Glossary of Theological Terms for Credential Exams

Compilation of Terms from the Certified, Licensed, and Ordained Credential Exam Synopses

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(*This glossary was developed from a compilation of terms listed on the Certified, Licensed, and Ordained credential exam synopses. Each applicant is responsible to verify the definitions listed on his/her exam synopsis.)

Agnosticism: “Not knowing.” T.H. Huxley (1825095) used this term to express his opinion that it was impossible to know whether on not God exists.

Amillennialism: The rejection of the notion of a 1,000-year reign of Christ upon this earth. Most "amillennialists" are preterists. They believe that biblical prophecies were fulfilled in the first 300 years of Christian history. Some spiritualize the Millennium and make it represent Christ’s present reign in heaven during the entire Church Age. They deny that Revelation 20 refers to a literal period of 1,000 years.

Antichrist: a false Christ who will appear at the end of this age, become a world dictator, and demand worship.

Apocryphal books: books written during the period between the Book of Malachi and the birth of Jesus. The Jews did not include them in the Hebrew Bible and all the Protestant reformers rejected them as not being inspired.

Apostles: Means "sent ones." Messenger. Refers to the twelve that were chosen by Christ during His earthly ministry.

Attributes of God: the special traits, characteristics, or qualities of God that constitute his nature and being.

Arianism: Arius about A.D. 319 began teaching that Jesus Christ is a spirit created by God before He created the universe, and that Christ does not share the essence, or substance, of God, but has a similar essence. He divided the Godhead into three distinct essences. The result was subordination not only of relationship but of nature. This led to a reduction of both the Son and the Holy Spirit to a position of less than full deity. A major early Christological heresy, which treated Jesus Christ as the supreme of God's creatures, and denied his divine status. The Holy Spirit was said to have come into existence through the operation of the Father and the Son, making Him even less deity. The Arian controversy was of major importance in the development of Christology during the fourth century.


Assemblies of God-policies regarding divorce & remarriage of ministers: See General Council Bylaws Article IX, B, Section S-Divorce & Remarriage

Assemblies of God Purposes and Distinctives: Review General Council Constitution Article II-V
Assemblies of God fourfold mission of the church: (Review Statement of Faith #10—The Church and Its Ministry) Since God’s purpose concerning man is to seek and to save that which is lost, to be worshipped by man, to build a body of believers in the image of His Son, and to demonstrate His love and compassion for all the world, the priority reason for being of the Assemblies of God as part of the Church is:

1. To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world.
2. To be a corporate body in which man may worship God.
3. To be a channel of God’s purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son.
4. To be a people who demonstrate God’s love and compassion for all the world.

Atheism: the denial that any god or God exists.

Atonement: “The act of reconciliation” to God by covering with a price, the blood of a substitute, so that no punishment is necessary. A term originally coined by William Tyndale to translate the Latin term *reconciliatio*, which has since come to have the developed meaning of "the work of Christ" or "the benefits of Christ gained for believers by his death and resurrection."

Attributes of God: An inherent characteristic or quality ascribed; The attributes of God are set forth in order by Moses in Exodus 34:6 Exodus 34:7. (see also Deuteronomy 6:4; 10:17; Numbers 16:22; Exodus 15:11; 33:19; Isaiah 44:6; Habakkuk 3:6; Psalms 102:26; Job 34:12.) They are also systematically classified in Revelation 5:12 and 7:12.

  - **Constitutional Attributes**: Spirit, Knowable, Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Wise;
  - **Moral Attributes**: Faithful, Truthful, Good, Patient, Love, Gracious and Merciful, Holy, Righteous and Just

Autographs: The original (handwritten) manuscripts produced by the human authors of Scripture. These were probably circulated and copied so many times that they wore out. None of them are now known to exist. However, copies of them are now known to exist. However, copies made in ancient times do not exist.

Bible Versions: Translations of the Bible that are accurate and readable, a translation that would fall in-between literal (word-for-word) and meaning (thought-for-thought).

