

St Joseph's Sixth Form College



Religious Studies Summer 2026 Transition Work

The EDUQAS A-LEVEL:

Christianity

Theme 1 – Religious figures and sacred texts	Theme 2 – Religious concepts and Religious life	Theme 3 – Social Developments in Religious Thought	Theme 4 – Religious practices that shape religious identity
Jesus' birth	The Nature of God	Attitudes to wealth	Baptism
Jesus' resurrection	The Trinity	Migration and Christianity in the UK	Eucharist
The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority	Atonement	Feminist Theology	Festivals
The early church	Faith and Works	Challenges from secularisation	Unification
Two views of Jesus	The community of believers	Challenges from science	Religious Experience
	Key moral principles	Challenges from pluralism and diversity within religion	Poverty and Injustice – Liberation Theology

Philosophy

Theme 1 – Arguments for the Existence of God	Theme 2 – Challenges to religious belief	Theme 3 – Religious Experience	Theme 4 – Religious Language
Inductive arguments – cosmological and teleological	The problem of evil and suffering	The nature of religious experiences	Inherent problems with religious language
Challenges to inductive arguments	Religious responses to the problem of evil – Augustinian and Irenaean type theodicies	Mystical experiences – William James and Rudolf Otto	Religious language as cognitive but meaningless
Deductive arguments – ontological	Sigmund Freud	Challenges to the objectivity and authenticity of religious experiences	Religious language as non-cognitive and analogical
Challenges to deductive arguments	Carl Jung	Influence of religious experience on religious practice and faith	Religious language as non-cognitive and mythical
	New Atheism		Miracle Religious language as non-cognitive and symbolic
			Language games

Ethics

Theme 1 – Ethical Thought	Theme 2 – Deontological Ethics	Theme 3 – Teleological Ethics	Theme 4 – Determinism and Freewill
Divine Command Theory	Aquinas' Natural Law	Situation Ethics	Religious Free will – Pelagius and Arminius
Virtue Ethics	Application of Natural Law – Abortion and Voluntary Euthanasia	Application of Situation Ethics – Homosexuality and Polyamory	Libertarianism – Philosophical, Scientific and Psychological
Ethical egoism	Modern Updates to Natural Law – John Finnis and Hoose's Proportionalism	Bentham's Act Utilitarianism & Mill's Rule Utilitarianism	Religious Predestination – Augustine and John Calvin
Meta Ethics – Ethical Naturalism, Intuitionism and Emotivism	Application to Capital Punishment and Immigration	Application of Utilitarianism – Animal experimentation and Nuclear Weapons	Hard Determinism – Philosophical, Scientific and Psychological

Christianity I: Interpreting Biblical passages

This will enable you to:

- Get up to speed with some of the passages of the New Testament that you are required to study as part of the first Christianity topic of the course.
- Understand the meaning behind the texts / issues connected with the texts.
- Start the process of trying to learn the texts by heart, as you will not have access to the texts in an examination.

What you have to do:

- Read the texts thoroughly and learn the passages in preparation for studying the texts in lessons.
- On A4 paper, complete the following lists of questions that are based the texts. Keep them safe for when you come to need them!
- Your answers will form the basis of a test in the first week back in September...

Matthew 1:18 to 2:23

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

1. 1:18 - What happened in this family? What were the unusual things that happened?
2. 1:19 – What do you learn about Joseph? What did he want to do? Why did he want to do that? What do you think about what he wanted to do?
3. 1:20 – What happened? What should Joseph do? Why should he do that? What was unusual about that?
4. 1:21 – What did the messenger tell Joseph? Why should Joseph call the baby 'Jesus'? What does the name 'Jesus' mean?
5. 1:22 – Why did all those things happen? What do you think about that?
6. 1:23 – The prophet had said that something would happen. What would happen? Look at the verses in the whole of chapter 1. Which verse(s) are about the virgin that would have a baby? Which verses are about 'a son'? Which verses are about his name?
7. 1:24-5 – What happened? What do you learn?

