



SWGS KS5 VOCABULARY LIST: RELIGIOUS STUDIES

This list consolidates key vocabulary in the subject, making it easier for you to know, understand and use it accurately. This may be provided as a pre-filled glossary or a word list to complete. Your teachers will use this vocabulary frequently, and you will encounter it in reading. You will be expected to learn meanings and spellings.

Christianity

Agape	The Greek word for 'unconditional love', and the basis for the Golden Rule for Christians, and of Jesus' sacrificial crucifixion.
Allegorical	A means of reading the Bible in a non-literal way, or in other words that the Bible is not to be taken as absolutely factual, but rather that Christians should read the Bible for the deeper meaning hidden within its texts and stories.
Anglican	A member of the Anglican Church, or the adjective used to describe Anglican practices or beliefs. The Church of England is one part of the Anglican Communion.
Anointing of the Sick	One of the seven sacraments for Roman Catholics (and some Anglo-Catholics, or Church of England Christians who use the seven sacraments as part of their worship), where the priest will use oil to anoint the head (and/or hands) of a person who is sick or suffering. Can accompany the laying on of hands, where the priest physically touches the head (or shoulder) of the person and prays
Apostle	From the Greek word meaning 'emissary', usually used to refer to the Twelve Disciples.
Apostolic Succession	A Roman Catholic belief, shared by Anglo-Catholics, that those who are ordained as deacons, priests, and bishops share a physical link back to the first apostles through the laying on of hands which occurs during ordination (being made a deacon or priest) or consecration (being made a bishop).
Arianism	The belief of Arius that Jesus was not fully divine, nor co-eternal with God the Father, but rather was created or made by God the Father at some point before the creation of the world.
Atonement	Making amends for sin, usually referring to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross which Christians believe was the ultimate act of atonement, to remove all of humanity's sin.

Baptism	The rite of initiation for Christians, in which water is used to symbolise the washing away of sin and to welcome the person into the Christian church. For some Christians (such as Roman Catholics), this is usually paedobaptism, which is the baptising of a baby or child usually by pouring a small amount of water over their head, at a font, three times in the name of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Other Christians (such as Baptists) prefer adult baptism, or believer's baptism, which usually involves full immersion of the person into a baptistery or pool.
Bible	The holy book for Christianity, made up of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is found in Judaism and Islam in various formats, whereas the New Testament focuses on the life and works of Jesus, and various letters (or Epistles) written by early Christians about the new Christian faith.
Biblical criticism	The academic exercise of examining the authorship of different aspects of the Bible to identify any potential bias or context from the writer(s).
Bishop	The most senior order of ordination (above deacons and priests), who are a focal point of unity for their diocese, and are able to perform confirmations and ordinations.
Calvinism	The doctrine of Christianity which follows the teachings of Calvin, including predestination and sola scriptura.
Canon	The texts which are found in authorised versions of the Bible.
Catechism	The Roman Catholic Church's summary of its doctrine and moral code.
Catholic	If spelt with a small 'c', catholic means universal, and can refer to the worldwide church. With a capital 'C', Catholic refers to an adherent to Roman Catholicism, or the adjective used to describe Roman Catholic practice and doctrine.
Celibacy	Refraining from sexual intercourse or other sexual activity, for example to fulfil a vow made as a religious monk, nun, or Roman Catholic priest.
Christology	The study of the identity of Jesus Christ, and his status as divine, human, the Messiah, and/or the Son of God for Christians.
Confession	One of the seven sacraments for Roman Catholics (and some Anglo-Catholics, or Church of England Christians who use the seven sacraments as part of their worship), where a Christian will tell the priest their sins, will receive advice and/or a penance (something to do to make amends). The priest will usually absolve their sins by pronouncing absolution.