Calvinism: the teachings of John Calvin (1509-64), especially as developed by the Synod of Dort (1618-19), emphasizing total depravity, unconditional divine election, limitation of the Atonement to the elect, irresistible grace, and perseverance in grace. Reformed churches are Calvinistic. An ambiguous term, used with two quite distinct meanings. First, it refers to the religious ideas of religious bodies (such as the Reformed church) and individuals (such as Theodore Beza) who were profoundly influenced by John Calvin, or by documents written by him. Second, it refers to the religious ideas of John Calvin himself. Although the first sense is by far the more common, there is a growing recognition that the term is misleading.
**Canon**: Comes from the term *reed or cane*, which is used to *measure*. Used as a term to describe those books, which measure up to being inspired. It came to mean a rule, or standard, and then the list of books accepted by the Church as a whole as Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit, that is, the sixty-six books of the Bible. The tests of previous recognition by authorities in the church, style, the law of non-contradiction, are means by which we have derived our current Bible.

**Charisma, Charismatic**

From the Greek word charisma which means "gift". (*Charismata* are freely bestowed gracious gifts.) Related to or possession one or more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12:4,9,28, 30, 31). Often used of all who put emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit and the availability and usefulness of the gifts today. The theology of Charismatics is similar to Pentecostalism (see "Pentecostalism") and includes the second experience or baptism in the Holy Spirit.

A set of terms especially associated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In medieval theology, the term "charisma" is used to designate a spiritual gift, conferred upon individuals by the grace of God. Since the early twentieth century, the term "charismatic" has come to refer to styles of theology and worship which place particular emphasis upon the immediate presence and experience of the Holy Spirit.

**Christology**: (Fr. the Greek Christos, “Anointed One”, and logos, “word”, “teaching”, “message.”) The section of Christian theology dealing with the identity of Jesus Christ, particularly the question of the relation of his human and divine natures. The study of what the Bible teaches about the person, ministry, and work of Jesus Christ.

**Classification of Spiritual Gifts**: There are many gifts inherent in the Holy Spirit which are distributed as He wills. Review Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4. The gifts listed in I Cor. 12 may be categorized in groups of three. **If grouped by function**, they will be listed as follows:

- **Teaching and Preaching Gifts**—message of wisdom, message of knowledge;
- **Ministry Gifts** (to the church and the world)—faith, gifts of healings, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits;
- **Worship Gifts**—different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues

Others will categorize the gifts of I Cor. 12 by groups of three as gifts of Mind, Power, and Speech.

**Day of Pentecost Events**: Review Acts 2

**Deacons**: A word meaning “servant,” “helper.” An office in the local church. Both men and women served as deacons (Rom. 16:1; I Tim. 3:8-13).

**Deism**: A term used to refer to the views of a group of English writers, especially during the seventeenth century, the rationalism of which anticipated many of the ideas of the Enlightenment. The term is often used to refer to a view of God which recognizes the divine creatorship, yet which rejects the notion of a continuing divine involvement with the world.

**Deity of Christ**: See Statement of Faith # 3—The Deity of Christ

**Dichotism**: The teaching that a human consists of two parts: body and soul. Sometimes the soul is also referred to as spirit.
Discipleship: “Learner,” “student.” Includes all who seek to learn from Jesus and obey His teachings.

Divine Healing and Atonement: Review Statement of Fundamental Truths #12

Ecclesiology: The study of the Biblical teachings concerning the church and its practices.

Ecumenism: (from the Greek oikoumené, the inhabited earth.”) Refers to modern attempts to unite various denominations.

Elders: pastors (Eph. 4:11), bishops and overseers (Acts 20:28, etc.), “leaders” and “rulers” (Heb. 13:7, I Thess. 5:12, etc.) of the flock. They were also the regular teachers of the congregation whose duty it was to expound the Scriptures and administer the sacraments.

Eschatology: The section of Christian theology dealing with the "last things," especially the ideas of resurrection, hell, and eternal life.

Eternal Punishment & Hell: See Statement of Faith # 15
Read the position paper below:

Evangelism: a preaching of, or zealous effort to spread the gospel

Fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22, 23- those gracious characteristics/habits which the Holy Spirit produces in the Christian

Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20

Hermeneutics: The principles underlying the interpretation, or exegesis, of a text, particularly of Scripture.

Homiletics: the art of writing and preaching sermons

Holy Spirit Baptism and gifts: (General Council Constitution and Bylaws, p. 83).

Illumination: The Holy Spirit’s work in bringing understanding of the truths of the Bible.

