

THE LANGUAGE OF DOMINANT CHRISTIANITY

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THE FILIPINO'S FIRST BATH.
MCKINLEY—"Oh, you dirty boy!"

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To baptize—A Christian sacrament involving the use of water—to be purified and/or strengthened and admitted to a church or church community.

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Language is the armory of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests.¹

[Language] ...has much to do with the philosophical and political condition of a society as geography or climate...people in Western cultures do not realize the extent to which their racial attitudes have been conditioned since early childhood by the power of words to ennoble or condemn, augment, or detract, glorify or demean. Negative language infects the subconscious of most Western people from the time they first learn to speak. Prejudice is not merely imparted or superimposed. It is metabolized in the bloodstream of society.²

¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*, chap. 16 in *Selected Poetry and Prose of Coleridge*, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (New York: Random House, 1951), pp 276-7.

² Saturday Review editorial on the “The Environment of Language” quoted in “Racism in the English Language” by Robert B. Moore in *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*. in, Enid Lee, et. al. editors, Washington D.C.: Teaching for Change 2006. p. 169.

Christian Hegemony and Language

The language we use is an indication of the deep structures of the way we think. The vocabulary, phrasings, and both explicit and implicit meaning of English words and concepts reflect our long history and the influence of many cultures, religions, and ideas of both dominant and resistant groups.

One of the longest-standing systems of institutionalized power in the United States is the dominant western form of Christianity that came to power when the Romans made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century. Christian hegemony—the everyday, pervasive, deep-seated, and institutionalized dominance of Christian institutions, Christian leaders, and Christians as a group—has profoundly shaped our lives. Some of that influence is very visible in our laws, customs, beliefs, and practices. Other parts of that influence have become nearly invisible, secularized, “common-sense” forms of knowing and being in the world. One way to identify both levels is to examine our language and the ways it represents, reflects, and reproduces Christian dominance. This pamphlet on the language of Christian hegemony is an attempt to widen the discussion about the impact of Christian dominance on individuals and institutions in the United States and in other Christian dominated societies.

When presented with Antonio de Nebrija’s *Spanish Gramatica*, the first-ever grammar of any modern European language in 1492, Queen Isabella reportedly asked the scholar, “What is it for?” Nebrija reportedly answered, “Language is the perfect instrument of empire.”³

The ruling elites of Christendom well knew the truth of Nebrija’s statement. From the collapse of the Roman Empire to the Protestant Reformation and the introduction of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century, literacy was unavailable to the general population and only some Christian clergy could read and write. Mass was said in Latin which non-formally educated people could not understand. Modern European languages developed in a Christian dominated culture deeply influenced by Christian values. Many words which had Greek, Hebrew,

³ J. Trend, *The Civilization of Spain* p 88 (1944) as quoted in Robert A. Williams, Jr. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990., p. 74.

Latin, Egyptian, or indigenous European roots were altered by Christian meanings.

About this pamphlet

This pamphlet is not about words or phrases. It is about the way that words and phrases develop out of assumptions about how the world works, what is important, and how we should live. The meanings encoded in the words and phrases represent deeper levels of thought and belief. As spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle suggests, “Don’t get stuck on the level of words. A word is no more than a means to an end. It’s an abstraction. Not unlike a signpost, it points beyond itself.”⁴ And like a signpost, a word is only useful if it takes us where we want to go, if it guides us in building the kind of world we want to live in. I would contend that many of these words and the core values and beliefs they represent take us, and have taken us, in the wrong direction. These words have been used to build health care, educational, and criminal legal systems that serve only a few and punish many. They have been used to create policies based on destruction of peoples, land, animals, plants, and the earth itself. They have been used to shape our relationship to our bodies, our feelings, our thoughts, our sexuality, and to other people in ways that limit and stunt our lives and allow our exploitation.

Notice these words and phrases. Think about what they represent. Notice what they point us towards. Decide how well they serve you. Do they point us towards where we want to go?

Words and phrases not only represent our values and beliefs, they also help shape them and to teach them to new generations. “So,” as Tolle writes, “if a word doesn’t work for you anymore, then drop it and replace it with one that does work.”⁵ The same can be said for our values and beliefs.

Dominant western Christianity is based on a moral binary understanding of the cosmos. There is perceived to be a battle between that which is connected to God and good, and that which is connected to the Devil and therefore evil—everything lines up on one side or another. The original phrase in the New Testament is in Matthew 12:30, “He who

⁴ Tolle, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*. Novato, CA: Namaste Publishing, 1999., p. 108.

⁵ Tolle, *The Power of Now*, p. 109.

is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters." This phrase was restated several times by former president George W. Bush and is a prevalent belief in our society. In this view there is no in-between, ambiguity, or compromise because the danger is too great. This moral "clarity" has become part of our everyday language.

The dominant influence of Christian hegemony and its moral binary worldview is perhaps most strikingly evident in the nearly constant ways that we judge things good or bad in our everyday conversations. Our constant referral to whether something is good or bad reflects the deeply binary way many of us see the world as well as the constant judgment we use to distinguish which is which. "That's good," "he's a bad boy," "She's a good person," "we're having bad weather," "They are going through a bad period," "We live in relatively good times," "I'm sorry to hear about your bad news"—these are examples of phrases which are used to render an instant either/or judgment which we believe can be indiscriminately applied to all kinds of different phenomena.

The weather is not good or bad, it just is. Rain might be inconvenient, disappointing, or uncomfortable weather for some and might be welcome, needed, or comforting weather for others. Our simple judgment gives the weather a moral status and our binary shorthand lets us avoid actually describing the weather and acknowledging the personal and relative nature of the statements we make.

Similarly people are not good or bad. We are each complex and not easily summarized or dismissed by a judgment. We may do things that are illegal, immoral, unhealthy, or thoughtless, but that doesn't make us "bad" people. And we know that "good" people are sometimes not what they seem. We often internalize both the judgment and the language to describe ourselves or feel as if we are good or bad people. This is reinforced by the media and the general culture that is quick to tell us which things count as good and which as bad.

We often also divide behavior into good and bad categories. There is good and bad sex (good sex = heterosexual sex for reproductive purposes, everything else is bad), good and bad violence (good violence is our violence against enemies, or the violence of the military or police—everybody else's violence is bad), and good and bad torture (good torture is what we do to those who are evil, to terrorists and agents of the devil;

bad torture is what others do to our troops and citizens). And, of course, many people speak of good girls and bad girls, usually referring to women who engage in behavior we either approve or disapprove of.

I'm not suggesting we abandon the use of the words "good" and "bad." But it would help us communicate with each more effectively and caringly if we less often resorted to a simple moral judgment and instead described the world around us without the moral overtones. We would be more present and connected to the world and more able to acknowledge and respond to the complexity of ideas, people, situations, and even the weather.

One way that Christian hegemony has overlaid a good/bad binary system on our intra-human relationships is by racializing our moral language and visual imagery through the use of the colors (and therefore words) "white" and "black." Good was defined as Christian, European, "white" or light, in contrast to bad which represented pagan, heathen, barbarian, Jew, Moor (Muslim), Indian, African, Asian, Arab, Latino/a, or mixed race—peoples who were "black" or dark.

"White," "light," "black," and "dark" are in the vocabulary list below. Think about how many words use black to convey a meaning that is evil, sinister, polluted, criminal, or illegal. How often the words "dark" or "darker" represents danger, pollution, something inferior, or something to fear.

The word "white" almost always conveys a meaning that is morally superior, innocent, pure, clean, safe, professional, fair, harmless, or peaceful—only positive qualities. "Lighter" is a movement towards goodness and away from all that darker hints at.

This white and black contrast has never been simply a linguistic one. Dominant western Christianity has encoded this binary in our visual imagery as well. Not just skin color but clothes color, and the color of various natural and human-made objects take on moral significance and communicate value.

Dominant western Christianity has used another major linguistic device to cover its violence and to preserve its benevolent stature—the passive voice. The passive voice is used in two different ways to mask power relationships and agency. In the first, white Christian men hide or obscure the history of violence and exploitation by white Christian men

through the use of such phrases as “Native American populations declined” (the U.S. government had a vigorous policy of ridding the land of Indians and even, at times, offered bounties for Indians killed); “Six million died” (the Nazi government had a systematic and extremely well-organized system for exterminating Jews during the Holocaust); “Many slaves did not survive the middle passage” (Africans were kept in conditions that ensured that many would starve to death or succumb to disease); “Slaves were brought to America”; “after the battle [massacre] women were raped”; “Many lives were lost”; etc. White Christian male use of the passive voice is also used to deny the presence and contributions of others in such phrases as “Washington, D.C. was built in . . .” (White, Christian political leaders used slave labor to build Washington, D.C. in . . .). The Continental Railroad was completed in . . .” (white, Christian male business leaders used imported Chinese labor and other workers to build the Continental railroad and many died in the process.)

Just as the use of the passive voice to obscure agency is part of the grammar of dominant western Christianity, the *enhancement* of agency is a contrasting part. Positive actions are usually attributed to white Christian men. They are the ones who built, who explored, who discovered, who invented and created. They are valued and good because they do good things. When bad things happen they are not, could not be responsible—which is indicated by the passive voice. White Christian men are active when it counts. Absent when responsibility is called for.

Using this Pamphlet

The following are commonly used vocabulary with Christian meanings. Many of these words and phrases have earlier or non-Christian roots but each is overlaid with Christian meaning and values and has a particular connotation for Christians and different connotations for those who are not Christian.

Christianity created new compounds such as “little faith” and “double-minded” (to be of “two minds”) out of older words. It also gave new meanings to old words such as Truth, Church, way, covenant, Word, saint, angel. It brought into common usage infrequently used words such as goodness, reverence, evangelist and beloved. And Christianity gave new religious meanings to some secular words, such as brother, gospel, salvation, hypocrite, peace, and parable.⁶

The unremarked-upon adoption of Christian-inflected words into everyday usage is an indication of the depths of Christian influence in our lives.

Take the word “outpost” for instance. Its formal definition is a small military base in another country or an outlying settlement.⁷ But it’s hard to hear or use the word without immediately thinking about the phrase an “outpost of (Christian) civilization.” Whether our image is of a fort on the frontier, a military base in Southeast Asia, a missionary compound in Africa, a mining camp in the Amazon jungle, or a settlement on the border we may well have associations of the word with a small group of beleaguered white Christians representing, extending, defending, or protecting civilization against the dangers of some kind of wilderness and the wild, inferior, and less civilized savage people who inhabit the area. Often the animals and weather are equally forbidding and reinforce the sense of danger. The role of white Christian men is to explore, investigate, conquer—discover this environment and protect the women, children, and other “dependents” who represent the core of western Christian values and who are with them in person or simply back at “home.”

Most of us, when we hear or use “outpost”, probably don’t consciously recognize all of these and other possible associations. But

⁶ Turner, Nigel. *Christian Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1981.

⁷ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* Third Edition. (AHD) Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992. p. 1286

for many of us, they are part of our deep-rooted common understanding of the meaning of the word.

The words below have many meanings. I have listed only those meanings that give some insight into the Christian influence on our thinking. Those marked with an asterisk are words that are false universals. Contrary to a Christian assumption of universal applicability, they have different meanings in Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, or in other religious traditions. For example, people are regularly asked to join in prayer to open meetings or public events. They might even be invited to bow their heads in prayer or looked at suspiciously if they don't. People in other religious traditions, if they pray, do not pray at those times, in those kinds of situations, and certainly not by bowing their heads.

Some of the words with an asterisk are words such as prayer and God in which the same word has Christian and other meanings. Other words, such as Bible and church, have a uniquely Christian meaning but are often made into falsely generic words applicable to other religions. Muslims, Hindus, and Jews do not pray in "churches," Their sacred texts are not "bibles."

A

Abominable/abomination—Orig. an unbeliever, demonstrated by that person committing one of several grievous sins.⁸

* **Abstinence**—The act or practice of refraining from indulging an appetite (sinful behavior) as for food, alcoholic beverages, and especially for sex.

Abys/abysmal—A bottomless pit from which it is impossible to escape (i.e. hell), the abode of evil spirits.⁹

Acolyte—Someone who attends a priest, performing duties such as assisting at the altar.¹⁰ Today, a devoted follower.

Act of God—An extraordinary act that only God could have known of or been responsible for. Used, for example, in insurance policies which exclude hurricane and earthquake coverage.

Act of grace—As in divine favor.

A.D.—*anno Domini*, year of the lord.

Adoption—Orig. the divine act of grace, adoption by god God of humans as his children.¹¹

Adorable—Orig. worthy of divine worship.¹² Now, generally cute or lovable.

* **Adore/adoration**—To worship as God (Christian).¹³

Advent—Orig. the period before Christmas. Now the arrival of something important.

Affinity—Relationship created through Christian marriage as opposed to kinship, related by blood.¹⁴ Today used more loosely to describe

⁸ Turner p. 2.

⁹ American Heritage Dictionary p. 8.

¹⁰ AHD p. 15.

¹¹ Turner p. 4.

¹² Chantrell, Glynnis, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of Word Histories*. (Oxford) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004., p. 10.

¹³ AHD p. 24.

a small group of individuals working together such as in the phrase “affinity group.”

* **Affliction**—In Middle English it meant infliction of pain or humiliation, specifically self-mortification.¹⁵ The Christian God is believed to punish by sending affliction and suffering.

* **Afterlife**—Orig. life after death.

Agnostic—Unbelief, or lack of saving faith in Jesus.¹⁶ The connotation for Christians became someone not to be trusted.

Agony—Deep suffering such as what Jesus experienced on the cross.

Aisle—A part of a church divided laterally from the nave by a series of pillars or columns.¹⁷

All things to all men—From 1 Corinthians 9:22

Alms—The practical virtue of charitable giving.¹⁸

Alpha and Omega—Phrase from Revelation (Rev 1:8, 21:6).

Amazing grace—Undeserved or unexpected divine favor.

Anathema—A formal church ban, curse, or excommunication.¹⁹

* **Angel**—One of nine orders of spiritual beings in Christianity.²⁰ Also: **Angel fish**; **Angel food cake**—Light, white cake (see also Devil’s food cake); **Angelic**—As in angelic expression—touched by or sent by God; **Angelica**—Herb believe to protect from poisoning and disease (see **witch**); **Our better angels**—Biblical phrase (used by Lincoln and Obama in speeches).

* **Animal/animal like**—A human being’s physical, as opposed to spiritual nature. A person who behaves in a bestial or brutish

¹⁴ Livingstone, E.A. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of the Christian Church* (CDCC). Revised Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. p. 9.

¹⁵ Oxford, p. 12.

¹⁶ Turner pps 474-8.

¹⁷ AHD p. 39.

¹⁸ Turner, p. 7.

¹⁹ AHD p. 67.

²⁰ AHD p. 70.

fashion.²¹ Often used to describe the feelings and lack of restraint of non-Christians indicating a lower form of humanness. Also carries connotation of human superiority to animals.

* **To anoint**—A ceremonial action to separate persons and things from profane use and to obtain for them the infusion of Divine Grace.²² Also, to convey divine blessings.