Covenant	An agreement between God and humans.
Creatio ex nihilo	The Latin for 'creation from nothing', referring to the belief that God created the universe from nothing as an act of omnipotence and grace (love).
Creationism	The belief that God created the world according to the accounts in Genesis. Progressive creationism (also known as old earth creationism) is the belief that the 'days' in the first Genesis account might refer to 'epochs' and not 24 hour segments of time. Six day creationism (also known as young earth creationism) is the more conservative Christian belief that the 'days' in Genesis refer to actual 24 hour segments, and that the earth's timespan since creation can be traced through Old Testament ages of humans all the way to the time of Jesus, making the earth between 6000 and 7000 years old.
Deism	The belief, prevalent in Process Theology, that God is not fully omnipotent, but rather is confined by the laws of the universe and must act in accordance with them.
Denomination	A branch of Christianity, for example Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, or the various Orthodox churches.
Ecumenism	Also known as inter-denominational dialogue, this refers to different denominations of Christians trying to find common ground and unity.
Epistle	One of the letters in the New Testament from a writer to one of the early groups of 'Christians' with guidance on how to live in line with the new teachings of Jesus.
Eschatology	The study of the 'end times', or of the end of the world, which Christians believe will occur, and which is depicted in the book of Revelation (also known as the book of the Apocalypse).
Eucharist	From the Greek for 'thanksgiving', it is another word for Holy Communion or mass, the central practice of most Christian worship, involving the eating of bread (and, for some Christians, the drinking of wine).
Fundamentalism	The belief that the Bible is inerrant and contains the exact truth of God. Fundamentalist Christians will, for example, be against homosexuality due to its outlawing in the book of Leviticus, which must be the infallible word of God.
Gospel	An account of the life of Jesus Christ, meaning 'good news'. In the (canonical) Bible, there are four gospels, three of which are similar and known as the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The fourth

	Gospel, John, is written in a more poetic style and is believed by most biblical critics to have been written later than the other three gospels.
Immanent	The belief that God intervenes and is active in the world, for example by performing miracles or through the Incarnation of God, Jesus, for Christians.
Immortality of the soul	The belief that, when a person dies, the immaterial soul will continue to exist, either within or outside of a body.
Incarnation	'God becoming flesh', for Christians this refers to the birth of Jesus as the incarnation of God, being both fully divine and fully human.
Inter-faith dialogue	Different religions (rather than different Christian denominations) coming together to discuss matters and to potentially find common ground between them.
Ius ad bellum	A part of St Thomas Aquinas' 'Just War Theory', ius ad bellum refers to the criteria that must be satisfied before a war can be declared and be considered justified and moral (for example, it must be declared by a legitimate authority).
Ius in bello	The second aspect of St Thomas Aquinas' 'Just War Theory', ius in bello refers to the criteria that must be followed during warfare in order for it to continue being justified and moral (for example, trying to avoid harming innocent civilians).
Justification by faith	The belief that Christians achieve salvation and can enter heaven through their faith in Jesus and God, rather than due to their actions. This relates to the doctrine of sola fides.
Justification by works	A member of the Anglican Church, or the adjective used to describe Anglican practices or beliefs. The Church of England is one part of the Anglican Communion.
Literalism	A way of reading the Bible as the exact words of God, rather than symbolically as a more representative or analogical text.
Liturgy	The form in which Christians worship, usually in a Church, and which can follow a set structure and wording.
Luther	Martin Luther, a prominent figure in the Protestant Reformation, who whilst a Catholic monk wrote 'The 95 Theses' which outlined his criticisms of the Roman Catholic Church's practices (for example, around the selling of indulgences) and nailed these to the castle church in Wittenberg.

