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A Glossary of Baptist and Catholic Terms

ALIEN IMMERSION—A Baptist term referring to baptism by immersion in a church other than a Baptist church.

APOSTLES' CREED—The ancient creed which is frequently used in most Western churches as a confession of faith. Baptists have no creed but the Bible; nevertheless, most Baptists believe what the Apostles' Creed says, and some Baptist churches even use it in their worship services.

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE—A confession of faith adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963, representing the consensus of Southern Baptists at that time.

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM—A Baptist term referring to baptism administered to those who personally (and not through a sponsor) have publicly professed their faith in Jesus Christ and have requested baptism. Implicit in the concept of believer's baptism is the understanding that the person baptized is sufficiently aware and mature to make a profession of faith and request baptism.

THE BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS—The Catholic sponsoring body of the Roman Catholic/Southern Baptist Scholars' Dialogue (abbreviated as BCEIA).

BLESSED SACRAMENT—A Catholic term referring to the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. This term refers both to the celebration of the Eucharist and to the preservation of the Body

of Christ after the celebration. Baptists do not use the terms “Mass,” “Eucharist,” or “Sacrament,” and they refer to their practice as “the Lord’s Supper.”

BORN AGAIN, REBIRTH, NEW BIRTH—Baptist terms referring to God’s transformation of life of those who were dead in sin in response to their acknowledgment of sinfulness and turning to God with repentance and faith to Jesus as Savior and Lord of life. Rebirth for Baptists is followed by a public profession of faith and commitment to Christ, usually made within the context of the preaching of the gospel. The result is confident assurance of having been saved.

CANONICAL—A term often used in reference to the Scriptures to designate those books of the Bible considered to be authoritative as opposed to similar writings which are not.

CANON LAW—The official law of the Roman Catholic Church governing major aspects of its life and practice. The latest update was issued in 1983.

CATECHUMENATE—A stage in the process of becoming a member of the Catholic Church on the part of an adult. This term also refers to the program of formation and instruction used to initiate adults into membership in the Catholic Church.

CHARISMS—A Catholic term referring to the gracious gifts of God to his people such as, for example, the charism of teaching.

CONFESSIONAL STATEMENT—A statement of belief on the part of a group of Christians.

CONFIRMATION—A Catholic term referring to the sacrament which is given to persons who, having been baptized, have come to the place in their lives at which they publicly confess Christian faith for themselves.

CONTEMPLATION—An advanced form of prayer characterized by simplicity of expression and an intuitive grasp of the mystery and presence of God.

CONVERSION—Among Baptists this term refers to the experi-

ence of salvation in Christ, involving a turning to Jesus under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Among Catholics this term refers to entrance into the Catholic Church on the part of an adult after having belonged to another religion, to another Christian denomination, or to no religion at all.

COUNCIL OF TRENT—A sixteenth century general council of the Roman Catholic Church convened to deal with problems associated with the Protestant Reformation.

COVENANT, CHURCH COVENANT—A Baptist term referring to a formal pledge of loyalty and support sometimes recited at communion time by a local congregation. Covenants are often adopted at the organizational meeting of a new church.

CREED—An officially adopted statement of faith which members of a church are expected to believe.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERFAITH WITNESS—A department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention; the Department is the Baptist sponsor for the Roman Catholic/Southern Baptist Scholars' Dialogue.

DIOCESE—A Catholic term referring to a geographical area whose churches are under the leadership of one bishop.

ECCLESIAL, ECCLESIASTICAL—Pertaining to church. The term derives from the Greek *ekklesia*, which means assembly.

ECUMENICAL, ECUMENISM—Pertaining to conversations and other activities between or among Christian denominations whose goal is better understanding and more friendly relationships. The ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is the unity of the people of God.

ECUMENICAL COUNCIL—A council of the Roman Catholic Church convened by the Pope and to which all the Catholic bishops of the world are invited.

ENCYCLICAL—An official, public letter of the Pope addressed either to a particular group of Catholics or to the whole Catholic Church dealing with topics of major interest and importance.

ESCHATOLOGY—The doctrine of last things.

EUCCHARIST—See “Blessed Sacrament.”

EVANGELISM—The preaching of the gospel to those not committed to Christ with the hope of making converts. This term is the Baptist counterpart of the Catholic “evangelization.”

