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GLOSSARY OF THEOLOGICAL TERMS

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The Catholic University of America

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Joshua Miguel, Ana Isabel, Emmanuel José, and Miguel David Díaz, in honor of their parents.

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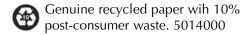
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Author Introduction

This book is intended as an aid for college instructors who face the task of introducing undergraduate students to Roman Catholic theology and as a helpful companion for students who often find their introductory theology and religious studies courses confusing and challenging, if not overwhelming. This book is meant to be a first step toward Catholic theological literacy.

In a sense, this glossary is like a foreign language dictionary that furnishes the basic meaning of terms. Travelers to foreign lands often carry a pocket dictionary in their backpacks to help them communicate as they navigate through those lands. Similarly, introductory students of theology need a convenient dictionary in their own backpacks to assist them as they communicate and navigate the sometimes rough terrain of theology.

Though this glossary is not a textbook per se, it has been written to serve as a supplement or companion for introductory theology and religious studies courses that are structured in many different ways. It is designed to be comprehensive, yet concise. On the one hand, some of the terms are really topics for book-length treatment; on the other hand, a glossary must be concise if it is to be user friendly. I have chosen terms useful for a basic understanding of Roman Catholic theology in the diverse and pluralistic context of the twenty-first century. I have tried to define the terms succinctly by providing (1) a reference to their language origin, (2) an indication of their theological content, and (3) a summary statement of their contemporary meaning. Like a pocket language dictionary, this glossary cannot and does not give every possible meaning for a term but concentrates only on the basics. Just as a language teacher or translator is needed to explain how a word is actually used, so a theology instructor is needed to put these terms into practice.

In light of the brevity of these definitions, I encourage those who would like further information to consult theological textbooks or encyclopedias for more extensive and definitive explanations of any given topic. As a first step in obtaining additional information, many of the definitions include cross-references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, a readily available resource for further explanations of Roman Catholic doctrine.

The aim of this glossary is to provide a set of beginning definitions or working explanations to help students enter into theological conversations and serve as the basis for genuine theological dialogue, discussion, and discovery. It is our hope that the development of a common vocabulary will enable students and instructors to move together through the rich, yet complex, heritage of Catholic theology.

Guide to Using This Text

Allows you to quickly identify the first and last entry on each page.

accident / AD

9

type of activity during *Lent*. Abstinence can also refer to refraining from drinking alcoholic beverages and refraining from sexual activity. (See *CCC* 2043)

Foreign and "root" terms within entries are underlined.

Check box allows you to mark terms you are expected to memorize. in everyday use refers to an unforeseen event, especially one that is undesirable. In *scholastic philosophy* and *theology*, an accident is a nonessential property or quality of a *substance*; although accidents provide distinctive features to, they do not exist apart from, particular substances.

accident. This word (from the Latin <u>accidere</u>, meaning "to happen")

acculturation. This word (from the Latin ad,, meaning "to," and cultura, meaning "cultivation of the land") refers to the process by which missionaries and evangelists adapt the Gospel to a particular culture. Usually acculturation is a process of finding bridges or links between Christianity and a culture where the Christian message is being preached.

acedia. See SLOTH.

Directs you to another entry in the glossary.

Mid term Exam

acolyte. This word (from the Greek <u>akolouthos</u>, meaning "a follower") refers to an assistant at a religious service. On an informal basis, *altar boys* and *altar girls* are sometimes called "acolytes"; however, officially, acolytes are men who are formally installed in the *ministry* of acolyte prior to being ordained *deacons* or *priests*; laypeople may also be permanently installed as acolytes to assist in liturgical services. (See CCC 903, 1672)

Refers you to a paragraph number in the Catechism of the Catholic Church for further information.

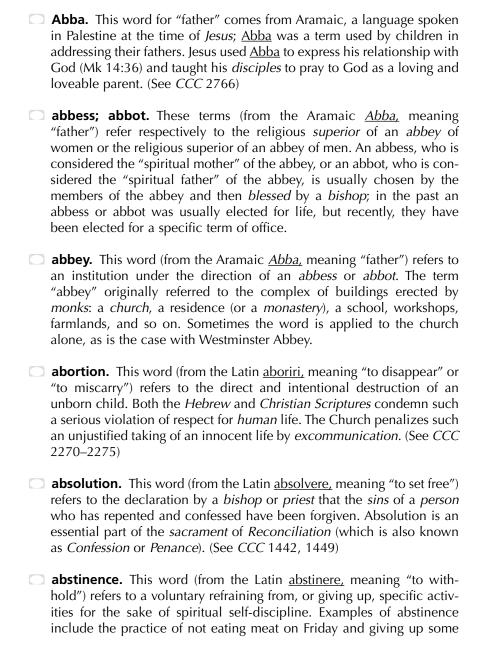
act; actuality. These two related terms (from the Latin agere, meaning "to do") have a wide variety of meanings; two meanings are particularly important in theology: (1) in the area of morality, "human act" refers to a person's free, deliberate, conscientious decision; and (2) in the area of philosophical theology, "act" or "actuality" refers to the realization or actualization of a particular potency or the achievement of a desired goal.

Italicized terms within a definition direct you to an entry for that term.

Act of Contrition. See CONTRITION.

AD. This abbreviation (from the Latin, anno Domini, meaning "in the year of the Lord") originated with Dionysius Exiguus (died ca. 544), who proposed beginning the enumeration of years with the birth of Jesus

A



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acculturation. This word (from the Latin <u>ad</u> , meaning "to," and <u>cultura</u> , meaning "cultivation of the land") refers to the process by which <i>missionaries</i> and <i>evangelists</i> adapt the <i>Gospel</i> to a particular <i>culture</i> . Usually acculturation is a process of finding bridges or links between <i>Christianity</i> and a culture where the <i>Christian</i> message is being preached.
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Catholic Quick Reference

The Catholic Quick Reference is a mini-encyclopedia of information on Catholicism. Many of the items listed here are more fully defined in the glossary entries. As within the glossary entries, you will also see references to paragraphs in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*. The referenced paragraphs are often just the beginning of a complete discussion of the items that are only briefly named here. If you would like more information on any of the items in the Catholic Quick Reference, look to the *Catechism* for a more in-depth discussion.

The Bible

The Organization of the Bible

The books of the Bible are actually organized into sections, and if you are familiar with these sections, it makes it easier to find your way around in the Bible.

The **Old Testament** has forty-six books divided into the following sections:

- The Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy). These five books are the core of the Old Testament. They tell the stories of Creation, sin, and the origin of God's Chosen People.
- The Historical Books (Joshua through 2 Maccabees). These sixteen books tell how the Israelites settled in the Promised Land. They also tell the stories of their kings.
- **The Wisdom Books** (Job through Sirach). These are the seven books of poetry and the collected wisdom of the Israelites.
- The Prophets (Isaiah through Malachi). These eighteen books are the collected speeches and biographies of the Israelite prophets. The prophets spoke for God against idolatry and injustice.

The **New Testament** has twenty-seven books divided into the following sections:

• The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). These four books are the most important books for Christians because they convey the meaning of Christ Jesus' life and teaching as their central message.