Anthem—Antiphonal Christian vocal music usually set to words from the Bible.²³

Anthropology—Orig. the study of human beings as contrasted with that of God or angels.²⁴

Antichrist—From Revelation: an enemy of Christ or a false Christ or simply an embodiment of evil.²⁵

Anti-Semitism—Orig. popularized by a German Christian anti-Jewish writer Wilhelm Marr in 1873 to describe what was for him the perfectly justified hatred of Judaism and Jews which he thought was a serious threat to German Christian culture.

Apocalypse/Apocalyptic—From the book of Revelation: great or total destruction.²⁶

The Apocrypha—Orig. books rejected from the Hebrew canon by the church. Today means added later, false, inauthentic.

Apostasy—Orig. the formal abandonment or renunciation of Christianity.²⁷ Now, abandonment of one's religion, political principles, or beliefs.

Apostle—Orig. the name given by the early church to some of its leaders. Has come to refer to those in Jesus' inner circle of (12) disciples.²⁸

²¹ AHD p. 72.

²² Oxford CDCC p. 26

²³ Oxford CDCC p. 27.

²⁴ Oxford CDCC p. 27.

²⁵ Turner, p. 19-20.

²⁶ AHD p. 85.

²⁷ Turner, p. 20-21.

²⁸ Oxford CDCC p. 32. See also Turner, pps 23-5.

Apostlebird—So named because it allegedly travels in flocks of twelve.

Appropriation—The practice of annexing to a monastery, college, or other spiritual body the tithes and profits of a parish.²⁹

Armageddon—The scene of a final battle between the forces of good and evil.

Aryan/Indo-European—Christian Biblical scholars used these words to describe Europeans as the descendents of Noah’s son Japhet.³⁰

As god is my witness

Ass kissing—Paying homage to the devil.

Assassin/assassinate—Orig. described Muslim “fanatics” at the time of the Crusades who were believed to be sent to murder Christian leaders.³¹ Also: **Assassin bug**—Bugs with short, curved beaks who eat other insects.

Atheist—Without god. A person who has no belief or faith in God—who denies the existence of God.³²

* **Atonement**—The reconciliation of humanity with God through the sacrificial death of Jesus.³³

Authorities/higher authorities—Rulers of the spiritual realm.³⁴

* **Awakening**—A term used by Christians to describe becoming aware of the power and glory of Jesus/God, and used by historians to describe periods of intense Christian religious revival in U.S. history e.g. The Great Awakening in the 1730s and ‘40s.

Axis of Evil—see **Evil**.

²⁹ Oxford CDCC p. 34.

³⁰ Kidd, Colin. *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. p. 23.

³¹ Oxford, p. 32.

³² Turner p. 493-4.

³³ Oxford CDCC p. 43. See also Turner p. 26-7.

³⁴ Turner pps 28-32.

B

* **Babel/babble**—Biblical scene of noise and confusion.³⁵ Also: **Tower of Babel**.

Backslide—To no longer follow the teachings of Christ, to revert to sin or wrongdoing.³⁶

Ban—An excommunication or condemnation by church officials.

* **Baptism/To baptize**—A Christian sacrament involving the use of water—to be purified and/or strengthened and admitted to a church or church community.³⁷ Also: **Baptized by fire**—Severe ordeal experienced for the first time.

Barbaric—As contrasted to civilized, i.e. contrasted with the refinement of Western Christian culture.

Babylon—First mentioned in Revelation as a site of moral and spiritual degradation.

Bastard—Legally and colloquially a child born outside of a monogamous, heterosexual legalized relationship (church-sanctioned marriage).

BC—Before Christ.

Bead—Orig. a Christian prayer. Subsequently came to describe the round objects used to count prayers.³⁸

Bedevil—To bother, pursue, or annoy such as the devil does.

To scare the bejesus out of—Alternate of “by Jesus.”³⁹

Beloved Community—A phrase used to describe an ideal Christian community carrying out God’s intentions. It describes the relation of Christian to Christian.⁴⁰

³⁵ AHD p. 132.

³⁶ AHD p. 135.

³⁷ See also Turner pps 37-41.

³⁸ Oxford CDCC p. 59-60.

³⁹ AHD p. 168.

⁴⁰ Turner p. 266-8.

Benediction—An invocation of divine blessing usually at the end of a church service.⁴¹

Benefice—A church office endowed with fixed capital assets that provide a living⁴² (a trust).

Beneficiary—Orig. the holder of a benefice.⁴³ Now the recipient of any kind of benefit.

Benevolence—An inclination to perform kind, charitable acts⁴⁴ for those in need.

Benevolent—Organized for the purpose of performing charity for those considered needy, dependent, and inferior. Intending to help.

Bewitched—Used to describe a man seduced by a woman using witchcraft and who has therefore lost his moral judgment.

* **Bible**—Collection of sacred Christian writings divided into an Old and New Testament. Today used more generally as in “His book is the bible in that field.”

Bitch—This derogatory word, originally referring only to female dogs, began to be applied to women shortly after the church authorized the Inquisition to investigate witchcraft.

Black—“without any moral light or goodness, evil, wicked, indicating disgrace, sinful.”⁴⁵ Also: **Black cat**—The shape the devil was supposed to take at witches’ sabbats⁴⁶ or the shape of a witch’s familiar; **Black magic**—Magic used for evil intent, dangerous; **Black art, blackball, black book, Black Death, black deed, black eye, blackface, black flag, Black Friday, blackguard, blackhearted, black hole, black humor, blackjack, black lie,**

⁴¹ AHD p. 172.

⁴² AHD p. 173.

⁴³ AHD p. 173.

⁴⁴ AHD p. 173.

⁴⁵ “Racism in the English Language” by Robert B. Moore, in *Beyond Heroes and Holidays*, p. 166.

⁴⁶ Kirsch, Jonathan. *The Grand Inquisitor’s Manual: A History of Terror in the Name of God*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008., p. 149-50.

blacklist, black look, blackmail, black mark, black market, black mass, black mood, blackout, black sheep.⁴⁷

Blasphemy/Blasphemous—Impious, contemptuous, or profane act, speech or writing directed at God or the church.⁴⁸

Bless you/God bless you—Said after someone sneezes or as a thank you for some action.

* **Blessed**—Sanctified, made holy by religious rite. Also: **Blessed St.**
; **Blessed Thistle.**

* **Blessing**—announcement of God’s favor.⁴⁹ Today used to show general approval: “Your marriage has my blessing.”

Blind—To not see the truth of God or lacking in spiritual insight as in “I once was blind but now I see.” Or in the phrase “to see the light.”⁵⁰

Blue blood—*Sangre azul*—Claimed by certain families of Castile as uncontaminated by Moorish or Jewish admixture. Now used to indicate noble or aristocratic descent.

Blue laws—Local ordinances prohibiting certain behaviors on Sundays. Prohibitions on selling alcohol on Sundays are still in effect in some counties.

Born Again—Orig. someone who converts or renews a commitment to Jesus, now, characterized by renewal, resurgence or return⁵¹

Bow one’s head in prayer—Muslims, Buddhists, and Jews, among others, pray in different positions and do not routinely bow their heads.

Brawling—The offense of creating a disturbance in a church or churchyard.⁵²

⁴⁷ See Richard Lederer, *The Miracle of Language*. New York: Pocket Books, 1991. p. 52.

⁴⁸ AHD p. 199. Turner pps 46-8.

⁴⁹ Oxford CDCC p. 75.

⁵⁰ Turner pps 50-1.

⁵¹ AHD p. 220

⁵² Oxford CDCC p. 80.

Bread and water (restrict someone to)—Common ration for prisoners of the Inquisition, sometimes referred to as “the bread of suffering and the water of tribulation.”⁵³

Brother—fellow Christian.⁵⁴ Also: **My Brother’s Keeper**—phrase from the New Testament; **Brotherly love**—Deep, non-sexual affection and concern that Christian men are supposed to feel for other Christian men and women. Charity or benevolence.

Bugger—Orig. Christian projection of aberrant sexual practices onto a Christian sect called Bogomils from Bulgaria, now slang for anal intercourse.

Bull—a serious and weighty written mandate issued by a Pope.⁵⁵

Bully Pulpit—Phrase coined by President Theodore Roosevelt to describe public office as a great opportunity to advocate an agenda like a preacher uses his or her pulpit.⁵⁶

* **Burning**—After Robert II of France burned heretics in 1022 burning became the normal penalty for heresy throughout Christendom.⁵⁷

By the grace of God (also found in: “**There but for the grace of God go I**”)

Byzantine—From the original name of the city where Constantinople (now Istanbul) was built and generally relating to the eastern orthodox church, now, negatively— full of intrigue, scheming, and deviousness.⁵⁸

⁵³ Kirsch, *The Grand Inquisitor’s Manual*, p. 99.

⁵⁴ Turner pps 56-7.

⁵⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 86.

⁵⁶ In those days “bully” was a positive adjective. The phrase has taken on a negative connotation since then.

⁵⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 88.

⁵⁸ AHD p. 264.

C

* **Calling**—What God calls one to do. or the divine call to salvation. For the Puritans, “the chief means of serving and praising God.”⁵⁹

Canon—A church law or set of laws, also part of a mass. Also books of the Christian Bible officially accepted as the Scriptures.⁶⁰ Today used as in, “Shakespeare is part of the Western canon.”

Capital punishment—State execution for some crimes. Some other societies have capital punishment but in the west it developed from Christian canon law based on passages from the Old and New Testament. Currently no Christian denomination except the Quakers (Society of Friends) considers it immoral although many individual Christians work against it.⁶¹

Carol—A Christian song of joy, originally accompanying a dance.⁶² Today often associated with Christmas.

Cathedral—The church which contains the throne of the bishop of the diocese.⁶³

Catholic—All-embracing, based on the Roman Catholic Church’s claim to universal truth.

Caucasian—Christian geographers and theologians claimed that the Caucasus Mountains had an abundance of sea shells and therefore this must have been where Noah landed and was thus the original home of (Christian) white people.⁶⁴

Call in the cavalry—From cavalier. A mounted Christian soldier or knight. Troops of soldiers on horseback used by the U.S. government to subdue “savages” (Native Americans) and barbarians (e.g. Filipinos) and to rescue white Christian families

⁵⁹ Lynn White, Lynn Jr. *Machina Ex Deo: Essays in the Dynamism of Western Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968. p. 64. Turner pps 61-3.

⁶⁰ AHD p. 281.

⁶¹ Oxford CDCC p. 99.

⁶² Oxford CDCC p. 101.

⁶³ AHD p. 303.

⁶⁴ Kidd, p. 24.

and settlements. Today used to describe mobile fighting units and often fondly applied to U.S. military troops engaged in combat in majority world countries such as Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Cell—Orig. the private room of a monastic Christian containing only bare necessities. Also refers to small groups of Christians who have pledged themselves to intensive work for the propagation of the faith.⁶⁵

Cemetery—Orig. a Christian burial ground.⁶⁶

Chapel—Orig. the sanctuary where St. Martin's Cloak was kept,⁶⁷ now, a place of worship smaller than and subordinate to a church.⁶⁸

Chaplain—A member of the Christian clergy attached to a chapel. Often misused (in the military or on campuses) as an interreligious title or reference.⁶⁹

Chapter and verse—Orig. referred to a section of the Christian Bible, now someone who knows the details of something. "He can recite that manual chapter and verse."

* **Charity**—A Christian virtue meaning love towards God and also towards one's neighbors.

Charity case—Someone to be pitied or someone needing Christian charity.

Chaste—Morally pure in thought or conduct.⁷⁰

Chasten—To correct sin by punishment, to make pure.⁷¹

Chastise/Chastisement—To purify by punishment.

Chastity—State of being pure or virginal.

Choir—A body of Christian singers assisting at Divine Service.⁷²

⁶⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 108.

⁶⁶ Oxford CDCC p. 109.

⁶⁷ Oxford, p. 91.

⁶⁸ AHD p. 320.

⁶⁹ AHD p. 321.

⁷⁰ AHD p. 324.

⁷¹ Turner pps 64-5.

* **Chosen people**—A belief by Christians that they have supplanted Jews as the receivers of the promises made in the Christian Old Testament.

Christ—Referring to Jesus as anointed by God.⁷³ Also: **Christ-like**.

To christen—to name at baptism. Now used in naming or launching ceremonies, e.g. of a ship.

Christendom—The Christian world.

Christian—A follower of Jesus.⁷⁴ Also as assumed benevolence as in “That’s Christian of you,” or “That’s was the Christian thing to do.”

Christian name—Orig. a name given at baptism or confirmation, now often refers to a first name.⁷⁵

Christian soldier—Orig. *milites Christi*—referring to an individual Christian. During the Crusades the phrase referred to those who took up arms to reclaim the Holy Land. See also the words to the popular Christian hymn “Onward Christian Soldiers.”⁷⁶

Christmas—The birth of Jesus, declared by the church to be celebrated on the winter solstice (December 25 in the old Roman calendar). Can be used as an adjective, as in “She exhibits a lot of Christmas spirit.” Also: **Christmas berry** (toyon), **Christmas berry tree** (Brazilian pepper tree), **Christmas fern**, **Christmas rose**, **Christmas cactus**, **Christmas disease** (a type of hemophilia), **Christ’s thorn** (a spiny shrub) etc., **Christmas bonus**, **Christmas vacation**

Church—A Christian congregation and also a place of Christian worship⁷⁷ often mistakenly used as a generic word to describe a place of worship of people who are not Christian.

Churched/unchurched—Knowledgeable in the ways of Christians.

⁷² Oxford CDCC p. 116.

⁷³ Turner pps 65-6.

⁷⁴ Turner pps 66-8.

⁷⁵ Ahd p. 340.

⁷⁶ <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/o/n/onwardcs.htm>

⁷⁷ Turner pps 68-71.

Church key—Ironic name for a can or bottle opener.

Citation—A summons to appear before a court of justice, especially a Christian court.⁷⁸

Civilize—To raise from barbarism to an enlightened (Christian) state.⁷⁹

Civilized/civilization—State of being showing evidence of (Christian) moral and intellectual advancement⁸⁰ as opposed to barbarous or savage. Also: **Clash of civilizations**—A phrase originally (and often still) used to describe the “battle” between the Christian west and Islamic societies.

* **Clean/cleanse**—Morally pure, virtuous or to bring back to a pure state.⁸¹

Cleanliness—As in “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.”

Clean living—Living without sin or vice.

Cloister/cloistered—Orig. a place for religious seclusion such as a monastery or convent.⁸² Now refers to any kind of secluded or protected place.

Cold war—The term *guerra fria* was coined by thirteenth-century Spaniards to describe their “uneasy coexistence” with Muslims in the Mediterranean.⁸³ The more recent cold war was declared by the self-proclaimed Christian United States against the Godless Communist Soviet Empire.

A **“come to Jesus” moment or conversation**—a conversation in which one is presented with the truth of Jesus, one sees the light, and is saved. Now used in less religious contexts.

Concentration camp—Deriving from Christian ruling elites attempts at containment (ghettos for Jews, leper colonies), purification

⁷⁸ Oxford CDCC p. 125.

⁷⁹ AHD p. 350.

