

A glossary of Christian terms

A

Abraham	The father of the Jewish nation. He and his group left Ur and started a new life in Canaan .
Adam and Eve	The first people according to the book of Genesis . They lived in the Garden of Eden.
Advent	The beginning of the church year. Starts on the Sunday nearest November 30th (St. Andrew's day) until Christmas . Advent is from the Latin meaning coming or arrival.
Acts of Apostles	The second of the books in the bible written by Luke .
Agnostic	Someone who says we cannot know whether God exists.
Altar	The place of sacrifice in church or chapel which represents the table where Jesus shared the last supper with his disciples .
Amen	The final word of a prayer ; means "so be it".
Annunciation	When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she was pregnant with Jesus .
Anglican	(Communion) - A worldwide branch of the Protestant church led by the Archbishop of Canterbury .
Angel	A heavenly being. A messenger of God .
Apocrypha	A section of the Bible not accepted by all Christians .
Apostles	The twelve followers of Jesus ; means "a person who is sent to preach the gospel ".
Apostles' creed	The oldest statement of belief in the church, based on the teachings of the Apostles .
Aramaic	One of the languages used by people in Jesus' time, probably the language that Jesus and the disciples would have spoken to each other.
Archbishop	A clergyperson who is responsible for a group of diocese .
Ash Wednesday	The first day of Lent . The day after Shrove Tuesday .
Ascension	When Jesus went back to heaven , 40 days after the resurrection .
Atheist	Someone who does not believe there is a God .
Atonement	Making amends for your sins or wrong deeds. Trying to put things right.

B

Baptism	The entry rite into the Christian church, which can take place as a baby or as an adult.
Baptistery	The place where baptism takes place.
Basilica	A word for a large church .
Beatitudes	A section of writing from the New Testament , each of which starts with "Blessed are the" (Matthew 5).
Bethlehem	A small town in the north of Palestine where Jesus was born.
Bible	The Holy Book of the Christians , contains the Hebrew Scriptures (Old

	Testament), the New Testament and sometimes the Apocrypha
Bishop	A senior minister , usually in charge of an area or diocese .
Blasphemy	Words that are spoken against God .
Blessed	Rewarded by God .

C

Calvin(ism)	John Calvin (1509-1564) was an important part of the Reformation and his followers started a movement called Calvinism, a branch of the Protestant church .
Celibate	In many Christian sects the priest or bishop is not allowed to be married or have sex.
Christ	Another name for Jesus Christ .
Christening	Another word for Baptism .
Christian(s)	Those who follow the teachings of Jesus Christ .
Christianity	The faith of the Christians .
Christmas	The festival which celebrates the birth of Jesus .
Church	(1) A building which is used for worship. (2) The community of Christians .
Clergy	Those people who are appointed to work in the church . The three types of clergy are deacons , priests and bishops .
Commandments	Rules given by God . The most famous are the 10 commandments given to Moses .
Communion	The most important of the Christian services. It acts out the events of the last supper which Jesus had with his disciples.
Confession	Words spoken about your sins , asking God for forgiveness.
Confirmation	When people who were baptised as babies confirm the promises made by their parents.
Conscience	Our internal 'voice' which tells us right from wrong, some people believe that this is the voice of God within us.
Consecration	When the bread and wine are turned into the body and blood of Jesus Christ .
Contemplation	Thinking about God , time spent in prayer and meditation .
Covenant	An agreement between an individual or people and God .
Creation	When God made the world.
Creed	A statement of religious beliefs agreed by the church to be true. There are 2 main creeds in the Christian church: the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed .
Cross	The most important Christian symbol.
Crucifix	A model of the cross with the figure of Jesus upon it.
Crucifixion	When Jesus was put to death on a cross . A form of capital punishment.

D

Day of Judgment	At the end of the world when all people will be judged on their behaviour during their lives.
Denomination	A group within the Christian church .
Devil	Some Christians believe that the devil is an actual being. Others that 'he' just

Disciple represents all things that are **evil**.
A person who follows the teachings of **Jesus**.

E

Easter The major **festival** in the **Christian** church which celebrates the life, death and **resurrection** of **Jesus**.

(Eastern) Orthodox The **Christian** churches found mainly in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. (e.g. Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox). One of the three main denominations along with **Roman Catholic** and **Protestant**. Maintaining a separate existence since 1054 A.D. when Eastern and Western **Christianity** disagreed over doctrine.

Epistle A letter. Part of the New Testament; many written by **St.Paul**.

Eucharist Comes from the Greek word meaning "Thanksgiving". It is based on the events that happened at the **last supper**. All **Christian** groups perform this **service** except Salvationists and **Quakers**.

Euthanasia The ending of life, by medical means, when there is no hope of recovery.

Evil Things that are not of **God**.

F

Faith A belief in **God**.

Festival A special occasion during the **church** year.

Free Church A **church** which has no higher authority than the leaders of that **church**.

Foetus The developing baby while it is in the womb.

Font The place in the **church** where babies are **baptised**.

G

Garden of Eden The original home of **Adam and Eve** before the fall.

Gethsemene A garden where **Jesus** prayed before being arrested.

Gender Another word for sex; we all have a gender either male or female.

God The supreme being, who created the world.

Golden Rule quoted by Jesus as 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:31).

Good Friday The day on which **Jesus** was **crucified**.

Gospel The part of the **New Testament** about the life of **Jesus**. Gospel means 'good news'.

Grace The loving help that **God** gives to all human beings, an undeserved gift.