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." 7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." 9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

8. 2:1 – What do you learn about where Jesus was born? Who was the king? What do you learn about the wise men?
9. 2:2 – Who was the king that the wise men mention here? What was the question? Why did they ask that question?
10. 2:3 – What happened? What might be the reason why that happened?
11. 2:4 – What did Herod do? What might be the reason why he did that? What do you think about his question?
12. 2:5 – What was the answer from the chief priests and the other men?
13. 2:6 – What had God's servant said about the Christ? What is the name of God's people?
14. 2:7 – What did Herod do? What might be the reason why he kept it a secret? What was important about the time when the star appeared?
15. 2:8 – make a list of Herod's instructions. Why should the wise men search in that way? What did Herod say they should tell him?
16. 2:9-10 – What did the wise men do? What happened to the star? What was their reaction to that?
17. 2:11 – Make a list of the things that the wise men did. Whom did they see? What was their reaction to that?
18. 2:12 – What happened?

The Escape to Egypt

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,

15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." 16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: 18 "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

19. 2:13 – Make a list of the things that happened. What do you learn about Joseph? What should Joseph do? What do you learn about Herod?
20. 2:14 – What happened?
21. 2:15 – How long did Joseph and his family stay in Egypt? Why was that?
22. 2:16 – Make a list of the things you learn about Herod. What sort of person was he? What would happen to all the small boys in or near Bethlehem?
23. 2:17 – Whose words became true? What do you learn about this person?
24. 2:18 – What do you learn from Jeremiah's poem? What does it tell you about the events in 2:16?

The Return to Nazareth

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." 21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, 23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

25. 2:19 – Make a list of those that Matthew mentions here. What happened?
26. 2:20 – What were the instructions? Who were the people that Matthew mentions in this verse?
27. 2:21 – What did Joseph do?
28. 2:22 – What happened? What do you learn about Archelaus? What might be the reason why Joseph was so afraid?
29. 2:23 – What happened? What do you learn about that?

Further tasks

Look up and read the version of Jesus' birth narrative in Luke's Gospel (1:26 to 2:40). If you do not have a Bible, use www.biblegateway.com

Write a summary paragraph to compare the birth narratives in Matthew 1:18-2:23 (see above) and Luke 1:26-2:40 (describe the similarities and differences).

Christianity II: Learning new vocabulary and phrases

Find the definition of the following keywords. You may need to use internet resources to help you.

Birth Narrative	
Gospel	
Proof text	
Benedictus	
Magi	
Magnificat	
<i>Nunc Dimittis</i>	
Annunciation	
Historicity	
Chronology	
Holy Spirit	
Betrothed	
Redaction criticism	
Gentiles	
Hypostatic Union	
Incarnation	
Kenosis	
Preincarnate	
Substantial presence	

Philosophy I: Truth and Theology

READ: Philosophy comes from the Greek word 'philosophia', or 'love of wisdom'. This love might be seen as inborn in the human instinct for 'wanting to know' anything at all. Yet, truth is different from information: Information can be received passively, whereas truth is recognised like a face. Truth stops us in our tracks. The attitude we have when we search for truth and our satisfaction in 'finding out' are emotional and moral just as much as they are intellectual. Truth is therefore also about what is good and right, even if lies appear pleasing. To see truth, one must meet it halfway in wanting what is good and wanting it with purity; to live in truth, we must make purity of desire our habit. This is called virtue. Hence, for many ancient philosophers the goal of human life was to make ourselves capable of dying in truth by living well.

In Christian theology there is a realisation that God is found to be related to all truth. We cannot really explain what matters to us even in our own everyday language without somehow speaking of the name of God and speculating about what the truth of his nature means for the world and us in it. Accordingly, what our thinking, emotions and moral intuitions disclose is powerfully re-organised when understood in the terms of a religious narrative. The best of our human love comes from the personality of God, who is love itself. Yet, though God creates out of love and we remain capable of action born from the purest love, the world is fallen. Our persistent limitedness is a painful contradiction to his infinity. This is where the fundamental Christian themes of sin, forgiveness, faith, worship and resurrection become philosophical themes.

1. Here is an amended extract from Francis Bacon's essay *Of Truth*:

What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. Certainly, there are those, who delight in giddiness, and count it like a bondage to fix their belief in one place; this affects their opinion of free will in thinking as well as in acting. And though these sorts of philosophers are gone, there remain certain discoursing wits which are of the same veins, though there is not so much blood in them as was in those of the ancients. But it is not only the difficulty and labour which men take in finding out the truth, and it is also not that, when it is found, the inescapability of truth on men's thoughts, which brings lies to be preferred; but a natural, though corrupt, love of the lie itself.