Messiah	Literally this means 'anointed one', referring to the idea of the Messiah being a king (even today the monarch of the United Kingdom is anointed when they are crowned king or queen). For Jews, the Messiah will be a king and/or warrior figure who will usher in a new Messianic Age. For Christians, Jesus was the anticipated Messiah (the chosen one of God), and they now await his return or second coming.
Minister	The title given to leaders of some Protestant Christian denominations who tend to be less liturgical in their worship.
Monotheism	The belief that there is only one God. For Christianity, the complexity centres around how God can be both Triune (that is, in 3 persons as part of the Trinity) as well as monotheist.
Omnibenevolent	'All loving', Christians believe that God is omnibenevolent and is a personal God, caring deeply for humanity which he has made in his own image.
Omnipotent	'All powerful', Christians believe that God is omnipotent, for example he was able to create all of creation from nothing (or ex nihilo) as recounted in the Book of Genesis.
Omnipresent	'All present', or a God who is present in all places at all times.
Omniscient	'All knowing', Christians believe that God is omniscient and is aware of all things, be they past, present, or future.
Pluralism	The belief that all religions describe and worship the same God, just in different ways and from different perspectives. All religions have access to the Truth of God.
Prayer	A means by which Christians attempt to interact with God, either in silence or aloud, and either alone or in a group. The Lord's Prayer is an example of a set prayer that many Christians say in order to attempt a connection with God.
Predestination	Calvin argued that God, due to his omniscience and sense of justice, must be aware of those Christians who, already, are predestined to enter heaven as the Elect, and those who are predestined to enter hell. God predestines this from before birth.
Priest	In ancient civilisations, the priest was the person authorised to offer sacrifices (of plants or animals) to the gods. For Christians, particularly within Roman Catholicism and parts of the Church of England, a priest is the man (although for some Anglicans this can be a woman) who represents Jesus at the altar and offers his sacrifice again for the

	congregation. The priest is also the figure able to offer the sacraments for these Christians, and would have been ordained by a bishop.
Prosperity Gospel	A belief that God gifts those who are faithful to him with prosperity, for example money, wealth, and status. This is particularly prominent within various Christian denominations in the United States of America.
Resurrection	The raising of the body back to life; Christians believe that Jesus was resurrected on the 3rd day after his crucifixion. Christians differ in their views on whether their own resurrections after death will be bodily and physical or else more metaphysical and spiritual. All Christians believe in the resurrection of the body, as outlined in the Nicene Creed.
Revelation	Something that reveals God to humans. Special revelation is direct, for example a miracle or a vision of God. General revelation is indirect, for example looking at a sunset and getting a numinous experience of there being a God or something greater than yourself. Different Christians believe that God reveals himself in different ways and forms, including Jesus, the Bible, preaching, the sacraments, healings, prayer, miracles, and the creation of the world itself.
Salvation	'Being saved', and therefore able to enter heaven. Christians believe that Jesus is the source of salvation as the Saviour and the way to conquer evil, resist temptation, and join him in the Kingdom of God.
Sanctity of Life	The belief that all life is sacred and belongs to God.
Secular	Something that is not connected with religion, nor impacted by religious or spiritual concepts.
Sin	An action that goes against the laws of God, for example by not following the Golden Rule or the Decalogue (10 Commandments).
Sola Fide	'Only faith'; the belief that a Christian is justified (shown to be righteous and a good Christian) before God only by their faith in him and Jesus, rather than by their actions or 'works'.
Sola Scriptura	'Only Scripture'; all that Christians need in order to understand God, Jesus, and their faith can be found in the Bible, which contains the inerrant words of God and must be the sole source of authority for Christians.
Soteriology	Technically this is the 'study of salvation', or the ways by which Christians can go to heaven after death.
Soul	The metaphysical aspect of a person, according to Christianity. Some Christians believe that the soul lives on after death even though the body dies (a dualist approach). The concept of the soul links to the

	accounts of Creation where God makes humans in his own image (the Imago Dei, Genesis 1.26) and where God breathes life into the body of Adam (Genesis 2.7)
Stewardship	The opposite of Dominion, Stewardship is the belief that the world has been created by God and that humans are now its stewards or caretakers, who have a duty to look after it (rather than exploit/conquer it) and hand it back to God at the end of time.
Theodicy	An argument that attempts to defend God against the Problem of Evil and Suffering.
Theology	From the Greek 'theos' (God) and 'logos' (word), so 'talking about God', or the study of God.
Transcendent	A characteristic of God that refers to him being separate from the world and humans in intellectual terms; he is beyond human comprehension and understanding.
Transubstantiation	The belief that during the Liturgy, when Holy Communion is being celebrated, the bread and wine take on the real presence of Jesus. This is mainly held by Roman Catholics, some Anglo-Catholic parts of the Church of England, and various Orthodox Christians.
Trinity	The three persons of the one God in Christianity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christians believe in a Triune God.
Universal Salvation	The belief that all people will attain salvation and be with God in heaven in the fullness of time. This is also known as universalism.

