


DIALOGUE AND ENCOUNTER

Knowledge organiser

Key vocabulary	
ecumenical council	In Catholicism, a meeting of the bishops of the worldwide Church at the invitation of the Pope, to decide on matters of the Church.
schism	A split or division within a group.
dogma	An essential belief which becomes a binding teaching in Catholicism.
reform	To make changes to something.
Christian unity	All Christians are united in common beliefs such as the importance of Jesus and his teachings.
ecumenism	The aim of promoting unity among the Christian Churches of the world.


The importance of councils within the Church

- After the Great Commission, as Christianity grew, councils became an important way of **making decisions** that could be shared with the Church and its members to **ensure harmony** in the Church.
- Councils aim to **resolve theological issues** peacefully, and debate matters of faith and morals.
- There have been **21 councils** in total. Some of these councils have established **dogma** that Catholics must follow.



The Council of Jerusalem

- The Council of Jerusalem was the **first council recorded in the Bible**, in Acts 15 and Galatians 3.
- The **apostles** met to decide whether people who were not Jewish (gentiles) needed to become Jews or follow Jewish Law in order to be followers of Jesus.
- The council decided that **gentiles did not need to become Jews or follow Jewish Law** to be Christian.
- In Acts, St Peter confirms that **both Jews and gentiles are chosen by God** and therefore there is no difference between them.
- In Galatians, St Paul explains that all people become brothers and sisters when they believe in Jesus, so the differences between Jews and gentiles do not matter and all can be followers of Christ.
- The Council of Jerusalem is the first example of **church leaders gathering to resolve a difference** that threatens to split the Church and its members.
- Today, **the bishops and the Pope** continue the work of the apostles and call councils as needed. A modern example of an ecumenical council is the **Second Vatican Council**, called in 1962 by Pope John XXIII to try to modernise the Church.



Different Christian denominations

When different views within the Church cannot be peacefully resolved, this can lead to splits and divides (**schisms**) within the Church. In the past this had led to **different Christian denominations** being founded.

The First Council of Nicaea in AD 325	This was a response to Arianism , which rejected the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Trinity. The council decided that Arianism was incorrect, so the Arians broke away from the main Church.
The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451	This was a response to Nestorianism , which argued that Jesus was a God-inspired man, not God-made-human. The council decided this was incorrect; as the difference could not be resolved, some Christians broke away from the Church.
The Council of Trent in 1543	This was a response to the Reformation , which wanted to reform Catholicism and remove practices the reformers did not agree with, such as selling indulgences. The Council of Trent was part of the Counter-Reformation, which was unsuccessful in stopping the Reformation. This led to some Christians splitting from Catholicism and founding Protestant groups.

Ecumenism

- The ecumenical movement wants to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and reconcile all Christians to bring about Christian unity.
- In his words and actions, **Jesus called for one united Church**, so the movement aims to bring about the Christianity that Jesus hoped for.

What can Christians do to bring about unity?

- Christians can put aside their differences and **focus on their similarities**.
- They can remember that they are all connected as part of the **Body of Christ**.
- They can have **discussions and dialogue** to better understand each other.
- They can **pray and worship together**, as in worship there is no room for disagreements.

How do Christians work together to bring about the common good?

- The **World Council of Churches** (a global community of churches) works to bring about ecumenism.
- They **organise projects** that help to distribute resources fairly.
- Their work **highlights shared Christian beliefs**. Focusing on these similarities helps Christians to come together to bring about the common good.