One of the later schools of the Greek philosophers, examining the matter, were puzzled to think why it should be that men would love lies; especially since men neither make it for pleasure, as with poets, nor for an advantage, as with the merchant; but for the lie's own sake. But I cannot tell; this same truth is a naked and open daylight, which doesn't show the masks, and extravagances, and triumphs, of the world, half so magnificently and daintily as candle-lights. Truth may perhaps fetch the price of a pearl which shows best by day; but it won't rise to the price of a diamond, or carbuncle, that shows best in varied lights.

A mixture of a lie often adds pleasure. Do we doubt that if we took out of men's minds their vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations and the like, that this would leave the minds of a number of men as poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to them?

1. Which people does Bacon think tend to lie for a purpose? What are these purposes? Can you think of any more?
2. Bacon thinks that people persist in lies for their own sake because it makes life more bearable and even exciting. He seems to imply that the truth is plain. Do you agree with Bacon's opinion at the end of this paragraph? Why?
3. Should poets—or, more relevantly today, TV scriptwriters—be allowed to add lies to truth? Why/why not? Is there any way to avoid mixing in fiction with fact for TV scripts?
4. Is there a difference in the attitude we have towards truth in everyday conversations as opposed to facts in scientific research? Should we have this?

Philosophy II. Argumentation

1. Explain in your own words why these arguments might not work.
2. However, which of these are actually somehow defensible? Why?

- a. "All whales are fishes, so all fishes are whales."
- b. "Either humans have complete free will, or all punishment is pointless. If there is no free will at all, then nobody is responsible for anything and criminals should never be blamed."
- c. "Religious people only believe in God because they were indoctrinated at a young age, so their arguments for God are not worth taking seriously."
- d. "Human life is sacred because it has special value. We know it has special value because human life is sacred."
- e. "Almost every culture has had some form of religion, so belief in God must be true."

Philosophy III. Arguments for God

One way to establish if a person's conclusion is true is to examine all the statements on route to the conclusion.

Here are two arguments for the existence of God.

1. Sort these seven numbered statements below into three columns: Agree / Disagree / Unsure.
2. For Aquinas, all of these statements and the conclusions are true. Do you agree or disagree with the conclusions?

Thomas Aquinas' 'Second Way', from causes	Thomas Aquinas' 'Fifth Way', from purpose
1. Whenever something comes to exist, it is caused to exist by something. 2. Nothing can be the cause of its own existence, since then it would be prior to itself. 3. Whenever something comes into existence, this must have been brought about by something other than that thing. (1,2) 4. The chain connecting things which come into existence and things which bring them into existence cannot be infinite. ----- C. There is a first cause, which brings things into existence but was not itself brought into existence. (3,4) We call this first cause 'God'.	1. Many things in nature act regularly towards an end or goal. 2. Many of these things lack intelligence, so they cannot understand or choose the end they act towards. 3. Whatever lacks intelligence cannot direct itself towards an end unless—like an arrow—it is directed by something with intelligence, which does understand this goal. ----- C. There is an intelligent being which orders natural things that lack intelligence towards their ends. (2,3) We call this intelligent being 'God'.

Philosophy IV: Learning new vocabulary and phrases

Find the philosophical definition of the following keywords. You may need to use internet resources to help you.

A priori	
A posteriori	
Argument	
Premise	
Conclusion	
Entailment	
Inductive argument	
Deductive argument	
Infinite regress	
Aesthetics	
Contradiction	
Necessary being	
Contingent being	
Cosmological argument	
Teleological argument	
The problem of evil	
The problem of suffering	
Theodicy	
Vale of soul-making	

Ethics I: Ethics and its Hope

READ: Ethics concerns the meaning of a life lived well. There are many ways to attempt this: Aiming for happiness, never giving in to exceptions, or following a religious text are all ways to direct and organise action both in an individual life and in society. However, 'introductions' to ethics do not often consider that the ground and end of any action are unclear and mysterious. At first, this complexity appears to undo the simplicity of moral guidelines for what one ought (and ought not) to do: The impulse for action swells up from underneath intention, since we often later must ask and clarify what moved us to act. Our actions also carry us away beyond ourselves into consequences, confrontations and states of mind we could not have foreseen. We even can be sincere about our intentions and yet remain dishonest about what we should and could have done. Throughout this, though, we remain responsible for our action and answerable for our intentions. So, what can ethics hope to do?