Image of God: the likeness of God

Imminent return of Christ: About to happen, or having the potential of happening at any time. The teaching that the coming of the Lord, which is the Blessed Hope, may occur at any time.

Immutable: unchangeable as referring to the attributes of God

Incarnation: that act of grace whereby Christ took our human nature into union with his Divine Person, became man. Christ is both God and man. Human attributes and actions are predicated of him, and he of whom they are predicated is God. A Divine Person was united to a human nature (Acts 20:28 ;
Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 2:8; Hebrews 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 3:16; Galatians 4:4, etc.). The union is hypostatical, i.e., is personal; the two natures are not mixed or confounded, and it is perpetual.

**Infallibility of Scripture:** The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct. (General Council Constitution and Bylaws).

**Initial physical evidence:** The baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues. (I Cor. 12:4-10, 28), but different in purpose and use (General Council Constitution and Bylaws).

**Inerrancy of Scripture:** Truth without error of any kind

**Inspiration (Biblical):** The writers of the words of the Bible were inspired (literal: "in-breathed") by the Holy Spirit.

**“Jesus Only” Doctrine:** The doctrine does not believe in three separate personalities in the Godhead, but believes in three offices, which are fulfilled by one person. God is one transcendent Monarch whose numerical unity is disrupted by three ongoing manifestations to humankind as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three faces of the one Monarch are actually divine manifestations of Jesus, the personal expression of God through His incarnation. This doctrine teaches that people are not saved until they are baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. Additionally, this doctrine proposes that a believer must be baptized in water in the name of Jesus, rather than in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Justification:** The cardinal doctrine of the sixteenth century Reformation. Luther rediscovered that the "righteousness of God" in Romans 1:17 was not a quality in God but the gift of righteousness which God gives to those who trust Jesus. This righteousness is legally imputed to the sinner and is always outside of the sinner. We cling to Jesus! His righteousness causes us to become acceptable to God. Objective justification means that God has declared the entire world of sinners to be right with him. Subjective justification occurs when the sinner comes to faith in Jesus Christ as a result of the preaching of the word.

**Millennium:** A Latin term meaning “thousand years." Use to refer to the future reign of Christ on earth.

**Ministry gifts:** (See Eph 4:11.) Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, pastors for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry

**Mission of the church:** (see General Council Constitution and Bylaws, p. 84, 85). Evangelism of the world, corporate worship of God, and building a Body of saints in the image of Jesus Christ

**Modalism:** A Trinitarian heresy, which treats the three persons of the Trinity as different "modes" of the Godhead. A typical modalist approach is to regard God as active as Father in creation, as Son in redemption, and as Spirit in sanctification.
Monism: Views the human person as a radical unity, a self not composed of separate parts such as body, soul, and spirit.

New Heaven and New Earth: See Statement of Faith # 16

Ordinances of the church: a practice commanded by Jesus and continued as a memorial in obedience to Him. The two specific ordinances are water baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Outpourings of the Holy Spirit (accompanied by tongues) in Acts- Review Acts 2, 9, 10, 19

Pentecost: (the fiftieth day) a Christian festival on the seventh Sunday after Easter, celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. Acts 2:4

Polytheism: the worship of many gods.

Post-millennialism: The teaching that the Millennium is the Church Age or an extension of the Church Age, with Christ ruling but not personally present.

Pre-millennialism: The end-time belief that Jesus will return physically to the earth at the end of the Church Age to establish His kingdom for a 1000-year reign. Most pre-millennialists are dispensationalists who believe in the Rapture and a literal seven-year tribulation in which the anti-Christ will appear. Emphasizes the literal interpretation of the Bible.

Prophecy: foretelling and forthtelling. As used here, prophecy refers to that part of God’s revelation in Scripture that is predictive, the revelation which God gives from His sovereign and eternal plans and foreknowledge of things to come. The prophet was one who spoke God’s message to His people. In this he was both a forthteller (preaching) and a foreteller (prediction). It is the predictive element we are concerned with here, however, we must always keep in mind that prophecy, though dealing with the future, carries a current message for godliness, peace, and comfort.

Rapture: 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17. Rapturists believe that they will be "snatched" out of this world prior to the great tribulation. Those who believe in a rapture are pre-millenialists.

