giving them hope in times of despair and telling them to persevere. Others claim it is 'a manifesto for social change' such as radical eschatologists and William Blake say and so can evoke people to creating a more just order.

Commentary

The answer is borderline level 7 – reflected in a mark of 41/45.

Its greatest strength is that it is very well-informed; its weakness, which is related to that strength, is that it is quite narrative in style and therefore limited in examination of the ideas presented. It is hoped that essays will become more analytical in style as centres become used to the demands of the paper. This mark shows that answers do not have to be 'perfect' to score highly.

The candidate illustrates both scientific and popular interest in the end of the universe, the end of planet earth and the end of life on earth. This amount of detail is not necessary, but the information is accurate and presented far more coherently than in many similar answers. The transition to a section on the Apocalypse is not effective, but it soon becomes clear what is being referred to. The account of some Christian beliefs reflects something of the diversity of views within Christianity, but here as elsewhere in the essay, there is some confusion in ideas, in this case between pre and post Millennialism. An examination of these views, once they had been briefly outlined, might have considered the reasons for these different interpretations.

The section dealing with the Apocalyptic literature has become a description of that literature rather than of its teaching. In this first part of the question, what the literature is understood to teach about the 'end days' is relevant while the 'true' nature of the literature would be best considered in the second part of the question. In this candidate's work the transition into the second part of the question is evident at the end of the first, and it is worth stressing that no credit can be carried over from one to the other.

- 02 'Eschatological and apocalyptic teaching has no value for people today.'**
Assess this view. (30 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

Whether a person believes this statement is true or false will depend a lot on how they interpret literature from religion on the issue and whether they believe the issue of eschatology and the apocalypse is even worth talking about as we cannot prove what will happen in the future.

The teachings of eschatology and the apocalypse will be valuable to those who are religious and interpret revelations as a literal account from God, timetabling the events of what will occur. This may cause different responses from different people in society. For example it could evoke activism or quietist behaviour.

An example to who such literature would be relevant to would be leader of the Branch Davidians, David Koresh. He adopted a quietest approach and in 1993 when the Branch Davidian ranch just outside Waco in Texas was burned down, Koresh and his cult saw this as part of the final events of the world and that they must accept their ultimate destiny. Thus it is fulfilling prophecy. This shows the significance such teachings has had on people in society not too far in the past. There are those who claim these teachings are of importance on a secular basis and from the viewpoint of science as they stress the need to change behaviour of society today. Society is causing over consumption of natural resources which are becoming more and more exhausted every day. Thus scientists such as Dr Glen Barry claim that such literature and teachings can be used to evoke feelings of anxiousness and fear in society causing them to evaluate their consumption of resources. Many scientists claim that if these teachings had been used years in the past, the overall state of climate change would have been better than it is currently. These teachings are also creeping into mainstream thinking illustrated in the increasing number of movies made based around the subject of the apocalypse.

Others would suggest that these teachings provide people dealing with events today to persevere through them as there is hope after this.

In addition many such as Martin Luther King have used this as a basis for fighting injustice and creating a more just society. Consequently literature and teaching of this nature could act as a manifesto for social change as reflected through a radically egalitarian viewpoint.

Conversely however there are those who believe that these teachings are of no value to people today as they are relevant for those whom they were written for. This particularly relates to apocalyptic literature as it was written for the Jews who had several waves of persecution and the Christians who were also persecuted by the Roman Empire. The language and symbolism can only be understood by them and with us trying to relate this to society today, we are losing the actual nature, purpose and the message of these teachings which was a message of those that the 'Day of the Lord' will come one day and good will overpower evil.

Similarly people may believe it is of no value as eschatology and the apocalypse is noticed as being an event, which will occur very far in the future and so will not affect many of the people in the modern society. Hence they are not focused upon it and do not believe it is of significant value to them as it will not affect them.

Also people may think that the persecution of today's people is similar to that of the people experiencing persecution in Revelations for example the people in Iraq under the rule of Saddham Hussain and so these teachings are of value as they can be applied and provide a sense of hope. However some could argue that societies in modern day are completely different to those in the past and particularly to those in the 1st and 2nd centuries. Hence these teaching can be of no value as they cannot be applied to such different situations.

Overall in conclusion to claim that eschatological and apocalyptic teachings have no value for people today is invalid as even if they are not used as literal beliefs about what will occur at the end of this world or universe they could still act as a tool or device for changing the attitude and behaviour of people in the modern society who overconsume the world's natural resources and could lead to a scientific prediction of the end times through climate change.

Commentary

This is a level 6 answer, reflected in a mark of 26/30.

It is well constructed and focused on the issue. It discusses different views, and reasons through to a conclusion on many of them. The material about the 'true, nature of and audience for Christian Apocalyptic literature is of direct relevance here.

At times it asserts points without providing supporting evidence/reasons – for example, the material relating to Martin Luther King which is not supported, and some points are rather speculative /general – for example the references to the situation in Iraq and 'modern day societies' at the end of the answer.

The discussion clearly relates to the broader context – referencing, for example, politics and films.