⁸⁰ AHD p. 350.

⁸¹ AHD p. 354

⁸² Oxford, p. 100.

⁸³ Samuel Huntington Samuel., *Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of the World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. p. 207. quoted in Majid, *We Are All Moors*, p. 4.

(expulsion of Jews and Moors from Spain) and eventually also as a means of controlling rebellious populations such as Native Americans by the U.S., Cubans by the Spanish, Boers by the British. Eventually used by the Germans to exploit and exterminate “undesirable” populations and by the U.S. to control Japanese-American citizens during World War II.

Confession—Orig. statement of acknowledgment of faith or belief in God⁸⁴ and an acknowledgment of one’s sins to a priest. Today an admittance of guilt for a crime.

Confessor—Someone who listens to a confession.

* **Confirmation**—The Christian rite by which the grace of the Holy Spirit is conveyed in a fuller measure to those who have already received it in some degree through Baptism.⁸⁵

* **Consolation**—Comfort in knowledge of God.⁸⁶

Contrition/contrite—Feeling regret or sorrow for one’s sins.⁸⁷ The remorseful person is said to be contrite.

* **To convert/conversion**—Orig. turning sinners to God.⁸⁸

Corporation—The first corporation was the eleventh/twelfth century Christian church, a centralized, autonomous, self-financing institution. Canon law of the period specified regulations of corporations including for the emerging corporate universities.

Correction—punishment meant to rehabilitate or improve. Originally Houses of Correction were workhouses (jails and prisons) for (male) vagrants, street beggars, the intemperate, and the poor meant to instill the white male Christian values of “self-reliance, self-support, self-exertion, self-dependence, and self-elevation.”⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Oxford, p. 112. and AHD p. 195.

⁸⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 140.

⁸⁶ Turner pps 73-8.

⁸⁷ Ahd p. 410.

⁸⁸ Oxford, p. 119.

⁸⁹ Ryan, Susan M. *The the Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003. , p. 78.

Council—A formal meeting of bishops or church representatives to regulate doctrine or discipline.⁹⁰

Creationism—The doctrine that the story of the creation of the world by God in the Bible is literally true.

Creed—A concise, formal and authorized statement of important points of Christian doctrine.⁹¹

Crisscross—Orig. Christ's cross⁹²

Crime—Orig. wickedness or sin⁹³—crime and sin were used interchangeably.⁹⁴

Crime against nature/sin against nature—A phrase used by Augustine in the fourth century to describe any sexual activity that did not lead to procreation. Sexuality was believed to have led to the Fall of Adam and Eve—the Original Sin—and therefore sex was a necessary evil. During the twelfth century Papal Revolution masturbation, homosexuality, use of contraception, prostitution, any sexual position in which the male was passive—these were all considered sins against nature and proscribed and often severely punished.

Criminal—As a result of the Papal Revolution in the twelfth century sinners were considered criminals because they broke both sacred and temporal laws. Criminals were considered sinners because they broke temporal laws and they chose to do evil.⁹⁵

Cross—The first thousand years of Christianity show virtually no references to or images of crosses. Around the tenth century the

⁹⁰ Oxford CDCC p. 150.

⁹¹ Oxford CDCC p. 153.

⁹² Fessenden, Tracy. *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007. p. 234 n 43. See also AHD p. 442.

⁹³ Oxford, p. 127.

⁹⁴ Berman, Harold J. *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983., p. 70.

⁹⁵ Berman, Law and Revolution, p. 183.

cross began to be used to represent the death of Jesus when he was killed by the Romans. It is now a widely used sign and symbol of Christianity. Also: **Cross to bear**—Reference to the trials of Jesus; **Cross burning**—To burn a Cross on something—a white Christian threat of violence and expression of racial or other form of hatred; **To cross one's fingers**—sign of swearing to truthfulness ; **To keep one's fingers crossed**—to hope that God will provide; **Cross your fingers**—For good luck or for an answer to a prayer; **Red Cross**—a Christian organization set up to provide Christian charity to those suffering from the effects of war, famine, and natural disasters.

Crucifixion thorn—Any of several desert bushes and shrubs which resemble a mass of thorns.

To crucify—To put someone on a cross as a form of punishment. Orig. from crucifix, an image of Jesus on the cross. Now, to seriously abuse someone.

Crusade—Holy war. The word literally means “state of being marked with a cross,”⁹⁶ i.e. divinely sanctioned. Now used as in “crusade against poverty” or a crusading journalist.

Crypt—A chamber or vault beneath a church partly or completely below ground.⁹⁷

Cult/cult leader—Veneration of a religious nature often negatively applied to non-mainstream forms of Christianity or to non-Christian religious groups and their leaders as in “cargo cults.”

⁹⁶ Oxford Dictionary of Word Histories p. 129.

⁹⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 156.

D

Damn it/darn it—Christian expletive. Also: **To damn someone**—To condemn to hell and everlasting punishment; **to damn to hell/I’ll be damned/I’ll be damned if.../not worth a damn/to not give a damn/to be damning.**

Damnation/damnably/damned—Condemned (**also, damning testimony or evidence**).

* **Dark**—Mysterious and threatening as in “darkest Africa,” or “dark continent,” or “Dark Ages.”

Deceit—Intentionally falsifying or leading people away from the truth of God.⁹⁸

Deism—A form of Christianity which carried a belief in a creator God who manifested no further intervention in the world.⁹⁹

Deliver—To save as in “Deliver me from temptation.” Also used as an exclamation “Deliver me!”¹⁰⁰

Deliverance—Rescue from evil and/or surrender to God.

* **Demon**—Evil spirit or minion of the devil.

Demon lover—A lover who will lead you astray as the devil was believed to be able to do. Also **speed demon**—someone who drives too fast.

Demonize—To portray as evil.

Denigrate—To darken or blacken the reputation of and therefore portray as ungodly.

* **Denomination**—Branch of Christianity, now used more broadly.

Depraved—Corrupt in moral character or habits. Also: **Total depravity**—A Christian expression describing the extreme wretchedness of the human condition as the result of the Fall.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Turner pps103-4.

⁹⁹ Oxford CDCC p. 167.

¹⁰⁰ Turner pps 105—7.

- * **Development**—A progression from a simpler or lower to a more advanced, mature, or complex form or stage.¹⁰² Often used to imply the natural (God blessed) superiority of western Christian civilization and of white Christian men and women as contrasted with undeveloped or underdeveloped individuals, nations, or cultures.
- * **Devil/devilish**—evil and destructive force, agent of Satan¹⁰³ used in many phrases as in **Devil may care, between the devil and the deep blue sea, full of the devil, to give (or pay) the devil his due, go to the devil, play the devil with, the devil take the hindmost, the devil to pay, a handsome devil, make a deal with the devil, the poor devil, the work of the devil, devil’s brew, devil worshipper, an agent of the devil, to be a sexy devil, devil in the details, sell your soul to the devil, do the devil’s work, idle hands are the devil’s playground, devilry, in bed with the devil or in league with the devil, Poor devil!, to serve the Devil, to wrestle with the Devil, to “beat the devil.”** Also: **Devilfish; Devil Ray**—A kind of ray. The Tampa Bay Devil Rays, an American League baseball team, changed their name to the Tampa Bay Rays in late 2007; **Devil Worshipper**—A pagan or other person who worships a non-Christian god or gods; **Devil’s advocate**—Orig. a person appointed by the Roman Catholic Church to argue against a canonization or beatification.¹⁰⁴; **Devil’s club**—A spiny shrub; **Devil’s darning needle**—A dragonfly; **Devil’s food cake**—Rich chocolate (dark) cake which is tempting; **Devil’s Paintbrush**—A plant; **Deviled eggs**—Orig. to annoy or torment, like the devil does to a Christian (see also “bedevil”). Today, to season heavily; **Devilwood**—A kind of tree.

Diabolical—Of the devil.

Dirge—Christian prayers for the dead.

¹⁰¹ CDCC p. 595.

¹⁰² AHD p. 511

¹⁰³ Turner pps 109-10.

¹⁰⁴ AHD p. 512.

Dirt/dirty—obscene or indecent as in dirty pictures, a dirty joke, or a dirty old man.¹⁰⁵

* **Disciple**—Orig. a student of Jesus.

* **Discipline**—A set of rules or methods, especially those related to a church or monastic order. Training that produces moral or intellectual improvement. A state of order based on submission to rules and authority.¹⁰⁶

To discipline—To enforce obedience to rules or authority or to teach self-control to those under one’s legitimate moral authority.¹⁰⁷

Discover—The Doctrine of Discovery was a policy established by 15th century popes that any person who discovered land unclaimed by Christians could possess the land and convert the indigenous people.¹⁰⁸ This doctrine became embedded in the western legal tradition and is still cited as a guiding legal precedent in U.S. courts. The word is now used to describe the gentrification/colonization of new neighborhoods which are “discovered” by those outside them.

Dispensation—An exemption from a church law, a vow, or other similar obligation. Now, any exemption.

* **Divine**—As in divine right, or as an adjective meaning heavenly—as in out of this world. Also: **Divine Providence**—Provided by God.

Dogma—A religious truth established by divine revelation and defined by the church.¹⁰⁹

Dominate—The German word for cathedral is *Dom*.¹¹⁰ Cathedrals were often located on hills and “dominated” the surrounding countryside.

¹⁰⁵ AHD p.528.

¹⁰⁶ AHD p. 530.

¹⁰⁷ AHD p. 530.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Papal Bulls *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) and *Inter Caetera* (1493).

¹⁰⁹ Oxford CDCC p. 177.

¹¹⁰ Carroll, James. *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co. 2001. p , 258.

Dominion—Orig. Greek: slave master, one in absolute control. Used to describe man’s God-given control over nature, men over women—correct hierarchical relationships

Doom/Doomsday—Day of final judgment, terrible fate.¹¹¹

Doomsday Book—Popular reference relating the census that William the Conqueror had conducted after he came to power to references in the book of Revelation.¹¹²

Double minded/to be of two minds—Wavering or lacking in faith.¹¹³

To doubt—A negative verb for one who lacks faith or questions God.¹¹⁴

Doubting Thomas—From the story of Thomas the Apostle someone who is credulous or skeptical. John 20:25.

* **Dove**—A Christian symbol for peace and reconciliation, for the Holy Spirit, for the church, and for the individual soul.¹¹⁵

Driven with the wind—Phrase from the New Testament that describes one who wavers in their faith.¹¹⁶

E

Ecclesiastic—Orig. a minister or priest.¹¹⁷ Now, religious as opposed to secular.

Economy—Early meaning referred to “the method or order of the divine government of the world.”¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Oxford, p. 159.

¹¹² Kirsch, Jonathan. *A History of the End of the World: How the Most Controversial Book in the Bible Changed the Course of Western Civilization*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006., p. 158.

¹¹³ Turner 116-8.

¹¹⁴ Turner 118-9.

¹¹⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 181.

¹¹⁶ Turner 119.

¹¹⁷ Oxford p. 167.

Ecumenical—Orig. belonging to the universal Christian church.¹¹⁹ Now, all embracing.

Elders—A special order of the church’s ministerial hierarchy.¹²⁰

The elect—For some denominations those chosen by God for eternal salvation. Now, any chosen for special consideration.

Election—The selection by God of particular people for salvation.¹²¹

Elevate—To raise to a morally, culturally, or intellectually higher level.¹²² To raise (e.g. the ignorant or destitute) out of darkness.

The eleventh hour—From Mathew 20: 1-15. A parable in which laborers hired at the eleventh hour of the twelve-hour workday were paid the same as those hired earlier. Today it means the last minute or opportunity to do something.

Enchant—To put under a spell, as Christians believed witches were able to do.

End of the world/end time/end of days—Concepts from Revelation. Today as in “Don’t worry, it’s not the end of the world.”

* **Enlighten**—To make luminous, to shine, to make clear as in to bring God’s truth to someone or reveal God’s hidden mysteries.

The Enlightenment—A Protestant term coined in the 19th century to distinguish the previous dark and superstitious period of Catholic dominance from the self-described rational Protestant theology, science and philosophy that emerged in the 17th century.

Entrance—See *enthrall*

Enthrall—To enslave or make a servant of, see *bewitch*.

Epiphany/to have an epiphany —A revelatory manifestation of the divine will or truth.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Noble, David F. *Beyond the Promised Land: The Movement and the Myth*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005., pps 87-8.

¹¹⁹ AHD p. 584.

¹²⁰ Turner pps 124-7.

¹²¹ Turner pps 129-34.

¹²² AHD p. 595.

* **Error**—An act, an assertion, or belief that unintentionally deviates from what is correct, right, or true.¹²⁴ Within Christendom only the church could decide what was correct or true belief.

Ethnic—Eighteenth century definition was “heathen; pagan; not Jewish; not Christian,” sometimes “ungodly,” and “irreligious” were added as well.¹²⁵

Ethnic Cleansing—Orig. the practice of the church during the Crusades to root out and exterminate a heretical Christian group such as the Cathars. This practice was subsequently practiced by Christian ruling elites to expel Jews and Moors from their territories. Later this practice of elimination by extermination was applied by white Christians to Native Americans throughout the Western Hemisphere and by the Nazis to all “undesirables” including Jews, Roma, homosexuals, and people with physical and mental disabilities.

Evangelize/evangelical—relating to bringing the good news of the Bible or to preaching the Christian gospel.¹²⁶

* **Evil**—The quality of being morally bad, non-Christian, or dangerous to Christians. Also **evil-doer** and **evil-minded**. Also: **Axis of Evil**—Ex-President Bush’s description of the rulers of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea; **Evil Empire**—A phrase used during the Cold War Era to describe the Soviet Union as contrasted with the Christian U.S; **Evil eye**—To curse or afflict someone by looking at them—a common accusation against women suspected of being witches.

Excommunication—A form of Christian punishment which excludes a Christian from partaking of most Christian rites and from participating in the community.¹²⁷

Exorcism—The practice of expelling evil spirits—particularly from people—by prayers and formulas.¹²⁸

¹²³ AHD p. 619.

¹²⁴ AHD p. 624.

¹²⁵ Kidd p. 22.

¹²⁶ Turner p. 190-1.

¹²⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 209.

Expiate/expiable—To make amends, reparations or atone for one’s sins by penance.¹²⁹ An expiable sin is one which can be amended by penance.

Explorer—A western Christian male endeavor to investigate thoroughly or discover information about, and often to lay some political or economic claim to non-Christian peoples and lands. See also **discover**.

Expurgate—Cleanse by removing objectionable (to church leaders) material.¹³⁰

Exultation—Spiritual fervor and extreme joy and rejoicing about the good news of Jesus.¹³¹

F

Faculty—A dispensation or license from a church authority permitting someone to perform an action or occupy a position.¹³²

Fag/faggot—Orig. as a bundle of sticks for fuel used to burn people, primarily women, at the stake during the burning times. It became (16th century) a derogatory or abusive word for a woman. Eventually it became a derogatory word for a male homosexual.¹³³

* **Faith**—Orig. having a secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God’s will. Now, have (or lose) faith in/taken on faith—as in without scientific or material (secular) evidence. Also in popular expressions such as “keep the faith.”¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Oxford CDCC p. 211.