Reconciliation (literal: "overcoming an estrangement") The bringing of people to God in a restored fellowship. Theologically, because of the sacrificial (see "Sacrifice, "Atonement") death of Jesus Christ, God has reconciled sinners unto himself. God has made us his friends because of Christ.

Redemption: the purchase back of something that had been lost, by the payment of a ransom. The Greek word so rendered is apolutrosis, a word occurring nine times in Scripture, and always with the idea of a ransom or price paid, i.e., redemption by a ltron (see Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). There are instances in the LXX. Version of the Old Testament of the use of ltron in man's relation to man (Leviticus 19:20; 25:51; Exodus 21:30; Numbers 35:31; Numbers 35:32; Isaiah 45:13; Proverbs 6:35), and in the same sense of man's relation to God (Numbers 3:49; 18:15).

There are many passages in the New Testament which represent Christ's sufferings under the idea of a ransom or price, and the result thereby secured is a purchase or redemption (Compare Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 3:13; Galatians 4:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18; 1 Peter 1:19;
Revelation 5:9). The idea running through all these texts, however various their reference, is that of payment made for our redemption. The debt against us is not viewed as simply cancelled, but is fully paid. Christ’s blood or life, which he surrendered for them, is the "ransom" by which the deliverance of his people from the servitude of sin and from its penal consequences is secured. It is the plain doctrine of Scripture that "Christ saves us neither by the mere exercise of power, nor by his doctrine, nor by his example, nor by the moral influence which he exerted, nor by any subjective influence on his people, whether natural or mystical, but as a satisfaction to divine justice, as an expiation for sin, and as a ransom from the curse and authority of the law, thus reconciling us to God by making it consistent with his perfection to exercise mercy toward sinners" (Hodge’s Systematic Theology).

Regeneration: (literal: "to be born-again") John 3: 3-5) The Holy Spirit’s work of giving new life to the sinner who repents and believes in Jesus.

Repentance (literal: "to change your mind") A change of the basic attitudes toward God and Christ, which involves a turning away from sin and a seeking of God’s rule and righteousness. Reformation theology teaches that repentance is the combination of contrition (sorrow over sin) and faith in the forgiveness of sins promised in Jesus Christ. Such repentance is the result of hearing the Law and the Gospel.

Results of the fall of man: review Genesis 3; review Statement of Fundamental Truths #4—The Fall of Man

Resurrection: The raising of the dead through the quickening of mortal bodies through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation of Christ: Review Statement of Faith #13-The Blessed Hope and #14-Millennial Reign of Christ

the second advent of Christ. Three different Greek words are used by the apostles to express this, (1) apokalupsis (1co. ( 1 Corinthians 2 th 1:7 ; 1 Peter 1:7 1 Peter 1:13 )); (2) parousia ( Matthew 24:3 Matthew 24:27 ; 1 Thessalonians 2:19 ; James 5:7 James 5:8 ); (3) epiphaniea ( 1 Timothy 6:14 ; 2 Tim 1:10 ; 4:1-8 ; Titus 2:13 ). There existed among Christians a wide expectation, founded on Matthew 24:29 Matthew 24:30 Matthew 24:34 , of the speedy return of Christ.

Sabellianism: The teaching of Sabellius (third century A.D.) that God is one Person with one personality, but that he manifested Himself in three modes: the manifestation of God as the Father, the Creator; the manifestation of himself as Son, the Redeemer; and the manifestation of Himself as the Spirit. For Sabellius these were three different “masks” (which treated the three persons of the Trinity as different historical manifestations of one God). It is generally regarded as a form of modalism.

Sacrament: In purely historical terms, a church service or rite which was held to have been instituted by Jesus Christ himself. Although Roman Catholic theology and church practice recognize seven such sacraments (baptism, confirmation, eucharist, marriage, ordination, penance, and unction), Protestant theologians generally argue that only two (baptism and Holy Communion) were to be found in the New Testament itself.