H

Heaven The place where **God** lives and where **Christians** go after their death.

Holy Special to **God**.

Holy Communion Another name for the **Eucharist**.

Holy matrimony Another term for Christian marriage.

Holy Spirit One of the three forms of God. The Holy Spirit came down to the **disciples** at **Pentecost** and to **Jesus** at his **baptism**. Often shown as a dove.

I

Incarnation When **Jesus** became human by being born to **Mary**

J

Jesus Christ The founder of the **Christian** faith. Born in Nazareth and killed by **crucifixion** at the age of about 33.

Jews The people of Abraham. **Jesus** was a Jew.

K

Kingdom of God The new kingdom to be ruled over by God.

L

Last supper The last meal that Jesus had before the **crucifixion**. At this meal **Jesus** gave a special meaning to the bread and the wine, which is remembered at the **Eucharist**.

Lent The 40 days, from **Ash Wednesday** to **Holy Week**. Represents the 40 days that **Jesus** spent in the wilderness.

Lord's Supper Another name for the **Eucharist**.

Lord's Prayer The **prayer** that **Jesus** gave to his **disciples**.

Lutheran A **denomination** of the **Protestant Christian church**. Followers of Martin Luther after the **Reformation**.

M

Mary The mother of **Jesus**, sometimes called the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is very important in the **Roman Catholic** church.

Mass Another name for the **Eucharist**.

Messiah **Jesus** of Nazareth is the Messiah which means 'King' or '**Saviour**' or 'Anointed One'.

Methodist A branch of the **protestant** church founded by John **Wesley**.

Miracle An event that cannot be explained by normal or scientific means.

Monotheism Belief in one **God** - The Christians, Jews and Muslims

Moses The **Jewish** leader who led the **Jews** from slavery in Egypt, and was given the **ten commandments** by **God** on Mount Sinai.

N

New Testament Part of the **Bible** together with the **Hebrew Scripture**. The New Testament contains the **Gospels**, the **Epistles** and the book of **Revelation**.

O

Old Testament Another name for the **Hebrew Scripture**, part of the **Bible**

P

Palm Sunday The day that **Christians** remember the entry of **Jesus** into Jerusalem.

Patriarch Leader of one of the 14 **Eastern Orthodox** churches.

Paul (Saint) A **Jew** who was converted to **Christianity** and who took the **gospel** to the Gentiles. Wrote many of the **epistles**.

Pentecost The **festival** when the **disciples** received the **Holy Spirit**. Often thought of as the birth of the **church**.

Peter (Saint) The **apostle** who denied **Jesus** and who Jesus called 'the rock on which the **church** was built'; Peter was the first **bishop** of **Rome**, or **Pope**.

Pharisee A religious leader of the **Jews** at the time of **Jesus**.

Polytheism Belief in many Gods.

Pope The leader of the **Roman Catholic** church, lives in **Vatican City**.

Prayer Talking to **God**.

Preacher A person who delivers a **sermon**.

Priest A clergy person who may celebrate the **Eucharist**, give blessings and forgive sins.

Protestant A form of **Christianity** after the **Reformation**. Protestant is used to describe the churches which do not belong to the **Roman Catholic** or **Orthodox** churches.

Purgatory The place between earth and **Heaven**, "Heaven's waiting room."

R

Reconciliation To get closer to **God** through the **forgiveness** of your **sins**.

Reformation When the Western church split into the **Catholic** and **Protestant denominations** in the 16th century.

Repentance To be sorry for the **sins** that you have committed.

Resurrection When **Jesus** came back from the dead three days after he had been **crucified**.

Revelation A message from **God**.

[Roman] Catholic The Christian **denomination**, based in **Rome**, that is headed by the **Pope**.

S

Sabbath The **Jewish** holy day, from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. Also used by some **Christian denominations** for **Sunday**.

Sacrament An outward sign of something special and holy. The **Roman Catholics**, **Orthodox** and the **Anglicans** believe in 7 sacraments. **Baptism**, **Eucharist**, **Confirmation**, holy orders, forgiveness of sins, anointing of the sick, and

Marriage. Most **Protestant** churches recognise only the first two of these.

Sacred	Something which is holy or devoted to God .
Salvation Army	A protestant church formed by William Booth to help the poor. It works to help people's physical needs as well as their spiritual ones.
Samaritan	A group of people who lived in Samaria at the time of Jesus , considered by the Jews to be inferior.
Satan	Another name for the devil .
Saviour	Another title for Jesus . Used to show belief that he rescued people from their sins by dying on a cross .
Secular	Anything that is not religious.
Sermon	A talk given in church on a spiritual or moral theme.
Sexism	Treating people differently because of their gender.
Sin	Doing something wrong that separates you from God .
Sunday	The Christian holy day; day of rest.
Synoptic	A Greek word which means "to look at together". The synoptic gospels are Matthew, Mark and Luke.

T

Temptation	Being persuaded to do evil or to sin .
Ten Commandments	The rules given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai.
Theist	Someone who does believe God exists.
Transubstantiation	A belief that the wine and the bread at the Eucharist actually turn into the body and blood of Jesus . Esp. in the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches.
Trinity	The one God in the three parts; God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit .

V

Virgin Birth	The belief that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus.
Virgin Mary	Another name for Mary .

W

Worship	The act of prayer or actions dedicated to praising God .
Worshipper	A person who is involved in an act of worship .

Y

Yahweh	Hebraic word for God . Used primarily by Roman Catholics
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