¹²⁹ AHD p. 645.

¹³⁰ Oxford, p. 192.

¹³¹ Turner pps 148-50.

¹³² Oxford CDCC p. 213.

¹³³ Oxford, p. 196.

¹³⁴ Turner pps 153-8.

Faithful—From belief in and commitment to God—as in “she is a faithful friend.”

Faith healer—Orig. a person who heals with Christian prayer, now used more generally.

Fallen—Moral overtones from Genesis: The fall of man (sic). To sin, lose one’s virginity. Often applied to women.

Familiar—An attendant to a witch.

* **Father**—Orig. Christian reference was from Jesus’ preferred referent for God (*abba*). In Christianity God is the father of Jesus and also the father of humans who are (adopted) children of God..¹³⁵

Abbot and **Pope** also derive from words for father. In Christianity a father is the ultimate moral authority with the responsibility to teach, educate, and discipline his family members.

Fellowship/Christian fellowship—Active participation in the community of followers of Jesus.¹³⁶

Fetish—Pejorative (and racist) Christian term for describing Indigenous religious items.

Fiend—An evil spirit, a demon, the devil. Now, completely absorbed or obsessed.

Fierce—Savage and violent.

Fight the good fight—From 1 Timothy 6:12: “fight the good fight of faith.”

Filthiness—The lowest stage of moral degradation—lowest reach of immoral indulgence.¹³⁷

Fire and brimstone/hellfire—Orig. how God punished Sodom and Gomorrah, also a phrase from Revelation (Rev 20:10) and other Christian New Testament writings. Now used to describe a rousing sermon describing the fate of sinners.

¹³⁵ Turner, p. 1.

¹³⁶ Turner pps 163-8.

¹³⁷ Turner p 174.

* **Fish**—the fish is a symbol of Jesus.

Flagellate—To whip or flog, scourge. Common punishment used by the inquisitions and by penitent monks and laypeople. Same meaning as in the phrase **To beat yourself up over something**.

Flesh/Fleshly—Negative moral sense given to the human body and human desires.¹³⁸

Flock—The community of Christians under the guidance of Jesus (the Good Shepard).¹³⁹

Fold—A Christian congregation, as in to bring into or welcome into the fold.

Font—Container for baptismal water.¹⁴⁰

* **Forbidden fruit**—From the story of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Genesis.

* **Forgiveness**—“Pray to God for forgiveness”/“Only God can forgive you.”

Foundation—A legal concept developed in twelfth century canon law which created a corporation for holding goods or other assets designated for the benefit of a church, hospital, or educational institution.¹⁴¹

Fraternity—Fraternities were founded by the church in the Middle Ages to meet the religious and social needs of clergy and laity such as support in death and intercession in sickness. They also promoted fellowship and recreation.¹⁴²

The free market/the market—Orig. an economic system or market that was free, i.e. unconstrained by human laws and regulations so that it could operate according to God’s natural laws. First described by Christian professor of natural theology Adam Smith

¹³⁸ Turner pps 176-8.

¹³⁹ Turner pps 314-5.

¹⁴⁰ Oxford CDCC p. 223.

¹⁴¹ Berman, Law and Revolution, p. 239-40.

¹⁴² Oxford CDCC p. 228.

as a system set up by God to reward the hard working and punish the lazy.¹⁴³

Frontier—Boundary area on the edge of Christian civilization surrounded by wilderness and savages (Indians). Also refers to an area not yet civilized and Christianized or not yet known by the civilized world.

Full Assurance—The faith that what God promises God will perform.¹⁴⁴
Also: **Full faith and credit.**

Fundamentalism—Strict adherence to and belief in the truth of the Christian Bible, now belief in the basics or fundamentals as in the phrase “market fundamentalism.”

G

General—the usual name for the head of a religious order such as the Franciscans and Jesuits.¹⁴⁵

Generous—Wealthy Christians were encouraged not to trust in their riches but to give to those in need within the Christian community.¹⁴⁶

Genuflect—To kneel momentarily on the right knee as a mark of ceremonial reverence on important church occasions.¹⁴⁷

Ghetto—The word “ghetto” originated in Venice, where Jews were confined by the Pope in 1516 to a district near the new iron foundry, or *geto nuovo*.¹⁴⁸ Ghettos were mandated for Jews, lepers, and other groups by the church much earlier than this.

¹⁴³ Noble, David F. *Beyond the Promised Land: The Movement and the Myth*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005. p. 86-94.

¹⁴⁴ Turner p. 25-6.

¹⁴⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 236.

¹⁴⁶ Turner p 185.

¹⁴⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 237.

¹⁴⁸ Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword*, 376.

* **Glory, glorious, or to glorify**—Visible light of God’s presence.¹⁴⁹ To exalt, praise or adore God.

Goat—Animal associated with the devil. Christians believed that Jews were servants of the devil and attributed horns and a tail to them.

God—**God Almighty/God bless e.g. America/God damn it! To play God; God’s acre**—Orig. a churchyard¹⁵⁰; **As God is my witness/in the name of God/ So help me God; In God we trust**—Refers specifically to the Christian god and not to Allah, Shiva, the Goddess, or Great Spirit. Added in the 1950s to our paper currency and declared by Congress to be the official motto of the nation to indicate that the U.S. is a Christian country in juxtaposition to godless communist ones.¹⁵¹; **(One nation) under God**—phrase added to the Pledge of Allegiance to describe the U.S. as a Christian nation, during the cold war to contrast the U.S. to the Soviet Union (sometimes described as the evil empire) and its godless communism.

Godchild/godfather/godmother/godson/goddaughter/ godparent—Christian relationships and roles at a baptism. Also: **Godparent**—(also sponsor)—Witness to a baptism who assumes responsibilities for the Christian upbringing to the newly baptized.¹⁵²

God-fearing—Pious and righteous Christian.

Godforsaken—Orig. forsaken by God, now, forlorn, desolate.

Godless—Wicked, impious, immoral, not Christian—a term often applied to heathens and infidels, and to communists during the Cold War.

Godsend—God sent, as in “I couldn’t do it all myself so her arrival was a godsend.”

¹⁴⁹ Turner p. 185-9.

¹⁵⁰ Oxford, p. 234.

¹⁵¹ In the words of the bill’s sponsor in the House, Charles Edward Bennett, “In these days when imperialistic and materialistic Communism seeks to attack and destroy freedom, it is proper to remind all of us of this self-evident truth that as long as this country trusts in God, it will prevail.” Congressional Record p 4384.

¹⁵² Oxford CDCC p. 556.

Godspeed—Orig. may God prosper you. Now, success, good fortune.

* **Golden Gate**—For both Jews and Christians a reference to the oldest of the current gates in Jerusalem’s old city walls.

Golly—Substitute for God in exclamations.

Good—**Good Book**—The Bible; **Do Good**—to be generous or show kindness in a practical way.¹⁵³; **Good News**—The message of Jesus’ saving grace, in contrast to and redemption for the bad news that we are all sinners; **Good Old Days**—Phrase generally used by white Christians to describe some former period when white Christian men were in charge; **Good Samaritan laws**—Laws protecting acts of voluntary assistance from liability; **Do-gooder**—A Christian who is doing charity. Now a negative term for someone whose efforts to help are detrimental; **For goodness’ sake/surely to goodness/my goodness/goodness gracious**—References to the goodness of God¹⁵⁴

Goody two-shoes—Character from a 1765 children’s Christian morality story. Now used to describe an excessively or annoyingly virtuous person.

Gosh darn it—Substitute for God damn it.

Gospel—Orig. “good news” of the Christian New Testament or based on Jesus teachings as in “It’s the gospel truth.”

Grace/divine grace—Divine love and protection or supernatural assistance from God. Also the invoking of or giving thanks for such blessing.¹⁵⁵ As in to say grace before a meal to ask for a blessing. Also: **Fall from grace**—Orig. Eve and Adam being forced from Eden. Hence separation from God through sin. Now, falling out of favor with someone; **Grace period/period of grace**—A period of divine blessing

Gracious—A substitute for the word “God” in such exclamations as “oh gracious,” “for gracious sake” and “good gracious.”

¹⁵³ Turner p 115.

¹⁵⁴ Oxford, p. 235.

¹⁵⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 248.

Grail/Holy Grail—Legend about a vessel bearing spiritual powers and blessings—sometimes claimed to be the cup used by Jesus at the last supper. Today, the object of a quest or prolonged endeavor.¹⁵⁶

Grandfather clause—The first recorded use of this concept was in the post civil war south. White Christians whose lineal descendents had been able to vote before 1867 were exempted from stringent new voting requirements enacted to prevent freed Blacks from voting.¹⁵⁷

Grapes of Wrath—Phrase from Revelation (Rev 14:19-20).

The Great commission—The instruction of Jesus to his disciples that they spread his teachings to all the nations of the world from Mathew 28:19: “Go and make disciples of all nations.”

Grim Reaper—Oblique allusion to a passage from Revelation (Rev. 14:19).¹⁵⁸

* **Guardian angel**—Orig. from New Testament references, an angel who protects whoever God assigns them and presents prayers to God on that person's behalf. Now, someone who watches over another person.

Guild—Guilds had a strong religious component; they were burial societies that paid for masses for the souls of deceased members as well as paying fines in cases of justified crime and regulating entrance to the crafts.¹⁵⁹

* **Guilty**—Responsible for the commission of a sin, an offense (against God), or a criminal act (against the community).

To Gyp—To be dishonest like a gypsy—derogatory reference to non-Christian groups of Roma in Europe and South and West Asia.

¹⁵⁶ AHD p. 786.

¹⁵⁷ AHD p. 788

¹⁵⁸ Kirsch, A History of... p. 187-8. “...the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.”

¹⁵⁹ Oxford, p. 242.

Gypsywort—A plant believed to be used by Roma (Gypsies) to stain the skin brown.¹⁶⁰

H

Hades—The place of waiting of departed spirits before judgment.¹⁶¹

Hagridden—Tormented or harassed by a witch.¹⁶²

Hail Mary—Orig. a Catholic prayer, now, a last ditch effort, phrase commonly used in sports contexts as in a “Hail Mary pass.”

* **Halleluiah/Alleluia**—“A heavenly song, a chant of saints in the bliss of Paradise, echoed on earth at joyful seasons.”¹⁶³

* **Halo**—The circle of light depicted around an angel’s, Jesus’, or a saint’s head to represent holiness.

Hearse—Orig. a latticework canopy placed over the coffin of a distinguished person while in church.¹⁶⁴

Heathen—Irreligious, uncivilized, unenlightened, unconverted to Christianity.

* **Heaven**—The dwelling place of God and the angels and to where those Christians chosen by God will exist after death. Also:
Heavenly/heaven on earth—When I hear that music I’m in heaven; **Heavens, heavens above, heaven help you; Heaven sent**—Sent by God.

Heck—A less strong or more polite substitute for “hell.”

* **Hell**—the place where unrepentant sinners are sent after death. Also:
Hellish, hell hole, hell to pay, to go through hell, till hell

¹⁶⁰ Oxford p. 243.

¹⁶¹ Oxford CDCC p. 258.

¹⁶² AHD p. 812.

¹⁶³ Turner p. 4-5.

¹⁶⁴ Oxford, p. 251

freezes over, come hell or high water, a living hell, like a bat out of hell, I'll see you in hell before I..., for the hell of it, go to hell! , going to hell in a handbasket, been to hell and back, a (snowball's) chance in hell, to catch hell, all hell broke loose, a hell of a lot, a hell of a mess, hell on wheels, be hell-bent on, have been to hell and back, play hell with, put through hell, raise hell, the road to hell is paved with good intentions, scare the hell out of.

Heresy—Orig. the belief of a Christian that is contrary to church teachings.¹⁶⁵

Heretic—A Christian who chooses error by denying or doubting official church doctrine, i.e. rejecting the authority of the church.

Hierarchy—Early, a body of clergy ordered into ranks or groups, or rule by such a group.¹⁶⁶

High-minded—The fault of being proud and confident—not fearing God.¹⁶⁷

* **History**—Orig. the story of “...the evident unfolding of the universal divine plan...the transcendent trajectory of redemption.”¹⁶⁸

Holier than thou—Self-righteously pious.¹⁶⁹

* **Holy Land**—A phrase long used by the church to describe the territory of the Christian Bible during the time of Jesus.

Holy Writ—Written by God.

* **Hope**—One of the three Christian theological virtues. The desire and search for a future good, i.e. union with God in heaven, based on faith and without doubt in God.¹⁷⁰

Hope chest—A chest used to collect items of clothing or household linen by unmarried young Christian women in anticipation of

¹⁶⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 268.

¹⁶⁶ AHD p. 851.

¹⁶⁷ Turner p. 212.

¹⁶⁸ Noble in Beyond pps 50-1. See pps 49-69 for a fuller description of the history of the concept.

¹⁶⁹ AHD p. 862.

¹⁷⁰ Oxford CDCC p. 279. Turner pps 212-5.

married life. Referred to as a “glory box” in Britain and Australia.

Hospice—A shelter for travelers, pilgrims, orphans, or the destitute especially one maintained by a monastic order.¹⁷¹ Hence also **Hospitality**.

Hospital—Orig. from Hospitaler, a member of a military religious order of Crusaders founded to care for sick and needy pilgrims in Jerusalem in the 12th century. Christian hospitals were set up beginning in the fourth century.¹⁷²

Humility—Submissiveness or humbleness before God.¹⁷³ The opposite of pride.

* **Hymm**—Christian song of praise or thanksgiving to God.

Hypocrite—Wickedness based on falseness.¹⁷⁴

I

* **Icon**—The image of God that Jesus bore, that man had lost (corrupted) at the fall, and which the church came to represent.¹⁷⁵

* **Idol/idolatry**—Negative Christian word for non-Christian (false) gods. Today, blind or excessive adoration.¹⁷⁶

* **Ignorant**—As in “ignorant savage” someone who lacks knowledge of the Christian god and/or of “civilized” life.

Illegitimate—Outside the law, not born in a family sanctified by marriage.

¹⁷¹ AHD p. 874.

¹⁷² Oxford CDCC p. 281.

¹⁷³ Oxford CDCC p. 284. Turner pps 216-8.

¹⁷⁴ Turner p 219-20.

¹⁷⁵ Turner p. 225-7.

¹⁷⁶ AHD p. 897.

- Immaculate**—Free from moral stain as in Mary’s immaculate conception of Jesus which was free of the stain of sex created by original sin. Today it means without impurity or spotlessly clean.¹⁷⁷
- Impious**—Orig. showing a lack of religious reverence. Now, not dutiful or respectful.
- Imprimatur**—(Let it be printed)—Certification by the church that certain kinds of books and other writing were free from doctrinal or moral error.¹⁷⁸
- Indian summer**—Orig. a time referred to as St. Martin’s summer. Since Indians were considered deceitful and treacherous may have originated from the sense of “false” summer.
- Indian giver**—A derogatory term for Native American ways which were considered untrustworthy by Christians. Now used to indicate someone who gives away something and then takes it back.
- Indulge/Indulgence**—Orig. a Church-granted dispensation from punishment for sin. Now, a yielding or giving in to a desire, an unrestrained gratification.¹⁷⁹
- Infallible**—Unerring. The words of a pope in teaching revealed truth were held to be God-sent and therefore not capable of falsity.
- Infect**—Morally contaminate or corrupt.
- * **Infidel/infidelity**—A person who willfully disbelieves in every form of the Christian faith.¹⁸⁰
- * **Innocent**—Uncorrupted, sinless, not harmful or dangerous.¹⁸¹
- Inquisition**—Orig. a court charged with investigating and suppressing heresy.
- * **Inspiration**—Divine guidance or influence.

