

RE Glossary

A

Abraham first well known Jewish person and one of the founders of the Jewish faith. Muslims also respect him as a prophet and a worshipper of Allah.

Advent time of preparation leading up to Christmas.

Akhand path complete and uninterrupted reading of the Sikh scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib

Allah Islamic way of saying God.

altar table or raised level surface where the celebration of the Eucharist takes place

amanuensis is a person who writes a letter dictated by someone else.

Amen literally means 'may this be true' or 'so be it' - used to complete a prayer.

Amrit a ceremony which makes a person an adult member of the Sikh religion.

ancestor person from whom one is descended, such as one's father or grandfather.

Anglican the name given to a member of the Church of England and to the Church of England itself.

Apocrypha books found in the Greek version of the Bible, but not in the Hebrew.

Apostle literally 'one who is sent', an eye witness of Jesus' ministry, sent to preach about him to other people, the name given to the eleven disciples of Jesus.

Archbishop a senior bishop. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the leader of the Church of England.

assumption (the doctrine of) the belief that Mary ascended to heaven.

astrologer person who claims to know how the stars can influence people, especially in the future.

atonement the belief that Jesus saved the world from its sin, through His death.

B

Baha'i faith which grew out of the Islamic movement, led by Baha'u'llah, in Persia, now Iran.

banished sent away as a punishment.

baptise, baptism. Christian rite of initiation: The ceremony used when someone becomes a Christian. The new Christian is dipped in water, or water is poured on his head as part of the ritual.

Bible literally 'book', this is the name given to the holy scriptures of the Christian faith. Jews sometimes use the name to refer to their scriptures too.

Blessed when God's favour is given to an object or person.

Brahma Hindu god of creation.

Buddha enlightened one, in particular Gotama Buddha.

Buddhist someone who follows the teaching of Gotama Buddha.

C

Canaan the land where the Children of Israel made their home. Jews now call it the land of Israel.

Canon of scripture the agreed collection of books in the Bible.

catechism religious teaching: in particular instruction by question and answer given to a person being prepared for Christian baptism.

CE an abbreviation for 'Common Era' meaning the time after Jesus' birth. In the past the letters AD were used. (The period before his birth is known as BCE - this used to be BC).

chapel a place of worship. Some Christians use the word instead of church.

Charismatic movement a movement within Christianity that seeks the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in communal forms of worship.

chauri fan waved over the Sikh scriptures.

Christ Messiah, King, Anointed One. The title given to Jesus by his followers.

christening Christian ceremony where a person is baptized and received into the Church.

Christian someone who follows the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Christingle a celebration of carols and candlelight from Scandinavia where St. Lucia is remembered.

Christmas festival where Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Church Christian community or the building which they use.

Codex a manuscript written in book form, rather than as a scroll.

commandment a law, especially one of the ten laws of Moses in the Old Testament

communion literally means 'common sharing'

Communion Service also known as Holy Communion, the Eucharist, Mass, the Lord's Supper and Breaking of Bread. A Christian church service where the bread and wine are shared.

communism a movement which promotes a classless society with no private ownership.

community a group of people who have strong links with one another.

compound enclosure for a group of people.

concentrate to give all of your attention to something.

Confession to admit a fault or one's sins.

Confirmation rite of admission into full membership of the Christian community.

Confucianism way of life based on the teaching of K'ung Fo Tzu (551-479 BCE)

congregation people who have come together to worship.

consecration an act whereby a building or person is set apart for sacred uses and responsibilities.

contemplation the act of thinking deeply and quietly.

Convert someone who changes their religion.

covenant an agreement between God and his people. They promise to serve him; he promises to protect them.

coverlet small covering.

creation the act of making the world.

creed statement of belief.

Crucifixion a Roman method of execution; the victim was nailed to a wooden cross.

crucify a form of execution used in the Roman Empire. The victim was nailed by his hands and feet to a wooden cross and left to die.

D

Day of Judgement the belief that at the end of time all people will stand before God and be judged according to how they have lived.

dedicate set aside for a religious purpose.

demon devil or evil spirit

denominations name given to the groups or Churches into which Christianity is divided.

Devil God's enemy; the supreme spirit of evil; a symbol of evil.

devotion giving oneself up to the service of God, to show someone how much you love them.

Diocese a group of churches presided over by a bishop.

disciple someone who follows a teacher or leader, the 12 men chosen by Jesus

Diwali Hindu festival of lights held in October/November

Durga also known as Devi, Amba, Kali, Parvati, the female side of God represented in the Hindu faith as the Goddess or Mother Goddess.

E

Easter Christian festival celebrating the rising of Jesus from death.

Easter Sunday a Christian festival remembering the day Jesus rose from the tomb.

ecclesia Greek word for church

Ecumenical from Greek, a word meaning 'the whole inhabited world'.

Eid ul Adha Feast of Sacrifice celebrated by Muslims everywhere at the end of the Haji each year.