EVANGELIZATION—The term used by Roman Catholics to refer to the activity of bringing the gospel to those ignorant thereof or uncommitted to Christ. This term is the Catholic counterpart of the Baptist term “evangelism.”

FATHERS OF THE CHURCH—Those learned and saintly leaders of the first centuries of the Christian era recognized for their outstanding contributions to the early development of the church.

GRACE—The favor or love of God for his children, the result of which is God’s friendship and eventually the eternal salvation of the believer.

GREAT COMMISSION—A Baptist term for Jesus’ command found in Matthew 28:19–20.

HIERARCHY—The Pope and bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in whom reside the power and authority to teach the faithful and govern the church.

IMPRIMATUR—The official approval of a bishop indicating that a published work is free of doctrinal error and may safely be used in the religious instruction of Catholics.

INERRANCY—That quality of the Holy Scriptures whereby all that is contained in the Bible is free from error and truthful in what it teaches.

INFALLIBILITY—The gift of God believed by Catholics to be given to the Pope enabling him to teach under certain circumstances and in the areas of faith and morality without misleading the faithful. Baptists sometimes apply this term to Scripture as the equivalent of “inerrancy.”

INITIALS after names—Members of Roman Catholic religious communities often place the initials of their community after their names, such as: S.J. for Society of Jesus, O.P. for Order of Preachers, SA for Society of the Atonement, S.D.S. for Society of the Divine Savior, M.M. for Maryknoll Missionary, and C.S.P. for Congregation of St. Paul.

INTERFAITH—Relationship of members of the world's great religions to each other. In a looser sense, the term is sometimes used to refer to relationships of Christian denominations to each other.

JUDICATORY—A body having judicial authority. Many Christian denominations have such a body, which has the authority to act in certain matters on behalf of the denomination. Southern Baptists are unusual in that they have no judicatory; the reason for this is that every local Baptist congregation is autonomous in all matters.

LANDMARKISM—A movement among Southern Baptists originating in the 1850s which teaches that Baptist churches are the only true churches and which emphasizes the importance of local congregations and minimizes the importance of all other organizations such as associations and conventions.

LITURGY—Religious ceremonies of Christian worship.

LITURGY OF THE HOURS—The officially approved prayers, especially morning and evening prayers, of the Roman Catholic Church, other than the prayers used in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments.

LOCAL CHURCH—In Catholic usage, the equivalent of a Catholic diocese, that is, a specified geographical area, with a bishop as the chief pastor. The name of the diocese is derived from the name of the city in which the bishop's cathedral and offices are located. In Baptist usage, a local church is a single, autonomous, congregation of baptized believers, whose spiritual leader is a pastor; many local churches may exist in a single city.

MAGISTERIUM—The official teaching authority of the Catholic Church, which authority resides in the Pope and the bishops.

MASS—See “Blessed Sacrament.”

MEDAL—A metal (or sometimes plastic) object with an image of Jesus, Mary, or a saint stamped on it. It is worn or displayed by Catholics as part of their devotional life.

MERITORIOUS—The quality of a human act which makes it pleasing in God’s sight and worthy of a reward.

MESSENGERS—A Baptist term referring to members elected by a local church to attend an association or convention annual meeting. Messengers are not delegates in the usual meaning of the term, because they do not receive instructions from local congregations about how they are to vote.

MILLENNIUM—The reign of Christ for a thousand years associated with his second coming. The meaning of the millennium is variously interpreted in Protestant theologies.

NICENE CREED—An ancient creed which summarizes the orthodox beliefs about Jesus Christ and is used by Eastern as well as Western churches.

NOVENA—A devotional prayer used by Catholics which extends over a nine day period. Novenas were more popular in the past than at present.

ORDER—Catholics use this term interchangeably with “ordination” (see below). Catholics and Baptists both use the term “church order” to refer to structures of church government.

ORDINANCE—The term used by Baptists to refer to baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptists believe that these are the only two religious rites commanded by Christ to be practiced in the church for all time. Baptists do not use the term “sacrament.”

ORDINARY—A legal term derived from the Canon Law of the Catholic Church to refer to the bishop of a diocese or some other religious superior who exercises his authority in his own right and not by delegation from another person.

ORDINATION—The rite whereby a person is officially designated as a minister. In the Catholic Church this is believed to be a sacrament. Baptists emphasize that ordination is a confirmation of the individual's call to ministry, and a prayer for God's blessing upon his or her ministry.

