

GLOSSARY  
RELIGION AND TELEVISION INSTRUMENT  
Cultural Indicators Project  
The Annenberg School of Communications

agreeing as in "agreeing in prayer"  
--praying together

anointing  
--one of the SACRAMENTS, where oil or some other substance is placed on the head or body of a sick or sinful individual--also used euphemistically for the work of spirits in "touching" individuals

ANOINTING of the holy spirit  
--same as above, except this phrase has become a code word for a person's having an emotional, CHARISMATIC experience

antichrist  
--one of the primary characters in the APOCALYPSE, literally, a human or earthly figure who will appear to be good, but actually turn out to be against Christ--term will only be used in discussions of ESCHATOLOGY, and usually means that the speaker believes that apocalyptic events such as the SECOND COMING are "real"

apocalypse, apocalyptic, apocalypticism  
--theories and beliefs about the ultimate outcome of history which hold that the end will see cataclysmic events, usually literal battles as prophesied in Daniel and Revelation--the term "apocalypse" sometimes refers to such cataclysmic events as in "...I await the apocalypse..."

apostles  
--literally, any person who WITNESSES to the revelation of Christ's ministry, death and resurrection--usually used to refer to EVANGELISTS and ministers who followed Christian teachings after Jesus' death and resurrection, and spread the "good news"--some "DISCIPLES" became "apostles"

## the APOSTLE

--the primary APOSTLE, Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the Apostle, and who is credited with many of the New Testament books--Paul had a vision on the road to Damascus and gave up his earlier persecution of Christians to become one himself--like most other early apostles, he was a Jew

## backsliding

--one of the major problems of contemporary PROTESTANTISM--people who once believed or were saved, but who have begun to "slide back" into earlier ways and earlier problems

## bible

--the holy book of Christianity, which contains books which are holy scripture to Judaism, but also contains the stories of Jesus' life, and the works and writings of his followers in the years immediately after his death. The "Canon" or acceptable form of the Bible was set several centuries after Jesus' death by a Church council. The authenticity and form of the Bible naturally has become a major controversy in Christianity since canonization. Current controversies in American Christianity center on Biblical "Authority" that is, should it be interpreted at all, or is it to be taken as literally "true" and "prescriptive." The other current controversy is over the translation of the Bible, with conservative PROTESTANTS seeing the first English translation (the sixteenth-century King James version) as the only acceptable one, and others feeling that more modern translations, in more modern English, including the latest knowledge in the study of Ancient Near Eastern Languages, are better.

## born again

--a phrase which is currently in fashion used to describe one's sudden understanding that Jesus is "lord and savior"--it is held to be something which can happen to Christians and non-Christians alike, and is usually most important to the more conservative, EVANGELICAL, or pentacostal groups

## calvary

--a literal place--Jerusalem's garbage dump in the first century--where Jesus was crucified--often used as a euphemism for that event, as in "...I understand the meaning of Calvary..."

## catholic

--derived from Latin, this term literally means "universal" when the "c" is lower case, thus applying to nearly all Christian groups--but when the "C" is upper case, refers to the Roman Catholic Church

## charismatic movement, charismatic gifts, charismatic expression

--a controversial movement within Christianity which holds that emotional, "spirit filled" expression in worship, such as "glossalalia" or "speaking in tongues" (words and phrases uttered in frenzy which sound meaningless but are held to be divine utterances, especially when translated by someone else) dancing or moving rythmically, falling into trances, etc., are the best way to worship or experience God. The "Holy Spirit" part of the TRINITY is most important to this school of thought.

## church

--a term which is used to denote both local "congregations" of Christians and DENOMINATIONS, as well as all Christians, the context usually makes the meaning obvious, such as in "...go to church..." vs. "Presbyterian Church" vs. "...the Christian Church..."

**confession**

--the meaning here is conventional except that in SACRAMENTAL terms "confessing" implies prayer to God or Jesus in which either specific acts are referred to or, more frequently, one "confesses" that s/he is a believer. The term is sometimes used in conversations with others where one "confesses" ones faith, or informs others that one is a believer. Also a sacrament in Catholicism.

**conversion**

--can mean the same thing as being "BORN AGAIN" but usually means that one is "converted" from one faith or religion to another. PROTESTANTS can use it to mean that they were "converted" from regular old PROTESTANTISM, to a "new" "BORN AGAIN" faith.

**creed**

--a specific statement of faith or belief, such as the Nicene Creed recited in the Mass by Catholics and others-- can also refer to a CHURCH which holds a specific "creed"-- such as in "...persons of all races and creeds..."