Eid ul Fitr Festival of fast breaking, when Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan.

enlightened someone who has 'seen the light', that is, has understood some great truth.

Epistle letter

eternal everlasting.

eternity for ever without end.

Evangelist writer of one of the New Testament Gospels.

evolution the theory that plant, animal and human life have evolved gradually over millions of years.

F

fast going without food or types of food as a religious duty or to express a belief or protect.

festival an enjoyable celebration (usually annually)

Five K's the five symbols of the Sikh faith.

Friar 'brother'; member of a religious group which lives and works among the people rather than staying in a monastery.

G

Gabriel one of God's chief angels.

Gentiles non-Jews.

ghee clarified butter.

Gobind Rai the tenth and final human Sikh guru, who died in 1708. He changed his name to Gobind Singh and formed the Khalsa.

God an important and powerful spirit, a being who is worshipped.

Goddess the female form of God.

Gospel means 'good news'. The name given to Jesus' message, and also the title given to the first four books of the New Testament.

Gotama Buddha after the Indian prince Siddhartha Gotama was enlightened, he became known as the Buddha.

Grace God's undeserved powerful love.

Gurdwara Sikh place of worship, literally house or door to the Guru.

guru the Indian word for a religious teacher. It means 'someone who leads you to the light'.

Guru Granth Sahib the sacred Sikh scriptures.

H

Hajj important Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah

Halal meat meat slaughtered in a special way according to the laws of Islam.

Hanukah Jewish feast of lights.

Hanukiah eight branched candle used at the Jewish festival of Hanukah.

heretic someone who holds views which are rejected by the majority.

Hijrah the historic journey made by Muhammed (Pbuh) from Makkah to Madinah

Hindu someone belonging to the faith of Hinduism, the original faith of India.

Holi Hindu festival of spring.

Holocaust name given to the suffering of the Jewish people during the Second World War when six million Jews were murdered.

holy set aside for God.

Holy Spirit one part of the Christian Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Holy week last week of the Christian period of Lent.

hymn a religious poem set to music and sung during worship.

I

Ibrahim for Muslims, a prophet of Allah. Jews and Christians call him Abraham.

Icon a religious picture of a holy person.

image an object made to look like someone or something.

Immaculate Conception usually refers to a belief that the Virgin Mary was born without sin.

immersion being completely covered by water.

immortal a person or a god who lives forever.

immortality never dying.

Incarnation the belief that God appears on earth in human form.

incense something that gives a sweet smell when burnt.

Infallible literally 'without error'

J

Jains member of a religious group from India, who do not believe in violence of any kind.

Jerusalem the capital of modern Israel; a sacred city for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

K

Ketubim writings, third section of the Jewish Scriptures.

kimono loose garment worn by Japanese.

Krishna a Hindu god who was believed to have become man to fight evil.

L

Lent a period of fasting, forty weekdays before Easter.

Levites assistants in worship in the Temple

Liturgy a form or order of public worship.

log-gong a musical instrument made out of a hollowed tree trunk.

Lord's Prayer the Christian prayer starting 'Our Father' taught by Jesus to his disciples.

luminous shining by its own light.

M

Moses a great leader of the early Jewish people.

minister the name for a Christian servant of God

Magi the visitors from the East who came to see the child Jesus.

Makkah Mecca, one of the centres of the Islamic faith, where Muhammed was born

Mandir Hindu temple

manna food

martyr someone who is put to death for remaining loyal to a belief.

Mass a service based on the last supper which Jesus ate with his disciples.

Mass Roman Catholic word for the Communion service.

Mass word used by some Christians to describe the Eucharist.

meditation a way of calming the mind and allowing it to rest on some aspect of belief.

Menorah seven-branched candle-holder used by Jews.

Messiah anointed one. Word used to describe the person promised by God to deliver his people, the Jews.

Mezuzah small holder on the doorposts of Jewish homes, which contains a passage from the Torah.

Mihrab recess in wall in mosque facing Mecca.

minaret a tall slender tower on an Islamic mosque.

Minister the title given to a clergy person in some churches, or anyone who conducts services.

Ministry Jesus' work of preaching, teaching and helping the needy.

Missionary someone who tries to make other people share his or her beliefs.

Monastery place where people who have taken special vows live as a religious community.

monk a man who gives up marriage and family life to follow his religious faith. Monks are mainly found in the Christian and Buddhist religions.

monument building which reminds people of a person or event.

Mosque building or space set aside for Muslim public prayer.

Muezzin the Muslim who calls others to prayer.

Muhammed (Pbuh) the last and greatest prophet of Allah.

Muslim follower of the faith of Islam.

Myth traditional story with a symbolic meaning.

N

nativity birth

Nevi'im prophets, second section of the Jewish Scriptures.

New Testament the 27 books which make up the second and main part of the Christian Bible.

nirvana the end of individual existence (a state which Buddhists try to achieve).

nuclear disarmament getting rid of nuclear weapons, such as the atom bomb.

nun a woman who gives up marriage and family life in order to follow her religious faith. Nuns are mainly found in the Christian and Buddhist religions.