¹⁷⁷ Oxford p. 262.

¹⁷⁸ Oxford CDCC. P. 291.

¹⁷⁹ Ahd p. 922.

¹⁸⁰ Oxford CDCC p. 294.

¹⁸¹ AHD p. 931.

Inspired—Orig. guided or aroused by divine influence.¹⁸²

Intelligent design—a newer Christian phrase for Creationism. It is the belief that the world must have had a supreme intelligence (God) who designed it

Intercession—A petitionary prayer on behalf of others.¹⁸³

Interdiction—A church penalty excluding the faithful from participation in spiritual things.¹⁸⁴

Interfaith—A Christian concept that technically means multi-religious but is often used to refer to Christian inter-denominational gatherings and projects with token representation of Jews and/or Muslims.

Invalid—Orig. from valid—Having sufficient strength or force; founded in truth, capable of being justified, defended, or supported; not weak or defective; good. Now, someone with a disability.

The Invisible Hand—Most commonly referring to the invisible hand of the market. The imprint of divine design on economic activity.¹⁸⁵

It's all Greek to me! —During the medieval period knowledge of Greek within the church was abandoned and when scribes came across a Greek word in texts it was often omitted with the Latin word *grecum* inserted in its place.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² AHD p. 935.

¹⁸³ Oxford CDCC p. 296.

¹⁸⁴ Oxford CDCC p. 297.

¹⁸⁵ Adam Smith first coined this phrase. Smith, a pious Christian and professor of natural theology, believed that the perfect economy reflected god's will. See Noble, *Beyond*, pps 89-94 for more details.

¹⁸⁶ Haskins, Charles Homer. *The Renaissance of the 12th Century*. New York: Meridian Books, 1927 p. 280 quoted in Ellerbe, Helen. *The Dark Side of Christian History*. Orlando, FL: Morningstar and Lark, 1995. pps p. 65,67.

J

Jesus Christ!

Jew/to Jew down—Bargain relentlessly and miserly as Christians believed that Jews did; Also: **Jewfish**.

Jezebel—A heretical and promiscuous woman described most prominently in Revelation, now a woman regarded as evil and scheming.¹⁸⁷

Judas—The disciple of Jesus who, it is claimed, betrayed him. Now, one who betrays another under the guise of friendship¹⁸⁸

Judeo-Christian—Christianity falsely claimed to supersede and render obsolete Judaism, a claim that is captured in the phrase Judeo-Christian. There is a very ancient and ongoing Jewish culture and tradition and a more recent Christian one. They are very different and there is no combined Judeo-Christian tradition.

* **Judgment**—God’s determination of which human beings would be sent to heaven and which condemned to hell¹⁸⁹

Judgment Day—Orig. referred to the Last Judgment when God would determine which humans went to heaven and which to hell, now a time when a major decision will be made.

Justify—To declare free of blame or sin, to absolve.¹⁹⁰

Justified—Saved or made right with God.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ AHD p. 968, this connotation also draws on reference to an earlier Jezebel in the Jewish scriptures.

¹⁸⁸ AHD p. 974.

¹⁸⁹ AHD p. 975.

¹⁹⁰ AHD p. 979.

¹⁹¹ Turner p. 239-45.

K

* **Kingdom, The**—The eternal spiritual sovereignty or realm of God or Jesus.¹⁹² Also: **Kingdom come**—Christian reference to the next world.¹⁹³

Knight—There were knights before the crusades but it was during the 12th century that religious orders of knights were set up by the Pope to protect pilgrims in the holy lands, and to fight in the Crusades, thus redefining the role with religious overtones—someone who was obedient to God, pure in heart, and a defender, champion, or zealous upholder of a Christian cause.¹⁹⁴ Also: **Knight Errant**—A knight who wanders around looking for dragons to slay and damsels to rescue—also: **Knight in shining armor**.

Knock on wood—Derived from the custom of using pieces of a cross as a talisman for good luck.¹⁹⁵

* **Knowledge**—Understanding/acceptance of God and spiritual truth.¹⁹⁶

L

* **Laity**—Member of the church who does not belong to the clergy.

* **Lamb**—A symbol of Jesus from John 1:29 “Lamb of God” (Jesus) used to denote meekness and innocence.¹⁹⁷

Lame—A Christian described state of having difficulty with movement often seen to represent a personal sin or failing, something to be

¹⁹² AHD p. 992.

¹⁹³ AHD p. 992.

¹⁹⁴ AHD p. 997. See also Mastnak pps 32-4.

¹⁹⁵ Carroll, Constantine’s Sword, 199.

¹⁹⁶ Turner pps 247-9.

¹⁹⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 335.

cured or healed, inadequate, perhaps even deceptive. Now used as a **lame excuse, lame duck, lame-brained.**

Lapse—a moral fall from Christianity hence a lapsed Catholic.¹⁹⁸

Last Supper—Refers to the Jewish Passover service that Jesus celebrated with his disciples before his crucifixion.

Laud/laudatory—From Psalms 148-50 originally to praise the lord, then a particular Christian service of morning prayers, now, to glorify.

Lawless—Sinful or immoral, disobedient to God.¹⁹⁹

Laying on of hands—Orig. a ritual for naming successors to Jesus' apostles and passing on his authority.

Lazy—Disposed to indolence, slothful²⁰⁰—a Christian sin. Often used to refer to a lack of self-discipline and determination. "Being" lazy is contrasted with working hard and used to ascribe a cause to people's lack of economic success. In this framework it is assumed that people are inherently sinful (lazy) and have to work hard to overcome this tendency. A "free" market economic system (i.e. one that is allowed to operate without government interference as God intended) supposedly rewards hard work and punishes laziness.

Lectern—A bookstand to support liturgical books.²⁰¹

Lecturers—Ordained and stipended ministers appointed by towns and parishes to provide regular preaching.²⁰²

* **Light**—Used visually and linguistically to symbolize good/godly as contrasted with dark/evil.

* **Limbo/in limbo**—A place after death for those Christians (e.g. unbaptised babies) who are denied entrance to heaven but have

¹⁹⁸ AHD p. 1014.

¹⁹⁹ Turner pps 254-5.

²⁰⁰ AHD p. 1022.

²⁰¹ Oxford CDCC p. 343.

²⁰² Oxford CDCC p. 344.

not been punished and sent to hell. Today, a place in-between or a time of waiting.²⁰³

Litany—Orig. a series of petitions for use in church services. Today, a tedious list.

* **Liturgy**—The prescribed services of the church as contrasted with private devotion.²⁰⁴

Live by the sword, die by the sword—From Mathew 26:52.

Loose—Lacking a sense of moral restraint, responsibility, or discipline as in “loose woman”, “loose talk”, or “loose morals.”²⁰⁵

* **Lord**—God. Also: **Lord have mercy/dear Lord; To Lord it over someone**—From Genesis (3:16) “your desire shall be for your husband and he shall lord it over you.”

Lost—A person who has not made a commitment to Jesus. Now, unable to find one’s way.

* **Love**—(agape) The essential nature of God. Christians are encouraged to unconditionally love God, and to love their neighbors, and their enemies²⁰⁶ regardless of their worthiness.²⁰⁷ Usually contrasted with love as a fondness for or attraction to something.²⁰⁸

Lucifer—A synonym for the devil.

Lucre—As in filthy lucre from Titus 1:11.

Lunacy/lunatic—Orig. used to reflect Christian disapproval of those who worshipped the moon.

To lynch—A form of racist murder in which a Christian mob took the law into their own hands to hang someone, usually an African

²⁰³ Oxford p. 302.

²⁰⁴ Oxford CDCC p. 352.

²⁰⁵ Oxford, p. 307. AHD p. 1061.

²⁰⁶ Oxford CDCC p. 356.

²⁰⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 356.

²⁰⁸ Turner pps 261-6.

American.²⁰⁹ Also: **Lynch law**—Vigilante or mob violence or “punishment” occurring outside the law.²¹⁰

M

Maker—God, as in “you are going to meet your maker,” to die and go for final judgment.

Malign/malignant—Orig. likely to rebel against God or other authority²¹¹ also, likely to speak or do evil.²¹²

Manifest Destiny—Belief that people in the U.S. had a God-given mission to rule the continental area between Canada and Mexico and even beyond (Hawaii, the Philippines, etc.) and generally to be a role model for the rest of the world.

Marriage bann—a notice of a proposed marriage proclaimed in church.²¹³

Martyr—Orig. a witness to Christian truth and then, after the fourth century, someone who gives their life for that truth.²¹⁴ Now often used sarcastically as in “don’t be such a martyr.”

Matrimony/marriage—Christian sanctified rite for confirming a lifetime bond between a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation and sexual restraint.

Mea Culpa—Phrase from the Latin Mass which means my fault (for sinning). Now, to take responsibility for something as in the phrase “my bad.”

²⁰⁹ Oxford p. 311.

²¹⁰ AHD p. 1073.

²¹¹ Oxford p. 315.

²¹² AHD p. 1088.

²¹³ AHD p. 143

²¹⁴ Turner ppps 272-4.

Medieval—A term coined by Lutherans in the Protestant Reformation to separate themselves from the pre-protestant period of Roman Catholic rule.

* **Merit**—A person’s right to be rewarded for a work done for God.²¹⁵

Middle Ages—A term coined by Lutherans in the Protestant Reformation to separate themselves from the pre-protestant period of Roman Catholic rule.

Militia—Before the Crusades, *Milites Christi* (soldiers of Christ) generally referred to monks, not soldiers. During the period of the Peace Councils and the Crusades (10th through 12th centuries) the word came to mean peace armies—military groups that waged war against God’s enemies to win peace.²¹⁶

Millenarianism/The Millennium—Belief in a future millennium—a one-thousand year period of blessedness— either before (postmillennialism) or after (premillennialism) the second coming of Jesus.²¹⁷

* **Miracle**—Something transcending the normal order of things (natural law) that occurs through divine intervention.²¹⁸

Miscegenation—An offensive term for a sexual relationship between a white Christian and a person who is not white and/or not Christian.²¹⁹ Anti-miscegenation laws were ruled unconstitutional in 1967 by the Supreme Court.

Miss the mark—To sin. The Apostle Paul wrote “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) using the Greek word *hamartia* (to miss the mark).

²¹⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 382.

²¹⁶ Mastnak, Tomaz. *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. pps 21-34.

²¹⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 386.

²¹⁸ Oxford CDCC p. 388.

²¹⁹ Marriage between a Christian and a heathen was void because one had to be baptized to be marriageable (to participate in a sacrament). Berman, *Law and Revolution*, p. 228.

Mission/missionary—Orig. sending the holy spirit into the world—a person or body of people sent by Christian institutions to a foreign land to bring the faith and/or aid.²²⁰

Mission statement—Orig. from Commission (see Great Commission above) and Mission (see above) now a personal or organizational statement of purpose or goals.

Missionary position—Christianity taught that women must be subordinate to men and therefore in sexual intercourse the man should be on top—Christian authorities such as Thomas Aquinas considered any other position sinful.

Missive—Orig. a letter from a monarch nominating someone as a bishop,²²¹ now more generally a letter.

* **Monk**—Hermits or members of a monastic order whose main duty is to offer praise to God within a monastery.²²²

Mortal sin—A major sin—one so horrible that it denies one's soul sanctifying grace and condemns one to damnation²²³—committing a mortal sin was justification for a death sentence during the Inquisition.

Mortify—To kill or subdue a desire by self-denial.

Mortification—Discipline of the body or the appetites (killing the lusts of the flesh) by spiritual self-denial or self-inflicted pain.²²⁴

Mortuary—Orig. a gift claimed by a priest from a deceased person's estate.²²⁵

²²⁰ AHD p. 1156.

²²¹ Oxford, p. 329.

²²² Oxford CDCC p. 393.

²²³ AHD p. 1176.

²²⁴ AHD p. 1176.

²²⁵ Oxford, p. 333.

N

- * **Natural Law**—The law implanted in nature by the Creator which rational creatures can discern by the light of reason.²²⁶
- Nepotism**—Orig. the privileges given to nephews of popes, who were often their illegitimate sons,²²⁷ now unfair preference for family or friends.
- New wine in old wineskins**—Phrase attributed to Jesus in Mathew, Mark, and Luke.
- New World**—In contrast to the old Christian and civilized world—also in terms of a Promised land for the chosen Christians who arrived there, a new opportunity to renew the world. Also contains reference to the “new heaven and new earth (often translated as new world” in Revelation).²²⁸
- Nonsectarian**—Not limited to or associated with a particular religious denomination.²²⁹ Often used to obscure Christian dominance by claiming that no particular Christian denomination is authoritative.
- Notaries**—People specially appointed by the pope or his delegates who confirmed and attested to the truth of deeds or writings in order to render them authentic.²³⁰
- * **Novice**—A person who has entered a Christian order but not yet taken final vows, today, a beginner.

²²⁶ Oxford CDCC p. 403.

²²⁷ Oxford p. 341.

²²⁸ Kirsch, A History of, p. 171.

²²⁹ AHD p. 1232.

²³⁰ Oxford CDCC p. 415.

O

Oath/oath of office—A formal declaration or promise to fulfill a pledge—often calling on the Christian god as a witness.²³¹ Attempts by non-Christians to use different religious texts such as the Koran for pledging an oath of office have been met with great resistance. **Other meanings:** “An irreverent or blasphemous use of the name of God...”²³² And: **Judicial oath**—Pledge to tell the truth in a court proceeding commonly sworn on a Bible and ending with the phrase “so help me God.”

Obedience—A Christian moral virtue that encourages people to carry out the will of their lawful superiors. It is one of the vows that monks and nuns take.²³³

Obscene—A term used by Christians to condemn something that incited lustful feelings.

Obscene kiss—Kissing the devil, something witches were often accused of doing during the witch craze.²³⁴

* **Offend**—To violate a moral or divine law-to sin.²³⁵

* **Offense**—A stumbling, or falling back from grace, a sin or a violation of transgression of a moral or social code—a transgression or a sin.²³⁶

Office—Orig. to perform a task of divine service, then became the place where such a service is performed.²³⁷

Officiate—To conduct the performance of a divine service.²³⁸

The One—Reference to Jesus. Today used to describe a savior/rescuer.

²³¹ AHD p. 1245.

²³² AHD p. 1245.

²³³ Oxford CDCC p. 417.

²³⁴ Kirsch, *Grand Inquisitioner's Manual*, p. 149.

²³⁵ AHD p. 1255.