**death-of-God theology**

--a theological movement of the mid-1960's which held, literally that God (or at least, the "traditional" God) was dead and that it was time for new forms. This was obviously a controversial idea, but it still holds sway in Christian theology, particularly on the part of those who wish to refute it. Evangelicals or NEO-EVANGELICALS hold that this movement was one of the results of "SECULAR HUMANISM."

**denomination**

--a specific faith group within Christianity, such as Presbyterian, Methodist, Catholic or Lutheran Churches-- also often refers to the institutional organizations of these faiths, their central offices, etc.

## disciples

--usually refers to the thirteen original followers of Jesus (Peter, James, John, Judas, etc.) in the New Testament-- sometimes used metaphorically, as in "...we are all Disciples of the Lord and Savior..."

## ecclesiology

--the study of the structure and organization of CHURCHES or "the CHURCH", not referring to local congregations

## eschatology

--theories about the end of time, including most often apocalyptic theories, though these terms are not co-extensive. Apocalypticism is a kind of eschatology, but not vice versa.

## eucharist

--the SACRAMENTAL rite of communion which is celebrated by all Christians such as in the Mass by Catholics and Anglicans. The rite is based on events following the Passover meal reported in the GOSPELS where Jesus washed the DISCIPLES' feet, and served them bread and wine.

## evangelical, neo-evangelical

--specific movements within Christianity, usually identified with specific DENOMINATIONS, which hold that the "preaching of the word" and the "saving of souls" are the most important aspects of Christianity, pushing aside concerns with material or physical being. Neo-evangelicalism is a recent movement which holds these tenets, but which pervades DENOMINATIONS and groups beyond those traditionally identified with evangelicalism.

## evangelize, evangelism

--literally, spreading the "good news" or preaching, "WITNESSING," or sharing the faith. Also usually implies success in these endeavors, i.e., those preached to are also CONVERTED.

**evolution**

--the scientific theories of origins and modifications of the species based on the ideas of Charles Darwin. A controversy for those Christians and others who see this theory as calling into question the Biblical account of creation.

**gentile**

--literally, anyone who is not a Jew

**gospel**

--literally, "good news," or the story of Jesus' life and ministry. Usually refers to the "Gospels," or the four books of the New Testament which recount these events, but can also be used more metaphorically.

**holy ghost**

--the third part of the TRINITY, held to be the spiritual emanation of God on earth, the part of God which works in everyday life

**inerrancy, inerrant**

--a code word which usually refers specifically to the literal truth of the BIBLE

**liberation theology**

--a theological movement of the 1970's which holds that the true loyalty of Christians in this day and age should be with powerless people in need of liberation (women, minorities, poor peasants in the third world, etc.) instead of with the powerful.

**materialism**

--usually used to refer to a person being more loyal to possessions and belongings than to transcendent things such as God and Jesus. Can also refer to society as materialistic rather than spiritual.

**millenium, millennialism**

--the millenium is a specific part of the literally interpreted APOCALYPSES of the BIBLE. It is a perod of one thousand years when Jesus will reign on earth. A millennialist (or variants on millennialism) is usually one who takes a very concrete material interpretation of eschatological literature, expecting the SECOND COMING, etc., as a "real event."

**moral relativism, relativism**

--theories of moral philosophy which stem from the thought of Kant and others, where absolute or literal rules are not held to be salient, rather moral choices are relative to other issues, such as context. The first popularization of this thought in recent years were in books dealing with "situation ethics" or "contextual ethics." These ideas are obviously controversial for those who hold literal views of the Bible, of revelation, or who feel that moral rules and codes are important.

**new morality**

--a catch phrase for moral or ethical conduct which is felt to be based in "RELATIVISM"--usually used to refer to sexual ethics as a euphamism for non-marital sexual activity. Has also come to be associated (in the minds of some) with pro-choice attitudes about birth control, and with "liberal" attitudes about women's roles, and gay rights

**pentecost**

--the Biblical event where Jesus revealed himself as resurrected and at which the CHURCH was begun, when the DISCIPLES became convinced that he actually was the son of God

**pentecostalism**

--an American EVANGELICAL movement of the turn of the century which focused on apocalyptic ESCHATOLOGY, CHARISMATIC expression, faith healing, and EVANGELISM. The movement developed into DENOMINATIONS which are specifically "Pentecostal" ones, such as the Assembly of God, and the Foursquare Gospel Church, and it also continues as a movement within other DENOMINATIONS

**protestant**

--any one of the many DENOMINATIONS which sprang up following the protestant reformation of the seventeenth century. There are great theological differences between these groups, and their collective difference from Roman Catholicism has faded somewhat, though it is still fairly safe to say that any Christian body which is not either Catholic or Orthodox, is probably Protestant. Protestant CHURCHES are the largest religious bodies in the United States, accounting for well over half of those persons who state a religious preference.