O

offering a gift for God.

Old Testament a collection of 39 books of Jewish scriptures which form the first part of the Christian Bible.

Oral teaching teaching passed on by word of mouth, not written down.

ornament anything pretty which adds beauty.

orthodox a person who accepts the traditional ways of a religion.

Orthodox Church the Christian churches of Eastern Europe.

P

Parable a story with a meaning or lesson.

Pater Noster the Latin words for 'Our Father'. It refers to the Lord's Prayer, which begins with these words.

patron saint saint who guards and looks after a country or certain people.

persecution making people suffer, or even die, for their beliefs.

Pesach Jewish festival commemorating the Israelites' escape from the Egyptians.

pilgrimage a journey for a religious purpose, usually to a special place where some meaningful event took place.

Pope the leader of Roman Catholic Christians

Priest person authorised to officiate at religious ceremonies, members of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches ordained and authorised to give the sacraments.

priest someone who has been specially appointed to perform, religious ceremonies.

profane irreverent, not sacred.

prophet a person called by God to tell the Jews how to use the Torah.

prophet a person who speaks the word of God, sometimes foretelling the future, sometimes telling people how to live.

prostrate to lie flat on the ground.

Protestant those Christian churches which do not accept the authority of the Pope as head of the Church and which do not belong to the Orthodox churches.

purity innocence.

Q

Qur'an the sacred scriptures of Islam.

R

Rabbi a fully trained teacher of Jewish scriptures and traditions.

Rama one of the incarnations of the Hindu Lord Vishnu.

Ramadan the month when Muslims fast.

rebirth the start of a new life.

recite say aloud from memory

redemption to obtain freedom from sin and evil.

reincarnation the belief that the soul survives death to live again on earth in a new body.

repent ask for forgiveness for sin.

repentance sorrow for sins, and the determination to try to do better.

representative a person who speaks on behalf of another person.

resolution something you have firmly decided

respect to show or feel that you think someone is very important.

Resurrection return to life after dying.

Roman Catholic that part of the Christian community which accepts the Pope as the head of the Church.

Rosh Hashanah Jewish new year.

S

Sabbath Jewish day of rest.

Sacrament an outward, visible sign of an inward invisible spiritual blessing obtained through certain rites.

Sacrifice an offering of something precious or valued to God.

sacrifice giving up something precious. In some religions, birds or animals are killed as an offering to God. This used to be a more common practice than it is now.

Sadducees religious group who believed there was no after-life for the soul following death

Saint people whose Christian lives have been especially good.

Salvation Army a Christian evangelical church founded by William Booth in the nineteenth century.

Samaritan someone from the region of Samaria

sari a long cloth worn by a Hindu woman; it is wrapped round the waist and passed over the shoulder.

sash long strip of cloth or ribbon

Saudi Arabia a Muslim country in the Middle East, famous for its oil.

scribe a copyist of manuscripts, and also a Jewish teacher.

Scriptures special books from which people learn about their religion.

scroll a book that is written on a long piece of rolled-up paper or skin.

sect a small branch of a faith. The word usually refers to a group who hold beliefs that are a little different than the major religions.

Seder Jewish service at the beginning of Pesach.

Shabbat Jewish day of rest, from Friday evening to Saturday evening.

Shintoism ancient religion of Japan, meaning the 'Way of the Gods'.

shrine a special place, often containing a symbol, image, or relic, as a focus for worship.

Sikh someone who follows the faith of Sikhism and the teachings of the Ten Gurus.

sin disobeying God.

spirit an invisible power which can be good or bad

submission obedience to power

Sukkah a shelter or temporary house built by the Children of Israel in the wilderness.

supreme greatest or most important.

Synagogue place where Jews congregate, meet for prayer and worship.

T

tabu something forbidden or sacrifice.

Torah the five books of Moses which form the core of Jewish scripture

Torah the name the Jews give to their whole scripture, as well as to its most important section, the five books of Moses. (Christians call it the Old Testament).

transcendent a reality that is above and beyond this world.

transubstantiation a belief that the bread and wine during the Eucharist mysteriously become the actual body and blood of Christ.

Trinity the Christian doctrine that there is one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

V

vellum writing material made from animal skins.

vicar a priest or minister in charge of a church in the Church of England.

Virgin Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Vishnu Hindu god who comes to earth in different forms.

visions an inspiring thought or idea; an experience in which one sees a special person who gives one a task or a message.

vocation a special call from, or choosing by God to do certain types of work and service.

Vulgate Latin version of the Bible, translated by St. Jerome.

W

Word (the) to Christians this refers to Jesus Christ.

worship any action which expresses a person's love for God.

Y

Yom Kippur Jewish festival ten days after Rosh Hashanah

Yuga the Hindu idea of an age, a period of millions of years.

Z

Zakat ul Fitr Muslim Feast of Fast-breaking at the end of Ramadan.

Zoroastrinanism the religion of the followers of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster (about 1400BCE).