²³⁶ AHD p. 1255, Turner pps 294-8.

²³⁷ Oxford, p. 351.

²³⁸ Oxford, p. 351.

One-drop rule—White Christian theory of racial descent, originally developed in Spain during the Inquisition as the concept of pure or clean blood (*limpieza de sangre*). It was embodied in laws (for example in Tennessee, 1910 and Virginia, 1924) which defined a white person as having ‘no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian.’²³⁹

* **Ordain/ordination**—To appoint a Christian to a sacred position/the ritual act of doing so.

Ordeals—A method of judicial proof used by Christians to establish God’s verdict when normal evidence was insufficient and a guilty verdict was wanted. For example, a woman suspected of witchcraft might be submerged in water and if she drowned it would prove that she was innocent (and dead) and if she survived it proved her guilt because she must have had the powers of a witch or the aid of the devil to survive.²⁴⁰

Orgy—Pre-Christian meaning was secret rites and worship. Christian meaning is excessive sexual activity or other indulgence.

Orient/Oriental—a Christian binary and Euro-centric concept to describe everything to the east of Europe from Palestine/Turkey to China, Japan, and Indonesia. It lumps together vastly different peoples, lands, cultures, languages, and histories and makes them foreign and exotic. It also renders invisible the West Asian roots, early history, and currents branches of Christianity

Original sin— The Christian belief that through Adam sin entered into the world and all people were subsequently born in sin.²⁴¹ Today used as in, “Their original sin was to not ask for help when they began the project.”

* **Orthodox**—Correct opinion aligned with official church doctrine.

²³⁹ Kidd p. 11.

²⁴⁰ Oxford CDCC p. 424.

²⁴¹ Oxford CDCC p. 427/8.

P

* **Pagan**—Heathen, not accepting Christianity.

Pandemonium—(Demons everywhere)—Capital of hell in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Panic/panic stricken—Christian association of pan with the Devil's influence.

* **Parable**—A simple story with a moral or religious message often used by Christians to refer to the teachings of Jesus.²⁴²

* **Paradise**—Orig. an enclosed park or garden. In Christianity since the eleventh century Paradise (or heaven) has been the eternal state of bliss achieved by those chosen by God in the final judgment. Today it connotes a state of present or future bliss.²⁴³

Parochial—Orig. relating to an ecclesiastical district or parish, now means narrow-minded.

The Passion—Jesus' redemptive suffering during the last days of his life, especially through his crucifixion.²⁴⁴

* **Peace**—The untroubled state of an individual Christian brought about by the acceptance of Jesus. Hence such phrases as "to make one's peace with God," "Depart in peace," and "may they rest in peace."²⁴⁵

Pearls before swine—From Matthew 7:6.

Peculiar—Orig. particular or special.²⁴⁶ A place exempt from the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese in which it is situated.²⁴⁷ Today unusual or odd.

Penance—Punishment to rectify sinfulness or an act of self-mortification or devotion to show remorse for sinfulness.²⁴⁸

²⁴² Oxford CDCC p. 435

²⁴³ Oxford CDCC p. 436.

²⁴⁴ Oxford CDCC p. 440.

²⁴⁵ Turner pps 320-1.

²⁴⁶ Oxford p. 368.

²⁴⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 446.

Penitent—Feeling remorseful for misdeeds or sins.²⁴⁹

Penitentiary—Orig. a priest appointed to administer penance²⁵⁰ then it became a place where punishment is given for sinfulness.

Pernicious—To work harm or evil.

Persecution—Orig. “material coercion aiming at impeding evil and compelling toward good.”²⁵¹

* **Perseverance**—“Steady continuance, after conversion, in the faith and life proper to the attainment of salvation.”²⁵²

* **Pestilence**—Something which was morally as well as physically corrupting.²⁵³

Pew—Orig. fixed wooden seats in a church.²⁵⁴

* **Piety/pious**—“Earnestly compliant” in the observance of Christianity. Devout. Also professing or exhibiting a strict, traditional sense of [Christian] virtue and morality.²⁵⁵

* **Pilgrim/pilgrimage**—A Christian who journeys to a shrine or sacred place—also the journey of a Christian towards God (e.g. “A Pilgrim’s Progress”). Taking up arms to fight in the crusades was often described as a pilgrimage. Now used more generally for a religiously motivated journey or simply a traveler.

Pioneer—Orig. a foot soldier. Often used to describe the first Christian settlers on indigenous land such as in South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and the U.S.

Plantation—To plant a Christian community in a new land as in the Plymouth Plantation. Also a vast estate run by white Christian men and worked by slaves.

²⁴⁸ AHD p. 1337.

²⁴⁹ AHD p. 1339.

²⁵⁰ Oxford, p. 370.

²⁵¹ Mastnak p. 30.

²⁵² Oxford CDCC p. 451

²⁵³ Oxford, p. 375.

²⁵⁴ Oxford CDCC p. 456.

²⁵⁵ AHD p. 1377.

Play God

Pontificate— Referring to the pope (pontiff). To make statements in an authoritative way, now used as pompous.

Poor/Working poor—A moral distinction and a catch-22 in western dominant Christianity in which those who are poor but not “working” don’t deserve support because they are sinful (lazy, unwilling to work, dependent) and those who are working don’t need support because they are working. Also implies disrespect for the non-working poor and ignores all the unpaid work that women and others do to support families and communities; **Poor box**—Box in church to make charitable contributions.

* **Poverty**—A renunciation made by a member of a Christian order. In the Medieval Christian church there was no virtue in being poor but there was virtue in renouncing one’s wealth.

The powers that be—From Romans 13:1.

* **Prayer**—Christian prayer is generally done with bowed, uncovered (covered for women) head and often in a congregational setting led by a church leader.

Preach/preacher—One who publicly proclaims the gospel.²⁵⁶

Preaching to the choir—Preaching to those in church who are presumably already saved.

* **Precept**—A Christian obligation as contrasted with a council or suggestion.²⁵⁷

Predestination—What God has foreordained about the salvation and damnation of people.

Preface—The words that introduce the central part of the Service of the Eucharist.²⁵⁸

* **Pride**—An inordinate love of one’s own excellence—the first of the seven deadly sins.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ AHD p. 1423

²⁵⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 472.

²⁵⁸ Oxford CDCC p 473.

* **Priest**—Orig. Christian religious authority.

Primitive—Low or early stage of development, unsophisticated, not modern.²⁶⁰ Often opposed to civilized. Christian missionaries thought that Native Americans and other non Christians could not be acceptable Christians unless and until they gave up their “primitive” cultures and adopted white European ones.

* **Proclaim**—To announce officially and publicly, declare the truth, praise, extol.²⁶¹ A verb often used by Christians as in “to proclaim Christian faith”, or “proclaim the word of God.”

* **Profane**—Literally, outside the temple, heathen.

Profanity—Sacriligious language.

Profess—Orig. be professed—be received into a religious order.²⁶²

Profession—The vow made on entering a religious order.²⁶³

Professor—One who professes. Orig. professors were those who taught at church supported universities in Europe

Progress—Orig. the movement, facilitated by Christian men, towards the fulfillment of God’s plan and the perfection of the world in preparation for the millennium. Today, advancement or development towards some positive or superior end.

Progressive—One who believes in the possibility of progress and works for the improvement of the world from a postmillennial framework.

* **Prohibition**—Within dominant western Christianity a tactic for eliminating substances or behaviors considered sinful most notoriously during the Prohibition Era in the early twentieth century when alcohol consumption was illegal in the United States.

²⁵⁹ Oxford CDCC p. 475.

²⁶⁰ Ahd p. 1439.

²⁶¹ AHD p. 1444.

²⁶² Oxford, p. 399

²⁶³ Oxford, p. 399

Pro-life—A word that male-run Christian groups that are against abortion have coined to claim a higher moral authority in the struggle over women’s reproductive rights.

Promiscuity—Illicit intimacy ranked with other sins such as drunkenness, wantonness, strife, and envying.²⁶⁴

* **Promised Land**—Orig. Biblical reference to Canaan, subsequently, Christian belief that, as successors to Jews, they were destined by God to come to the colonies in the Western Hemisphere to fulfill a biblical prophesy. Today, a longed-for place where complete satisfaction and happiness will occur.

Protestant work ethic—The belief that working hard is a virtue in and of itself, it will keep one from sin and will be rewarded by God.

Provost—The head of an ecclesiastical chapter.²⁶⁵

* **Pulpit**—Orig. an elevated platform used in preaching or conducting a Christian service.²⁶⁶

* **Punish/punishment**—To subject to a penalty for an offense, sin or fault.²⁶⁷

* **Pure/purity/purify**—Free from sin, corruption or defilement, hence the name (and adjective) “Puritan.”

Purge—To rid of sin, guilt, or other defilement.

Purgatory—A period/place experienced after one’s death for doing penance for one’s lesser sins before the final judgment. Now, to endure a harsh regime to attain a state of cleansing or purity.

Puritanical—Harsh discipline in an attempt to purge weakness and reclaim virtue.

²⁶⁴ Turner p. 350.

²⁶⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 482.

²⁶⁶ AHD p. 1467.

²⁶⁷ AHD p. 1469.

Q

* **Quiet time**—A period of private prayer and Bible study or devotional reading.

R

Race—Orig. from Medieval Spanish, a defect or blemish in the weaving of a piece of cloth. A bolt of cloth *sin raza* (without blemish) was worth more. By extension it was used to describe a Christian nation *sin raza de judios/moros* during the Inquisition—one which had a *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity), i.e. was religiously and racially pure.

Raise Cain (or the devil, or hell)—To behave in a rowdy or disruptive fashion.²⁶⁸

* **Rapture/rapturous**—The state of being transported, especially to heaven.

* **Reconciliation**—The process of bringing together in peace through the mediating presence of Jesus.²⁶⁹

Red blooded—Code for white male Christian Americans.

Red-letter day—From the practice of highlighting church festivals or saint's days in red in the calendar. Now, a memorable day.²⁷⁰

Redeem—Save from a state of sinfulness and its consequences.²⁷¹

Redemption—Salvation from sin through Jesus' sacrifice.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ AHD p. 1494.

²⁶⁹ Turner pps 363-4.

²⁷⁰ Oxford, p. 423

²⁷¹ AHD p. 1513

²⁷² AHD p. 1513.

Redlining—the formerly legal and institutionalized white Christian practice of economic and housing discrimination against people of color, Jews, Muslims, and other groups considered undesirable by Christian communities.

Relic—As in “a relic of the past,” originally a Christian phrase referring to the remains of or objects belonging to a departed holy person or saint.

* **Religion**—Orig. “a state of life bound by monastic vows.”²⁷³ Often used to contrast Christianity to superstitions, myths, creation stories, etc. Also used to mean to accept God (Christian) as in “He got religion.” Also: **Eastern religions**—a Christian binary term to indiscriminately describe enormously different religions found in Asia and to cover over the west Asian roots and history of Christianity.

* **Religious**—Orig. a member of a monastic order.

Redeem/redemption—To save from a state of sinfulness and its consequences.²⁷⁴

The Redeemer—Orig. Jesus.

Remission—The forgiveness of sin.

Render unto Caesar...—From Mathew 22:21.

* **Renunciation**—To discard, reject, or give up fleshly desires and earthly things.²⁷⁵

* **Reparations**—The amends made to God for offences against him by means of prayer and penance.²⁷⁶

Repent/(un)repentant—Remorse or contrition for past sin.²⁷⁷

* **Repentance**—The acknowledgement and condemnation of one’s sins, coupled with a turning to God.²⁷⁸

²⁷³ Oxford, p. 426.

²⁷⁴ AHD p. 1513

²⁷⁵ AHD p. 1529, Turner pps 365-6.

²⁷⁶ Oxford CDCC p. 499.

²⁷⁷ AHD p. 1530.

²⁷⁸ Oxford CDCC p. 499.

Requiem—Orig. the first word of the Christian mass for the dead, now a funeral service.

Responsibility/personal responsibility—Code phrase that encapsulates Protestant values of individualism, discipline, and hard work and Christian concepts of a market economy in which God (the invisible hand) rewards those who work hard and punishes those who don't. It is used to argue against social support for those who are impoverished or otherwise need assistance.

* **Restitution**—In Christian theology the act by which an injury done to another person is repaired.²⁷⁹

Resurrect—To bring back to life, raise from the dead. Also:

Resurrection—The rising of Jesus after his crucifixion;

Resurrection Fern—A fern that, during dry spells, curls up and looks dead until moisture returns; **Resurrection Lily**.

* **Retreat**—A period of days spent in silence and occupied with religious exercises introduced during the Counter Reformation period of Christianity.²⁸⁰

* **Retribution**—Recompense for evil.²⁸¹

* **Revelation/Revelatory**—A manifestation of divine will or truth without human mediation.²⁸²

Revival—A meeting for the reawakening of Christian faith.

* **Righteous**—Acting in accord with divine or moral law and free from guilt or sin.

Righteous Indignation—In some Christian doctrines, righteous indignation is considered the only form of anger which is not sinful, e.g., when Jesus drove the money lenders out of the temple.

Rob Peter to pay Paul—Orig. probably from a twelfth century Christian Latin phrase meaning “As it were that one would crucify Paul in

²⁷⁹ CDCC p. 500. Turner pps 374-7.

²⁸⁰ CDCC p. 501

²⁸¹ Oxford p. 433.

²⁸² Ahd p. 1543. Turner pps 381-2.

order to redeem Peter.” Today refers to taking money for one purpose and using it for another.

Rubrics—Ritual or ceremonial directions in Christian prayer or service books.²⁸³

S

* **Sabbath**—As a synonym for Sunday. Muslims celebrate Friday as the Sabbath and Jews celebrate it Friday evening through Saturday evening.

* **Sacraments**—The means by which Christians partake in the mysteries of Christ. They consist of seven Christian rites conferring grace (e.g. baptism is a sacrament).

Sacramental—A rite, an act or a sacred object used in a sacrament.²⁸⁴

* **Sacred**—Orig. consecrated or made holy. Also: **Sacred site**—Often used to honor Christian holy sites but not those of Native peoples or of other religions.

* **Sacrilege**—Violation of something considered holy to Christians, now gen. attack on something held important.

Sacrosanct—Made holy by a rite of the church, now gen. held in highest esteem, untouchable.

Saint—An official Christian designation for a holy person. Today used as in the phrase “She brought me food and was a real saint when I was sick.”

Salvation—The state of having one’s soul saved by God from evil and, ultimately, hell that brings about the possibility of joining God in

²⁸³ Oxford CDCC p. 514.

²⁸⁴ AHD p. 1585.

heaven through acceptance of Jesus and the avoidance of sinful behavior. Today, being saved from a bad event.²⁸⁵

Salvation Army—A Christian organization set up to provide Christian missionaries within the U.S. to minister to the needs of poor and working people and to lead them to God.

* **Sanctity/sanctum**—Christian words for holy.

Sanctimonious—Orig. holy in character, now used as pompous.

Savage—To refer negatively to people who were or are not Christian.

Salvific/salvation—The saving of a soul, state of being saved.