Philosophy

Analogical	Analogy is an inference where information or meaning is transferred from one subject to another based on similarities or comparison. An analogical argument relies on analogy to show that due to similarities between the two subjects some further conclusion can be inferred.
A priori	Claims that rely on a logical deduction and not on sense experience, they are 'prior to' or 'before' sense experience. For example, the truth claim of the statement 'a triangle has three sides', follows from the definition of the term, not from knowledge of things in the world.

Contingency & necessity	A contingent truth or being depends on some other factor it could have been otherwise. Necessity implies that something is required, or always true; a fundamental and essential thing.
Proof	Evidence or argument establishing a fact or the truth of a statement. In philosophy, this means there is sufficient evidence or argument to support the truth of a proposition.
Evil	That which is contrary to God's will; cause of suffering; the moral opposite of good
Natural evil	Cause of suffering within the natural world including disaster, disease, decay and death. Sometimes referred to as suffering, this is evil which is not the consequence of specific human action and humans generally have little or no control over it.
Moral evil	Intentional human action (commission) or inaction (omission) that results in suffering, e.g. murder.
Soul making	A concept that describes how suffering helps humans develop morally.
Theodicy	A defence of the justice and goodness of God in the light of evil.
Free will	The ability to act at one's own discretion. This results in having moral responsibility for our free choices.
Corporeal vision	A form of empirical religious experience, i.e. they are experienced through the senses (e.g. sight, touch, and hearing).
Imaginative vision	Vision seen in the mind, usually through a dream experience.
Intellectual vision	A vision without any visual image, an 'illumination of the soul' which is seen with the 'eye' of the mind. Those who experience them claim to 'see things as they really are.' They are hard to describe using language as they are a form of mystical experience.
Numinous experience	An experience of the holy; something wholly other than the natural world and beyond comprehension. Involves the power or presence of a

	deity. Otto describes them as 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' ('a tremendous and fascinating mystery').
Mystical experiences	Mystical experiences or systematic meditation, which cause a heightened awareness of the divine or an ultimate reality.
Religious experience	A personal experience of the divine.
Credulity	The willingness to believe in something in the absence of reasonable proof.
Testimony	The reports of witnesses.
Faith	A belief in something or somebody. In terms of religious faith can also imply an attitude of trust or assent to unproved assertions.
Reason	The use of logic to come to a conclusion.
Cognitive language	Language which conveys a knowledge claim or factual information which can be shown to be true or false depending on evidence.
Non-cognitive language	Language about which it is inappropriate to ask whether it is true or false in a factual sense. This includes, for instance, statements of emotions or moral claims.
Verification principle	Idea that the meaning of a statement lies in the method of its verification—so that any statement that cannot, even if only in theory, be verified, is meaningless.
Falsification principle	Belief that the meaningfulness of a statement lies in the method of its falsification. A sentence is only factually significant if there is some evidence to falsify it.
Symbolic	A view of religious language which sees the words representing a reality to which they point, and in which they participate, but which they cannot describe.
Eschatological Verification	A phrase coined by Hick for the idea that some statements will be proved true after death, such as claims about an afterlife. 'Eschatological' refers to the end times or 'eschaton'
Miracle	An unexpected event demonstrating the specific power of the divine or supernatural. For Hume, this always entails a breach of the natural laws of physics, but Aquinas and others, emphasize the religious meaning of

	such events saying that there is no requirement for natural laws to be broken.
Realist	Scientific theories can give us true descriptions of the world and knowledge of things that we believe to exist but cannot observe. The world is 'mind-independent' and exists in and of itself regardless of our beliefs. about it.
Anti-realist	The view that we cannot have knowledge of a mind-independent world, as any phenomena we observe are then interpreted through the mind. Therefore, to speak of an unobservable 'something' such as the power of the divine has no cognitive content.
Soul	The 'essence' of the person. The nature of the soul is much debated but it is generally considered to be spiritual rather physical and it is usually distinguished from the body and the mind.
Via negative	The 'negative way', mainly associated with Thomas Aquinas. He argues that human language is inadequate in describing God; therefore, we can only speak of him in terms of what he is not.
Blik	Term used by R. M. Hare to describe a religious frame of reference within which everything is interpreted
Language games	The name given by Wittgenstein to his claim language has meaning within a particular social context. Each context is governed by rules, in the same way that a game is governed by rules. The meaning of a statement is defined by the context in which it is used.