Ethical questions ask about habit and hope, freedom and anxiety. Ethical systems, for all their principles, threats and rewards, are perhaps most significant in what they each ask us to ignore and deny. At our worst, we are self-indulgent and legalistic—permissive and harsh—all at once. Our guilt and resentments overwhelm us. The most painful questions in ethics ask us to imagine what our lives would be if we had not been wronged, and—of our own wrongs—perhaps what we would do if only we were allowed to begin all over again. Christian ethics asks then whether our thoughts, hopes and our whole lives could arrive now as they will be in the perfect love of the life to come.

Ethics II: Mitigation and the Law

Consider this scenario: A defendant arrives to court after committing a crime. You are the judge.

The argument from the defence is:

“The defendant should not be blamed because their actions were caused by their upbringing, biology, environment and past experiences.”

1. In which circumstances would you be prepared to give the defendant a reduced sentence, and for which crimes are you prepared to do this? List 7 examples with your reasons.

Now consider and write answers to the following below:

2. Do you find any inconsistencies between your separate judgements? Would you change any of your decisions if you lived with your adolescent children in the same neighbourhood as those presented before you in court? Is this relevant at all to how judges should rule?

Ethics III: Euthanasia Laws in England

In April 2026, the 'Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill' put forward by Labour MP Kim Leadbeater was not passed by the House of Lords in April. Though it passed readings in the House of Commons by 23 votes, an unprecedented number of suggested amendments from healthcare bodies and disability charities delayed the progress of this euthanasia bill. However, a fresh attempt to legalise assisted dying in England and Wales has been launched in June 2026, with the MP Lauren Edwards telling the BBC she wanted to "finish the job".

1. Research this story on news websites. Watch the activist Liz Carr's videos on a similar 2016 law passed in Canada ('Medical Assistance in Dying', or MAiD) on YouTube.
2. Create a summary of two positions: the viewpoints of a) **activists in favour of the bill** and b) **disability charities/healthcare professions against it**.
3. Sort the objections with names into two groups: principled and regulatory. Principled concerns are those raised because we might believe that euthanasia is immoral no matter what. For instance: "euthanasia is always either murder or suicide, which are immoral". Regulatory objections are those which remain unsure that the current proposals for the law are safe and enforceable enough. For example: "In the current plans, we are not being careful enough to make sure that people who wish to be euthanised are not being forced or manipulated into choosing this by a family member".
4. Are there any concerns between principled and regulatory objections which overlap?

Ethics IV: Learning new vocabulary and phrases

Find the philosophical definition of the following keywords. You may need to use internet resources to help you.

Absolutism	
Relativism	
Objective	
Subjective	
Moral	
Good	
<i>Privatio boni</i>	
Virtue	
Voluntarism	
Situationalism	
Applied ethics	
Free will	
<i>Phronesis</i>	
Primary precept	
Secondary precept	
Libertarianism	
Principle of utility	
Pelagianism	
Original sin	

Further resources:

1. Books (PDFs can be found online)

Shusaku, E. <i>A Life of Jesus</i>	ISBN: 0809123193
Magee, B. <i>The Story of Philosophy</i>	ISBN: 0751333328
Vardy, P. <i>The Puzzle of Ethics</i>	ISBN: 0006281443
<i>The Puzzle of God</i>	ISBN: 0006281435
C. S. Lewis <i>Mere Christianity</i>	ISBN: 0007461216
Holland, T. <i>Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind</i>	ISBN: 0349141207
Gaarder, J. <i>Sophie's World</i>	ISBN: 1474602282
Hansell, N. <i>The Sage Train: Philosophy comes to life</i>	ISBN: 9789340846841

2. Film, TV and Video

The Good Place (2016-2020)

Sliding Doors (1998)

Million Dollar Baby (2004)

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004)

Clips from the old TV show *The Great Philosophers*:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFF9E7ADD88FBA144&si=sTu0I7uL-Nn1HI-d>

3. Audio

Episodes of the BBC radio show *In Our Time*, available on Spotify and BBC Sounds:

Ep. *Good and Evil*

Ep. *Mill*

Ep. *Virtue*

Ep. *Miracles*

There are many other episodes of *IOT* which you are welcome to explore.