Saints: Translates the Greek hagios, “a holy person.” In the New Testament all believers are saints, not because they have reached perfection but because they have turned their backs on the world to follow
Jesus. They are headed in the right direction. (Every believer born of the Spirit, who is an integral part of the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven (Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:22; Heb. 12:23)

Sanctification: To make holy, or holiness. It is the separation from the profane and unholy to a devotement to God. To make clean and holy in an ethical sense. Synonyms of this term in the New Testament are purity, holiness, cleansing, and perfection (completeness, wholeness.) It is significant to note that the Scriptures always exhort the believer to be pure and holy during their lifetime. The Scriptures present this as an action of the Holy Spirit that is worked within the believer after justification, but before glorification. There is no example in the Greek text where exhortations to perfection, purity, sanctification, or holiness are in the future tense. This fact denies the possibility of these actions occurring after death.

Second Death: See Statement of Faith #15—The Final Judgment
This phrase is found only in Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 20:14, and 21:8. The Targums use it ( Deut 33:6; Psalm 49:11 ). Philo uses the term to refer to all miseries arising from sin causing physical death followed by hopelessness in the afterlife (Rewards and Punishments 2.419). Revelation 2:10-11 contrasts it with the life given to the faithful. Death is the loss of the only kind of life worthy of the name.

The word used for "eternal punishment" in Matthew 25:46 is kolasis [kovlasi"]. According to Bauer writers during the New Testament period used it only of temporal torture and conscious torment in the afterlife. No other idea for koine Greek is recognized. Moulton and Milligan can find only examples in papyrus where kolasis [kovlasi"] involves the person actually feeling the punishment. It is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in 1 John 4:18, which says fear has torment.

The second death is to be cast into the lake of fire ( Rev 20:14 ). This is a permanent state ( Rev 14:11 ), where in anything that would qualify as "life" is forever absent.

Security of the believer: the Biblical teaching that the security of the believer depends on a living relationship with Christ; in view of the Bible’s call to a life of holiness; in view of the clear teaching that a man may have his part taken out of the Book of Life; and in view of the fact that one who believes for a while can fall away. (General Council Constitution and Bylaws, p. 121).

Sin and Salvation:
Sin is "any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God" ( 1 John 3:4 ; Romans 4:15 ), in the inward state and habit of the soul, as well as in the outward conduct of the life, whether by omission or commission ( Romans 6:12-17; 7:5-24 ). It is "not a mere violation of the law of our constitution, nor of the system of things, but an offence against a personal lawgiver and moral governor who vindicates his law with penalties. The soul that sins is always conscious that his sin is (1) intrinsically vile and polluting, and (2) that it justly deserves punishment, and calls down the righteous wrath of God. Hence sin carries with it two inalienable characters, (1) ill-desert, guilt (reatus); and (2) pollution (macula)."

Salvation includes all that God has done and will do for the believer in delivering from the power of sin and death and restoring to fellowship as well as assuring future resurrection and the full inheritance He has promised.
Tithing: 1/10. Used for the support of the active ministry and for the propagation of the gospel and work of the Lord and not give to charity or used for other purposes. (General Council Constitution and Bylaws, p. 124).


Transcendence: The term 'transcendence' derives from a Latin word meaning 'to go beyond'. It refers to deity as existing above, outside of, or beyond creation. It is generally a different and higher order of being than are humans and other living entities. For example, the ancient Hebrews viewed God as seated on a throne in Heaven above the firmament, where he could smell the delicious fragrance of meat cooking on temple altars below.

Trinity: The distinctively Christian doctrine of God, which reflects the complexity of the Christian experience of God. The doctrine is usually summarized in maxims such as "three persons, one God."

Verbal plenary inspiration: (General Council Constitution and Bylaws, p. 81). Full inspiration of the Scriptures right down to the words (of the autographs).

Vicarious atonement: (See atonement.) Christ’s substitutionary work on the cross.

Virgin Birth and Conception: the Christian belief that Jesus was miraculously conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary without sexual union with man (Matt 1:18-25 ; Luke 1:34-35).

Water baptism: The ordinance of baptism by immersion as commanded in the Scriptures (General Council Constitution and Bylaws, p. 83).

Worldliness: participation in activity that defiles the body, or corrupts the mind and spirit; the inordinate love or preoccupation with pleasures, position, or possessions, which lead to their misuse; manifestation of extreme behavior, unbecoming speech, or inappropriate appearance; any fascination or association which lessens one’s affection for spiritual things (General Council Constitution and Bylaws, p. 123).