

## Glossary

**Abbess:** female head of a monastic community of women, usually in the Benedictine tradition

**Anabaptist:** name used for men and women who were part of the Radical Reformation; it means literally “re-baptizer” and was used against Protestants who believed that Christians baptized as infants had to be baptized as adults, since infant baptism had no meaning

**Androcentrism:** a point of view which accepts that what men think, do, and say represents what is “normal” and of primary importance

**Apostle:** a “delegate” or “messenger” of Jesus Christ

**Asceticism:** the exercise of extreme self-discipline in matters of physical pleasure, such as sexual relations and eating

**Bishop:** Christian leader who governs the congregations in a territory known as a diocese; a bishop is responsible for offering the sacraments, ordaining clergy, teaching and administration

**Canon:** collection of writings regarded as authoritative; the standard for faith and practice

**Clergy:** men and women who have been ordained (see “Ordination”)

**Cloistered:** communities of monks and nuns are said to be cloistered when they remain inside the walls of the monastery

**Covenant:** a relationship between God and humanity or between human beings that involves serious and long-term commitment; all parties to a covenant have obligations and privileges

**Denomination:** a particular religious group; in America, usually associated with large and culturally-dominant groups (see “Mainstream”)

**Dispersion:** movement of the people of Israel away from their homeland either by choice or force

***Elder***: person chosen in local congregation to participate with other elders in running the affairs of the congregation

***Evangelical***: Christian tradition which stresses the importance of a distinct experience of conversion as entry into the Christian life; those who are converted are expected to engage in holy living and especially in being “evangels” or bearers of the “good news” of God’s forgiveness through Jesus

***Female***: human being having a female reproductive system

***Feminine***: behaviors and characteristics which particular cultures associate with women

***Feminism***: a point of view which advocates that women should have self-determination and rights equal to those enjoyed by men; also a movement that works toward ending oppression of and discrimination against women

***Feminist Hermeneutics***: a range of approaches to the Bible which begin with the assumption that men and women are equal; one variation of the feminist hermeneutical model acknowledges that the Bible contains a great deal of material that treats women as subordinate and inferior to men; it also acknowledges that there is a judgment or critique of the degradation of women running through the Old and New Testaments which challenges the commands of silence and subordination

***Gender***: culturally determined definitions of appropriate behavior and characteristics for men and women (see “Feminine” and “Masculine”)

***Hebrews***: a group of people in the Ancient Near East who, after leaving Egypt, eventually settled in what became the kingdoms of Israel and Judah

***Heresy***: teachings that contradict the teaching of the most powerful Christian group in a particular time and place (see “Orthodoxy”)

***Holiness***: a movement among American Protestants that stressed a second-life-transforming experience after conversion which sanctified the believer and protected him or her from future intentional sin

**Lay:** men and women who belong to a Christian community but who are not ordained (see “Ordination”)

**Lectionary:** list of texts from the Bible to be read on specified Sundays throughout the year

**Liturgy:** form or structure of Christian worship (prayers, responses, readings, hymns)

**Mainstream:** in categorizing religious communities, scholars often refer to groups that are large and wealthy, have cordial relations with the society around them, and have played a major role in shaping that society as “mainstream”; smaller communities in tension with the surrounding culture and religious mainstream are often called “alternative” religions

**Masculine:** behaviors and characteristics that particular cultures associate with men

**Mysticism:** perspective within Christianity which believes that people can experience and communicate with God directly in visions, dreams, and trances

**Nun:** see “Sister”

**Ordination:** a ritual that sets certain Christians apart to preach, administer the sacraments, teach, and govern

**Orthodoxy:** teachings of the dominant and most powerful Christian group in a particular time and place

**Patriarchy:** a social arrangement in which all important forms of power (political, military, economic, and religious) are in the hands of men; men also shape the intellectual and artistic life of the culture; women can have varying degrees of power within a patriarchy

**Patristic:** first five centuries of Christian history are called the patristic period or the period of the Church Fathers; these men were church leaders whose writings shaped much of Christian thought and practice

***Presbyter:*** in the early church, presbyters had responsibility of overseeing the affairs of a local congregation; for some Christians the word means “priest” while for others it is understood as “elder”

***Pentecostal:*** movement in American religion which stresses that after conversion a Christian can expect to have a second life-changing experience in which the Holy Spirit bestows certain spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues

***Puritan:*** protest tradition that emerged in England at the end of the sixteenth century; Puritans were Protestants who believed that the Church of England had compromised too much with Roman Catholicism, especially in the areas of ritual and church government

***Rabbinic Tradition:*** collective wisdom and legal commentaries by the teachers or “rabbis” of the Hebrew Scriptures who began to emerge in the Jewish community in the first century

***Religious Order:*** communities of men and women who take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and live according to a “rule” or order for community life; examples would be the Benedictines and the Ursulines

***Sacrament:*** an act of Christian worship associated with the grace of God; in the Roman Catholic Church there are seven sacraments (baptism, eucharist, confirmation, marriage, penance, holy orders, and extreme unction/annointing of the sick), while in Protestant churches, there are two (baptism and eucharist)

***Sect:*** religious community which in America deviates yet borrows from the dominant Protestant denominations; often in conflict with the surrounding culture and denominations; examples would be the Mormons and Christian Science

***Sister:*** usually a Roman Catholic woman who belong to a religious order that emphasizes active service in the world in contrast to cloistered nuns, who, historically, have stressed contemplation; sister and nun are often used interchangeably

***Spheres, Ideology of Two:*** a point of view which accepts that men are best suited for work in the public sphere of economics and politics; while women

are made for the domestic sphere, which encompasses child care, religion and morality

***Suffrage***: right to vote in elections

***Theology***: study of questions such as the nature of God, good and evil, salvation, creation, and the nature of human beings

***Vocation***: career, function, or occupation to which a person is called by God