Ethics

Ethics	This term comes from the Greek word ethikos, which in its root form (ethos) means custom or habit. It refers to a branch of moral philosophy that aims to determine the meaning of right and wrong, and subsequently the correct way to act.
Applied ethics	The application of normative ethical principles to practical situations and moral dilemmas.
Normative ethics	Ethical theories which inform people how they should act and which ethical norms to follow.
Deontological	Any ethical theory which argues that the rightness or wrongness of an act lies in doing the right thing because it is the right thing in itself – regardless of any consequences. It is judged by whether the act adheres to specific duties, rules and obligations.
Teleological	Any ethical theory which argues the rightness or wrongness of an action according to its consequences. The term is derived from the Greek 'telos' meaning 'end' or 'purpose'.
Proportionalism	Idea based on the premise that the Natural Law could be laid aside if there was a proportional reason for doing so, e.g. greater good could be served by doing it, in that particular scenario.

Embryo research	Scientific research using embryonic cells, for example stem cell research.
Cloning	The process produces genetically identical individuals of an organism, or copies of cells or DNA fragments which is also known as 'somatic transfer'.
'Designer' babies	Common term used to describe a human embryo which has been genetically modified. This would be following guidelines set by the parent or scientist, to produce desirable traits such as eliminating a genetic disorder.
Abortion	A medical procedure to terminate a pregnancy, normally before the foetus can survive independently.
Voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide	Euthanasia literally translates from the Greek meaning 'a good death'. It describes a medical procedure by which either a person terminates his or her own life because of extreme pain or suffering, or the life of another person is either allowed to come to an end or is brought to an end with the assistance of others, because of a critical medical condition. 'Voluntary' means there is consent and a choice made by the person.
Capital punishment	Punishment for a crime via the death penalty.
Animal experimentation	The use of non-human animals in experiments for medical or scientific progress.
Intensive farming	Also known as factory farming, this is a production-focused approach towards farm animals which aims to maximize output, while minimizing production costs. Often associated with intensive breeding programmes, hormone modification and cramped conditions.
Blood sports	A sport involving the hunting, wounding, or killing of animals.
Meta ethics	Considers the meaning and justification of ethics. Meta ethics considers the meaning of terms such as 'good' and 'right'.

Naturalism	A meta-ethical view that morality is defined by facts about nature or human nature.
Non-naturalism	The meta-ethical view that knowledge is a factual property known through means outside 'naturalism', for example by intuition or God's commands.
Intuitionism	A form of ethical non-naturalism. The meta-ethical view that moral knowledge is a property known by intuition.
Moral responsibility	To be morally responsible requires freedom of choice. It is the status of morally deserving praise, blame, reward, or punishment for an act or omission, in accordance with moral obligations.
Libertarianism	Belief that human beings are ultimately free moral agents despite environmental and other limitations.
Hard determinism	Belief that as all events are causally determined and the result of previous events, choices and actions, therefore human free will is an illusion.
Compatibilism	Idea sometimes called 'soft determinism' as it maintains that human free will is to differing degrees compatible with determinism.
Conscience	The faculty said to enable us to make moral decisions, by giving us a sense of right and wrong.
Adultery	A married person engaging in voluntary sexual intercourse with a person who is not their spouse.
Doctrine of the Mean	Aristotle's belief that developing the moral virtues depended on determining the 'middle way' between the vices of excess and deficiency.
Free Will	The ability to decide choices freely without that choice being predetermined. Therefore, the moral agent is responsible for those choices.
Utilitarianism	A teleological, normative ethical theory. An example of ethical naturalism that identifies the 'good' in human experience is what causes pleasure and 'wrong' is what brings pain.