Samaritan or good Samaritan—The person in Luke (10:30-37) who reached out to the traveler who was in trouble. Today someone who does good deeds.²⁸⁶

Sanctify/sanctified—To make sacred by God.

* **Sanctuary**—A church or other sacred place where a fugitive was safe from arrest by religious decree.

Sanction—Orig. an ecclesiastical decree.

* **Satan**—Proper name of the supreme evil spirit in Christianity. Also: **Satanic**—Intentionally evil.

Save—To set free from the consequences of sin. Also: **Saved**—A person who has accepted Jesus Christ as one's savior and therefore has her or his sins forgiven; **to save the world**—"He thinks he is going to save the world"; **saving grace**—A redeeming quality or virtue.

Savior—Orig. Jesus, now as in, "In loaning me money for food he turned out to be my savior."²⁸⁷

Schism—A formal breach of union within a Christian church.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Turner pps 394-8.

²⁸⁶ Oxford CDCC p. 247.

²⁸⁷ Turner pps 392-4.

²⁸⁸ AHD p. 1613.

Scholastic—From Scholasticism, the dominant western Christian theological school of the Middle Ages that attempted to organize all knowledge into a single system.²⁸⁹

* **Science**—Orig. called natural theology then natural philosophy and subsequently natural science—the search for God’s laws in the operation of the natural world.

Scrutiny—The formal testing of applicants before baptism in the early church.

Secular—Orig. the world as opposed to the church.²⁹⁰ After the Protestant Reformation the word was used to indicate civil Christian authority as opposed to Roman Catholic authority. Now often used misleadingly to indicate something not influenced by Christianity.

Self-reliance—A Protestant virtue

Semitic—Orig. derives from Christian Biblical scholars who speculated that the Jews, via Abraham, descended from Noah’s son Shem, rather than from Ham or Japhet.²⁹¹

* **Sensual**—A negative Christian term for the animal or fleshly side of human nature often contrasted with spiritual.²⁹²

* **Sermon**—Orig. from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, now “a religious discourse delivered as part of a church service.”²⁹³

Settle/settler—“To establish residence in; colonize.”²⁹⁴ Often used to describe the movement of white Christians onto indigenous lands hence the use of the phrase “settler nations” to describe countries so colonized such as South African, New Zealand, Canada, and the U.S.

The Seventh Seal—From Revelation (Rev 8:1).

²⁸⁹ AHD p. 1615. Also Linda Woodhead, *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004., p. 62.

²⁹⁰ Oxford, p. 455.

²⁹¹ Kidd p. 22-4.

²⁹² Turner pps 409-10.²⁹² Kidd p. 22-4.

²⁹³ AHD p. 1648. Oxford 457.

²⁹⁴ Ahd p. 1652.

The Sex/the opposite sex—Christian assumption that there are two genders and they are related to each other in a binary opposition.

Shock and Awe—Recent political/military term used to describe the righteous power of and impossibility of resistance to U.S. might—claims Christian god-like powers of (apocalyptic) destruction.

Sign(s) of the times—Orig. a signal of the approaching end times

Simony—Reference to Simon Magus in Acts 9:19-22. The purchase or sale of spiritual things.

Sin—Orig. the purposeful disobedience of a person to the known will of God,²⁹⁵ the transgression of religious guidelines. Today refers to a lack of virtue or an act that is reprehensible.

Seven deadly sins—Pride, covetousness (greed), lust, envy, gluttony, wrath (anger), and sloth (laziness). These Cardinal or Mortal sins destroyed the life of grace and could lead to eternal damnation if not absolved or forgiven.

Sleepy—“Inactive, quiet: a sleepy rural town.”²⁹⁶ Often used to describe villages, towns, and even countries that are not considered active, vital, modern, progressing and productive, implies that they are waiting for contact with advanced western Christian civilization to wake up and start developing.

Social gospel—A liberal Christian movement from a postmillennial framework which stressed human potential and the idea of progress, and was reformist and utopian in tone.²⁹⁷

Sodom and Gomorrah—Orig. towns mentioned in Genesis which were destroyed by fire because of their wickedness. Today used to describe a place of great sin or wickedness. Also: **Sodomy**—From the story of the residents of Sodom in the Bible, originally referring to their sinful behavior, which was interpreted to be either inhospitality or rape. After the fourth century their sin was interpreted to be deviant (or any) sexual activity in line with the

²⁹⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 545.

²⁹⁶ AHD p. 1695.

²⁹⁷ Oxford CDCC p. 548.

growing anti-sex orthodoxy of the church. In the Twelfth century sodomites came to refer specifically to those who participated in homosexual activity.

Sound Mind—Orig. a Christian phrase meaning self-control or self-discipline.

Sovereign/sovereignty—Self-governing. In dominant western Christianity only Christians and Christian nations are believed to be able to self-govern.

Spare the rod and spoil the child—Common Christian admonition to parents to use physical discipline based on various passages in the New Testament.

Spell—A word or phrase believed to have magic power—a power attributed by Christians to witches and sorcerers.

Spellbinding/spellbound—Enchanting, bewitching, fascinating.

* **The Spirit**—Orig. the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. Now also refers to being inspired by passion, intuition, or divine impulse.

Spiritual warfare—The battle waged by Christians for God, against the Devil to convert (or kill) non-Christians and reclaim their land.

Sponsor—(also **Godparent**)—Witness to a baptism who assumes responsibilities for the Christian upbringing to the newly baptized.²⁹⁸

Steeple—a tall tower or spiral on a church.

Steeplechase —a horserace, foot race or course of action marked by many obstacles named from the use of church steeples as landmarks.²⁹⁹

* **Stewardship**—Management of the earth by humans on behalf of God.³⁰⁰

* **Stiff-necked**—A phrase from Exodus and elsewhere that early Christians used to refer to the “arrogant of heart” who refuse to

²⁹⁸ Oxford CDCC p. 556.

²⁹⁹ Ahd p. 1760.

³⁰⁰ Oxford CDCC p. 560.

see the truth of Jesus and are therefore destined for divine punishment.”³⁰¹

To stumble—To sin.

Suffering—Suffering is believed to be a sign of sinfulness and a source of redemption based on the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

Suffrage—Orig. intercessory prayers.³⁰²

Sunday—The Lord’s day.

Sunday best—clothes fit to be worn to church

Sunday school—Orig. school for Christian instruction given on a Sunday.

Sundown towns—the white Christian towns, residential areas, and cities which prohibited people of colors, Jews, or other groups deemed undesirable from living in or, in many cases, even staying overnight (after sundown) in them.

* **Superior**—One who has authority over others because of their ecclesiastical rank.³⁰³

Superstition/superstitious—Pejorative Christian word used, for example, in reference to African or Indigenous American religious beliefs.

* **Surrender**—As in submission to God’s will.

Swear—To use profane oaths or to make a solemn declaration invoking God.³⁰⁴ Also **swear at**, **swear in**, **swear out (a warrant)**, **swear word**, **swear on the Bible**.

³⁰¹ Turner p 431.

³⁰² Oxford, p. 493.

³⁰³ Oxford CDCC p. 567.

³⁰⁴ AHD, p. 1812

T

Take off one's hat to—To show respect for (for Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, and other religious/cultural groups putting on head wear is a sign of respect, not baring one's head).

Take our country back—Phrase used by white Christians to bemoan the loss of white Christian male dominance and the growth and increased influence of communities of color and other marginalized groups.

Technology—Originally mechanical arts, then arts of science, meant to refer to the achievement of practical knowledge of the unfolding and fulfilling of the divine plan through contributions to the perfection of society.³⁰⁵

* **Temperance**—Restraint of the appetites and passions in accordance with reason. One of the four cardinal virtues.

Temptation—Orig. reference to Mathew 4, the temptation of Jesus by the devil—a moral and religious trial or tribulation (sometimes a persecution) caused by Satan or by one's own lusts.³⁰⁶ Now generally the allure of anything sinful or forbidden.

* **Test of faith**—Orig. an experience of pain or suffering such as Job experienced that challenges a person's trust in God. A trial to separate the true believer from the false to see who is fit for salvation. Also in the phrases "to be put to the test" or "tried and tested". During the Inquisitions this was turned into methods of physical torture as inquisitioners developed various trials by fire and water.³⁰⁷

Testament—The Bible, also the Christian meaning of a witness which led to the word testimony.³⁰⁸ Also: **New testament**—Second part of Christian Bible, not officially codified until the 15th century; **Old Testament**—First part of Christian bible based on Jewish

³⁰⁵ Noble in Beyond, pps 69-86.

³⁰⁶ Turner pps 440-3

³⁰⁷ Turner pps 444-7.

³⁰⁸ Oxford, p. 508.

scriptures which were subtracted from, added to, reordered, and edited.

Testify—To make a declaration of faith. Also to tell the story of how one came to be a Christian.

Testimony—A public declaration regarding a religious experience.³⁰⁹

T.G.I.F.—Thank God, it's Friday

Theology/theologian—Orig. only pertaining to Christianity, the science of the divinely revealed religious truths relating to the word of God or the Bible.³¹⁰

Third degree (to give someone the)—The Inquisition specified five different degrees of severity in the torture to be applied to heretics.³¹¹

Theology/theological/theologian—Relating to the word of God or the bible.³¹²

Thirteen—Declared to be an unlucky number by the church to counter the pagan belief that thirteen was lucky. Many high rise hotels and office buildings do not have a thirteenth floor (of course, the floor labeled “fourteen” is, in fact, the thirteenth floor).

A Thorn in the flesh—From 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

Through a glass, darkly—From 1 Corinthians 13:12.

* **Tithe**—Paying one-tenth of one's earning for the support of a Christian church or clergy member.³¹³

Time/To kill time/waste time—The valuation within Christianity and capitalism on being productive and the devaluing of leisure activities and “unproductive” use of time.

Tract—A pamphlet with a Christian or moral purpose.

³⁰⁹ AHD p. 1855.

³¹⁰ Oxford p. 509.

³¹¹ Kirsch, The Grand Inquisitor's Manual p. 93.

³¹² Oxford, p. 509.

³¹³ AHD p. 1881.

Traitor—From the Latin word for “one who hands over.” It was used by early Christians to describe other Christians who handed over their Bibles to the Romans and vowed allegiance to the emperor rather than be martyred.³¹⁴

Trial by fire (also, hold someone’s feet to the fire)—common form of torture used and perfected during the Inquisition.

* **Tolerance**—Granting of permission by religious authority.³¹⁵

A Trust—Legal device used by the church to avoid civil taxes. Title to church land was conveyed to a lay person to be held by him as trustee for the religious corporation.³¹⁶

* **Truth**—Knowledge of God through Jesus which the Gospels can lead Christians to. Does not refer to knowledge of the material world. Used in such expressions as “to bear witness to the truth,” “to rejoice in the truth,” “to know the truth.”³¹⁷ **Also: the truth shall set you free**—Belief that knowledge of God will relieve one from suffering and lead to salvation.

Twelve-step program—A program for recovering from addictions based on a Christian framework of surrendering one’s will to God.

U

Unction/unctuous—Anointing with oil for a religious purpose usually by a bishop or priest. Today unctuous is used to describe a person who shows exaggerated or false earnestness, or is slippery.³¹⁸

Under God—As in “one nation, under God...”

³¹⁴ Krisch. A History of. P. 118.

³¹⁵ Oxford p. 515.

³¹⁶ Berman, LawLand and Revolution, p. 235.

³¹⁷ Turner pps 464-7.

³¹⁸ Oxford CDCC p. 604.

* **Unholy**—Wicked or immoral, not consecrated.

* **University**—Orig. used to describe the corporate bodies of teachers and students “moving in one direction” i.e. towards God, in the early Christian-governed centers of learning in Europe.

Unnatural—Judged to be contrary to natural law (God’s law). A deviation or violation of natural feelings, behavior, or social norms.³¹⁹ (Homosexuality, although very common among many animal species, is often referred to as unnatural in dominant western Christianity).

V

Vale of tears—Earthly sorrows that are left behind when one enters heaven.

Vandal/vandalize—Orig. the name of a Germanic group that attacked the Christianized Roman empire, now someone who intentionally destroys private property.

Venerable—Used in reference to ecclesiastics or those who have obtained the first degree of canonization. Now generally commanding respect because of age, dignity or position.

Venial sin—A serious but forgivable sin warranting only temporal punishment.³²⁰

Vice—An evil, degrading, or immoral practice or habit³²¹ Dante’s seven deadly vices were pride (vanity), avarice (greed), lust, wrath (anger), gluttony, envy (jealousy), and sloth (laziness).

* **Vigil**—A Christian service held at night the day before a festival.³²²

³¹⁹ AHD p. 1956.

³²⁰ Oxford CDCC p. 615.

³²¹ AHD p. 1989

³²² Oxford CDCC p. 619.

Vigilance—Spiritual alertness and watchfulness lest one stray from (be tempted from) the path to God.³²³

* **Virtue**—Moral excellence and righteousness (rightness with God).³²⁴
Also: **Cardinal virtues**—Prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice, contrasted with the theological virtues.

* **Vow**—Orig. to pledge to follow a life of Christian religious devotion—now, a pledge of fidelity as in wedding vows.

W

Wagons/circle the wagons—Orig. described the actions of western Christian settlers who were attacked by Native Americans for trespassing on their land. The settlers would make a circle of their wagons for defense. Today refers to a defensive action.

Wake—Orig. an all-night vigil kept before certain holy days.³²⁵ Today, a watch over a deceased Christian before burial.³²⁶

Wandering Jew—A Medieval Christian legend about a man who taunted Jesus on his way to the cross and was condemned by God to wander the earth until the Second Coming.³²⁷ Also, a trailing plant native to tropical America.

War on Terror—An unending crusade against evil declared by the self-proclaimed Christian United States against evil Islamic terrorists.

Wasp/Waspy—White, Angle-Saxon Protestant.

Waterboarding—Orig. called the water ordeal—one of the most common methods of torture used and perfected during the Inquisition.

³²³ Turner pps 488-9.

³²⁴ AHD p. 1996.

³²⁵ Oxford CDCC p. 625.

³²⁶ AHD p. 2008.

³²⁷ AHD p. 2011.

The Way—Christianity as the singular path to salvation.³²⁸

* **Wedding**—Orig. a Christian ceremony between a man and a woman pledging fidelity (making a vow) in front of a priest.

Well meaning/well intentioned—Having good or kindly intentions rather than bad or evil ones. Even if the effects of one's actions are ineffectual or even harmful they are mitigated if one's intentions (or thoughts) are good because that is what God will judge.

* **White**—Includes the definition “morally pure, spotless, innocent, free from evil intent.”³²⁹ As in “That's white of you.” Also: **white bread, white Christmas, white-collar worker, white dwarf, white elephant, white flag, white-glove, white heat, White Knight, white lie, white of you, white magic, white meat, white nights, white noise, white slavery, whitewash, whitewall, white with rage, lily white.**

Wicked—Evil by nature and in practice—from Wicca (witch).³³⁰

Will—In Christendom, wills were religious instruments for the future welfare of one's immortal soul. It designated a certain portion of one's possession to go towards charitable acts to count towards one's penance.³³¹

Witch—A common accusation against women during the Inquisitions. Now a commonly used pejorative term for women. Also:

Witchcraft—For Christians it is the alleged exercise of magical powers through the gift of supernatural beings other than God and his angels; **Witch hunt; Witching hour**—Considered to be the hour when witches and demons were most powerful.