**rapture**

--another specific event projected in apocalyptic literature where all those who believe at the moment when Jesus returns will be literally, bodily, lifted into heaven. Rapture literature holds that bodies will actually disappear (leaving clothes behind) and that Christian bus drivers, etc., will suddenly vanish, leading to all sorts of mayhem.

**revival**

--aside from obvious meanings, "a revival" is a special CHURCH service or other service which is held to "revive" the flagging faith of Christians. Tent-meeting revivals were very common in the last century all over America, and travelling revivals (often without tents) continue to be held today from the Bible Belt to the Philadelphia Civic Center.

**sacrament**

--any one of many "sacred" acts which have been imbued with ritual meaning over the years since the founding of Christianity. There are, of course, formal sacraments, such as the EUCHARIST, ANNOINTING, and the laying on of hands, which have achieved formal status in official Christianity. There are such sacraments in nearly all religions, and the precise nature of each of them is a controversy within Christianity as well.

**salvation**

--traditionally held to mean that one is assured that he or she will have eternal life, thus "saved" from eternal chaos, listlessness, or Hell. The term is liberally used now as a label "...I am saved..." and means basically the same thing as being "BORN AGAIN" though the terms are not co-extensive. Being "BORN AGAIN" is one specific way of being saved (held by its proponents to be the only way) but not all of those who feel assured of salvation would say that they have been "BORN AGAIN."

**second coming**

--the second coming of Christ prophesied in the BIBLE. All Christians hold that this will happen, but for some it is considered to be a metaphorical, or symbolic event, while others hold that it is an actual, material event, while still others hold that while it is actual and material, it is likely to happen within a definite period of time, such as by a specific date, or "within a generation."

**secular humanism**

--a phrase coined by EVANGELICAL and NEO-EVANGELICAL writers to refer to systems of thought which do not include the need for divine action. Moral systems which uphold the dignity and worth of people, while they may be consistent with Christian ideals, are false unless their proponents are self-consciously Christian. To this way of thinking, secular humanists are worse than atheists. Contemporary critics of secular humanism tend to hold that it lies behind social experiments such as Socialism and Communism, and thus these latter political systems are related to other secular-humanist systems, such as the theory of EVOLUTION. Secular humanism is also often blamed for the breakdown of morality in the country through its obvious relationship to RELATIVIST moral philosophies.

**sepulcher**

--the cave where Jesus was buried after crucifixion, and from which he was resurrected

## stewardship

--the Christian's responsibility to take care of the world (nature, etc.) and of his/her own resources, including giving a share of those resources to the others and to the CHURCH or religious organizations

## testimony

--a believer's story of how s/he was saved, CONVERTED, healed, or had prayers answered, usually including a recalling of problems or sins suffered before SALVATION, healing, etc., the experience itself, and descriptions of how things have changed since

## thousand year reign

--see MILLENIUM, millennialism (above)

## tract

--a small pamphlet which carries a short evangelistic message, sometimes in cartoon form, other times in the form of Biblical studies or quotations. The handing out of tracts is held by some to be legitimate evangelistic activity

## tribulation

--a specific point in the APOCALYPSE which precedes the actual SECOND COMING of Christ. Taken to be a period of "great tribulation and distress"--which can characterize most periods of human history in one way or another. Thus, when a person refers to the "coming tribulation" or to the fact that "we are now in the tribulation period" that usually characterises them as a millennialist who feels that the second coming of Christ is imminent.

## trinitarian

--one who believes in the TRINITY, or a CHURCH or sect which so believes

## trinity

--the three figures or faces of God presented in the Christian scriptures: The Father (God him/herself); The Son (Jesus, now risen and with God in heaven); the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit (God's spiritual or ghostly part which is present on earth.) Trinitarians are vociferous in arguing that they are not pantheists, the Trinity are separate revelations of one God not three separate ones

## unitarian

--one who rejects the idea of the TRINITY, holding that God is one form, and that the two other forms are not God

## universalism

--theological systems which hold that no one faith system or theological figure (such as Jesus, Mohammed, or Vishnu) is the best or better than others, but that all are evidence of the work of the same force or forces, thus there is a universal God and faith system, and that all religions actually respond to that God or reality or faith system. Obviously, this idea is controversial among those who find Jesus or another figure the best way. Evangelical Christians and others identify universalism as one of the results of SECULAR HUMANISM.

## witness (as verb)

--the act of preaching to others from one's faith or sharing one's faith. The term can be used to mean either evangelism or social or political action which is based in belief.

## word, word of God

--terms usually used to refer to the BIBLE, as in "...he believes in the INERRANCY of the word of God..."