PAROUSIA—The Greek word, which means "presence" or "coming," which many scholars use to refer to the return of Christ in the future.

PENANCE—See "Sacrament of Reconciliation."

POLITY—A form of church government. Roman Catholic polity is hierarchical; Southern Baptist polity is democratic.

THE RITE FOR THE CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS—The officially prescribed program of the Catholic Church for introducing adults to its beliefs and practices and initiating them to membership; it is often abbreviated RCIA.

RELIGIOUS—Catholics use this term as a noun to refer to a person who has publicly professed vows in a religious congregation such as the Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, Passionists, or Benedictines, to name but a few.

RELIGIOUS ORDER or CONGREGATION—A Catholic term referring to an officially approved community of men or women who publicly profess religious vows, usually poverty, chastity, and obedience.

REVIVAL—A Baptist term referring to a set of religious activities designed to promote renewal of religious commitment within the church and the evangelizing of the unchurched. It often consists of a week of meetings devoted to intense preaching and prayer.

RITUAL—A set form of religious worship or devotion.

ROMAN CONGREGATION—A department of the central administrative organization of the Catholic Church in Rome. Examples are: The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, The

Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, The Congregation for Bishops, The Congregation for Worship, and The Congregation for Religious.

ROMAN CURIA—The central administrative organization of the Catholic Church in Rome, which is made up of congregations and other departments of lesser rank such as secretariats.

ROSARY—A Catholic term referring to a popular devotion consisting of the recitation of fifteen decades of prayers. A decade consists of an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit while meditating on one of fifteen central mysteries of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord.

SACRAMENT—A Catholic term classically defined as “an outward sign instituted by Christ to confer grace.” By outward sign is meant a ceremony or ritual, that is, something perceptible to the senses, such as the laying on of hands, the celebration of a sacred meal, washing with water, and so on. Catholics believe that Christ gave his church seven such rituals as principal means whereby the faithful would receive his life-giving favor. These are baptism, confirmation, Holy Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and marriage. Baptists practice four of these (baptism, the Lord’s Supper, ordination, and marriage), but they do not call them “sacraments.”

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION—A Catholic term which is also called the sacrament of penance or confession. It is the sacrament through which sins are forgiven, and it consists of sorrowfully confessing one’s sins to a priest and receiving absolution or the pronouncement of pardon from him.

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL—See “Vatican II.”

SECULAR PRIEST—A Catholic term referring to a priest ordained to serve in a diocese, in contrast to a religious priest who is a member of an order or congregation and who frequently serves in different parts of the country or world.

SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—This refers to the Baptist belief that once you have been born again, you will never fall away

from the state of grace; even though you may sin and backslide, in the end you will be saved.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION—A loose coalition of about 37,000 Baptist churches who cooperate in order to carry out missions, evangelization, education, and benevolences. The term also refers to the annual meeting of messengers from the churches affiliated with the SBC to make decisions regarding the cooperative work of the churches.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES—Uttering sounds one does not understand in the conviction that this is done under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is a dominant religious experience for Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians, who are found in most Christian communions today, including the Roman Catholic and Southern Baptist communions.

SPIRITUALITY—The life of the Spirit, the life of God's grace, God's life in his children, which life needs the nourishment of God's Word, prayer, self-discipline, the observance of God's commandments, and participation in his ordinances or sacraments. The term is used more often by Catholics than by Baptists; the latter tend to speak rather of "devotional life."

STATIONS OF THE CROSS—A popular form of Catholic devotion consisting of meditating on the fourteen principal aspects of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Images depicting these fourteen events are usually displayed on the walls of Catholic churches.

THE TWELVE—A term, found frequently in the New Testament, for the first apostles whom Christ sent out (see Matthew 10:1–5).

VATICAN II—A general council of the Catholic Church held in Vatican City. Its opening session, on October 11, 1962, was presided over by Pope John XXIII, who had called the council; its closing session, on December 8, 1965, was presided over by Pope Paul VI. Its official documents have been translated from

Latin into English and published under the title *The Documents of Vatican II*. The First Vatican Council was held in 1870.

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES—An international ecumenical organization. Neither the Roman Catholic Church nor the Southern Baptist Convention belongs to the WCC.