Witness/to bear witness—Orig. person testifying for Jesus as a martyr. Now more generally a person who has credibility because of what they have seen or what they know.

³²⁸ Turner pps 490-2.

³²⁹ “Racism in the English Language” by Robert B. Moore, in *Beyond Heroes and Holidays*, p. 166. See Lederer, *The Miracle of Language*, p. 52.

³³⁰ AHD p. 2040.

³³¹ Berman, *Law and Revolution*, p. 232-4.

The Word—Jesus himself as a manifestation of God as well as the message of God’s saving grace.³³²

Work/work ethic—During the period of the rise of capitalism and the Protestant Reformation hard work took on the quality of a moral virtue and the set of values around hard work were eventually described as the “work ethic” or the “Protestant work ethic.” (Captured in such phrases as “Idle hands are the devil’s playground.”) Previously in Christianity moral acts or righteous deeds were described as works, now, (hard) work itself became a moral act.

The World/worldly/worldly affairs—A negative reference to life on earth with its temptations and distractions. It is overrun by Satan and his agents, separated from God and hostile to him. It is contrasted with God’s perfect, eternal realm. Christians have God’s grace and their own faith to be “in the world, but not of the world.”³³³ Also: **New World/Old World**—Christian Euro-centered description of the Americas and Europe to capture the promise of creating a new paradise in the “uninhabited” Americas; **New World Order**—Phrase coined by Fundamentalist Abraham Vereide in 1945 to describe a theocracy in which rich and powerful Christian men would rule the world for God³³⁴; **Out of this world**—Heavenly.

* **Wrath**—Divine judgment or retribution.³³⁵

* **The Wrath of God**—Phrase from Revelation and other Biblical passages.

³³² Turner pps 494-6.

³³³ Turner pps 498-501.

³³⁴ Sharlet, Jeff. *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008. p 90-91. Also 111-2.

³³⁵ AHD p. 2060.

Y

You're either with us or against us—From Mathew 12:30.

Z

Zero tolerance—A righteous Christian attitude or policy which addresses certain social behaviors as sins and punishes them without empathy or attention to complicating social dynamics.

Christian Names

Another indicator of dominance is the ability of an institution to rename the people and the geography that they control. Many people around the world were given anglicized names when they were baptized to affirm their existence in the eyes of God as a believer. Many others had their names anglicized by immigration officials or other bureaucrats because their names were “barbaric”—they sounded strange, they were judged to be difficult to pronounce, or they were too long and just didn’t sound Christian or civilized enough.

The European conquest of Africa, the Americas, the Pacific Islands and much of Asia led to the renaming of many landmarks, natural features, and population sites in the European languages of the conquerors.

Often Christian colonizers would build cities on top of indigenous villages and, in particular, they would build churches on indigenous spiritual sites, including cemeteries. This practice continues today. There are recently completed or currently under construction shopping malls, convention centers, sports stadiums and other projects built on recognized Native American grave sites across the United States.

The secularization and normalization of Christian influence may lead us to not even notice the religious roots of the geographic names we use. We may visit St. Petersburg, Russia³³⁶; Sao Paulo, Brazil; San Jose or San Isidro, Costa Rica; Santa Cruz, Bolivia; Christchurch, New Zealand; Christmas Island in the South Pacific, St. Louis, Senegal; Port St. John’s, South Africa, Holy Island in England, Santo Domingo, San Salvador, Argentina, Devil’s Island in the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile³³⁷, San Fernando, Philippines, the St. Lawrence river, St. John’s Newfoundland, San Juan, Puerto Rico, or the country of El Salvador without recognizing these names as signs of Christian colonization.

³³⁶ This city was named after Peter the Great but the honorific of Saint reflects the Christian influence and power of the (Eastern) Church.

³³⁷ Just in Central and South America alone there are more than 150 towns named Santiago after the apostle James. Salisbury, Blood. P. 73. St. James is the patron saint of Spain and is often call Santiago Matamoros (James the Moor killer) because his spirit was believed to have aided the Christians in defeating the Moors in battle.

There are many cities and other geographic sites in the United States which bear Christian place names such as

Bethlehem
Cincinnati
Dolores, CO³³⁸
Christian County, MO
Corpus Christi
Holy Cross Mountain
Ignacio Valley
Las Cruces
Lebanon
Los Angeles³³⁹
Mission Viejo
New Haven
Philadelphia (the city of brotherly love)
Providence, RI
Sacramento³⁴⁰
San Antonio
San Bernardino³⁴¹
San Diego³⁴²
San Francisco³⁴³
San Jose
Sangre de Cristo mountains
Santa Ana
Santa Barbara
Santa Clara
Santa Cruz
Santa Fe

³³⁸ Original name was Rio de Nuestra Senora de las Dolores" or the River of Our Lady of Sorrows

³³⁹ Originally named *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles del Río de Porciúncula*

³⁴⁰ Named after the Eucharist sacrament-Spanish for "the Most Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ"

³⁴¹ Bernardino was a virulently anti-Jewish and anti-gay Italian priest in the late 14th and early 15th centuries.

³⁴² St. James, equivalent to Santiago

³⁴³ Named for Francis of Assisi

Santa Maria
Santa Monica³⁴⁴
Santa Ynez
Sault Sainte Marie³⁴⁵
St. Augustine
St. Cloud³⁴⁶
St. Paul
St. Petersburg

Over one thousand cities in the U.S. have Christian biblically derived names including such cities as Salem (OR, VA, MO, NH), Bethlehem, PA, Shiloh, St. Olaf, MN, Mount Olive, NC, Zion, IL, Pella, IA, Palestine, TX. Antioch, CA, Carmel, CA, and Progress, (IN, OR, PN, FL), New Hope (TX, PA, HA, MN). And, of course, there are many other places named after the Devil such as Mt. Diablo and Devils Postpile National Monument, or with the words “Angel” or “Paradise” in them such as the city of Angel’s Camp, (CA) or Paradise Valley.³⁴⁷

Christian names show up in many other areas of our lives. To give just one example, recently I was in Costa Rica taking a hiking tour of a jungle river. We spotted a lizard which was running quickly across the water from rock to rock. Our tour guide promptly told us that we had just seen a Jesus Lizard—so named because it appeared to walk on the water.

Human built parts of the environment such as bridges, canals, and tunnels can also reflect Christian language:

³⁴⁴ Named for Saint Monica of Hippo

³⁴⁵ Old French for "falls of St. Mary's" (Sault de Sainte Marie)

³⁴⁶ named after the city of Saint-Cloud, France, which was named for the 6th-century French monk Clodoald

³⁴⁷ In a sad irony, Angel Island was the name of the detention camp in the San Francisco Bay Area where immigrants from Asia were held, sometimes for years, before decisions were made to either admit them to return them to their countries of origin.

Bridges

Golden Gate Bridge, CA³⁴⁸

St. Georges Bridge, DE,

Dolores River Bridge, CO

St. George Island Bridge, FL

St. Johns River Veterans Memorial Bridge, FL

St. Claude Ave. Bridge, LA

St. Johns Bridge, OR

Huguenot Memorial Bridge, VA³⁴⁹

Canals and Tunnels

St. Clair Flats Canal, MI

Devil's Slide Tunnel, CA

San Fernando Tunnel, CA

Devil's courthouse Tunnel, NC

Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel, UT

³⁴⁸ For both Jews and Christians the Golden Gate is a reference to the oldest of the current gates in Jerusalem's old city walls

³⁴⁹ In honor of the French Christian Huguenot settlers who came to the area in the 18th century

Word Groups

In specific areas of our language it is easier to see Christian influence when words that pertain to a particular cultural area are pulled out. I have picked a handful of categories below to highlight the interlocking aspect of Christian vocabulary and values.

Criminal/legal terms

Act of God, adoption, appropriation, backslide, ban, benefice, beneficiary, blue laws, canon, capital punishment, chastise, chasten, citation, confession, contrition, corporation, correction, council, crime, crime against nature, criminal, devil's advocate, discipline, dispensation, Doctrine of Discovery, economy, excommunication, expiation, foundation, good Samaritan laws, guilty, illegitimate, judgment, judicial oath, justify, justified, natural law, nepotism, notary, oath, oath of office, offense, obscene/obscenity, penance, penitent, penitentiary, persecution, punishment, reparations, repentance, restitution, sanction, scrutiny, Semitic, sovereign, testify, testimony, third degree, trust, truth, vandalize, will, witness, zero tolerance

Health related terms

Abstinence, affliction, clean, cleanse, cleanliness, clean living, concentration camp, red cross, expurgate, ghetto, hospice, hospital, immaculate, infect, infection, malignant, panic, pestilence, prohibition, promiscuity, pure, purge, spare the rod and spoil the child, twelve-step program, unnatural, zero tolerance

Positive moral terms

Amazing grace, angelic, guardian angel, beloved community, benevolent, benediction, blessed, born again, brother, brotherly love, your brother's keeper, charity, chaste, chastity, Chosen People, Christian, church, civilized, deliverance, development, divine, elevated, enlighten, epiphany, faithful, faith healer (Christian), fellowship, forgiveness, generous, glory, God fearing, good, grace, hope, humility, love, immaculate, innocent, knight, lamb, light, obedience, peace, pious,

redemption, righteous, saint, good Samaritan, saved, self-reliant, temperate, tolerant, virtuous, well meaning, white,

Negative moral terms

Abominable, abysmal, affliction, agnostic, anathema, anti-Christ, apostasy, ass kissing, atheist, backslide, Babylon, barbarian, bastard, bewitch, bedevil, bitch, black, blasphemy, blind, brawling, bugger, charity case, cult, dark, deceit, demon, demon lover, depraved, total depravity, devil, devil worshipper, devilish, diabolical, doubt, enchant, entrance, enthrall, error, evil, evil eye, faith healer (non-Christian), fallen, fiend, fierce, filth, flesh/fleshly, godless, heathen, heretic, high minded, hypocrite, idol, idol worshipping, idolatry, illegitimate, impious, infidel, Jezebel, Judas, lame, lazy, loose, lost, lunatic, malignant, obscene, pernicious, pride, profanity, sacrilege, satanic, sensual, sinful, sodomy, superstitious, unchurched, unholy, vice, wicked, witch, unnatural,

Racial terms

Animal/animal like, anti-Semitism, Aryan, assassin, barbaric, black, blue blood, Byzantine, call in the cavalry, Caucasian, chosen people, The great commission, concentration camp, cross burning, crusade, cult, dark, denigrate, discover, eastern religions, ethnic, expurgate, fetish, frontier, ghetto, goat, grandfather clause, to gyp, gypsy, ignorant, Indian Summer, Indian giver, Indo-European, infidel, to Jew down, medicine man, one-drop rule, oriental, pagan, primitive, pioneer, race, red-blooded, savage, Semitic, sleepy, superstition, vandal, wandering Jew, sundown town

Education related terms

Anthropology, disciple, discipline, economy, faculty, fraternity, knowledge, history, lecturn, lecturer, Medieval, Middle Ages, natural, professor, provost, religion, scholastic, science, technology, theology, university

Code words for Christian values or beliefs

Creation Science, dominion, discover, end times/end of the world, explorer, the Great Commission, “free” market, intelligent design, Judeo-Christian, miscegenation, New World Order, personal

responsibility, pioneer, religion, pro-life, secular, self-reliant, settler, signs of the times, take our country back, to kill or waste time, circle the wagons, war on terror, working poor, work ethic,

Political terms

Axis of evil, Call in the Calvary, Chosen People, clash of civilizations, cold war, concentration camp, crusade, Doctrine of Discovery, dominion, the Enlightenment, ethnic cleansing, Evil Empire, free market, frontier, Holy Land, In God We Trust, Inquisition, The Invisible Hand, Judeo-Christian, to lynch, lynch law, Manifest Destiny, Medieval, Middle Ages, militia, miscegenation, nepotism, New World, new world order, new world/old world, One-drop rule, One Nation Under God, the opposite sex, orient/oriental, pioneer, plantation, progress, progressive, prohibition, Promised Land, redlining, reparations, sanction, sanctuary, settler, shock and awe, social gospel, sodomy, sovereignty, spiritual warfare, stewardship, sundown town, traitor vandalize, war on terror, waterboarding, working poor, you're either with us or against us, zero tolerance

Exclamations and Expletives

I have listed exclamations and expletives as a group because, more important than their particular meanings, they indicate how, in times of deep emotion, we immediately, without thought, draw on familiar references and beliefs to help us express our feelings.

As god is my witness, bastard, bitch, bless you, god bless you, bugger off, Christ, by the grace of God/there but for the grace of God go I, damn it, darn it, damn you, damn you to hell, I'll be damned, I'll be damned if... , It's not worth a damn, I don't give a damn, damnation, damnable, I'll be damned, go to the devil, the poor devil, it's divine, fag, faggot, God almighty, God bless e.g. America, God damn it, you godforsaken..., golly, for goodness' sake, surely to goodness, my goodness, goodness gracious, gracious me, gosh darn it, gracious, oh gracious, for gracious sake, good gracious, halleluiah, alleluia, heavens, heavens above, heaven help you, it's heaven sent, it's heavenly, heck, come hell or high water, I'll see you in hell before I..., go to hell, a hell of a lot, ignorant, it's all Greek to me, Jesus Christ, you lazy, no-good so and so, mea culpa (my bad), T.G.I.F.—thank God, it's Friday, witch, it's out of this world.

This booklet is available in a printed version and as a downloadable file at www.christianhegemony.org. It is part of a larger project to center attention on western Christian dominance as one of several primary systems of oppression (e.g. capitalism, imperialism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism).

This project is not a critique of individual Christians or of their beliefs. Rather it is based on the knowledge, as stated in the beginning of this booklet, that Christian hegemony—the everyday, pervasive, deep-seated and institutionalized dominance of Christian institutions, Christian leaders, and Christians as a group—has profoundly shaped our lives. The goal of the project is to promote and support widespread understanding, analysis of, and resistance to this system because its continued operation is a central obstacle to our collective liberation.

Elements of the project will include this booklet, other articles, the website, a forthcoming book, a blog, exercises, workshops and trainings, and consultations. I encourage you to sign up for further information and resources and to provide feedback, additions to the vocabulary list and additional resources at the website, www.christianhegemony.org.

When presented with Antonio de Nebrija's Spanish Gramatica, the first-ever grammar of any modern European language in 1492, Queen Isabella reportedly asked the scholar, "What is it for?" Nebrija reportedly answered, "Language is the perfect instrument of empire."

This is no mere matter for the philosophy classroom. We face the possible or probable extinction of life on our planet. If we can, we must grasp the bias and limitation of the "West's" worldview, powered by a hegemony that makes us oblivious to the wisdom of the people of America's First Nations.

Bruce Wilshire

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Paul Kivel is a social justice educator, activist, and writer. More resources are available at www.christianhegemony.org.