

Trends in Christianity



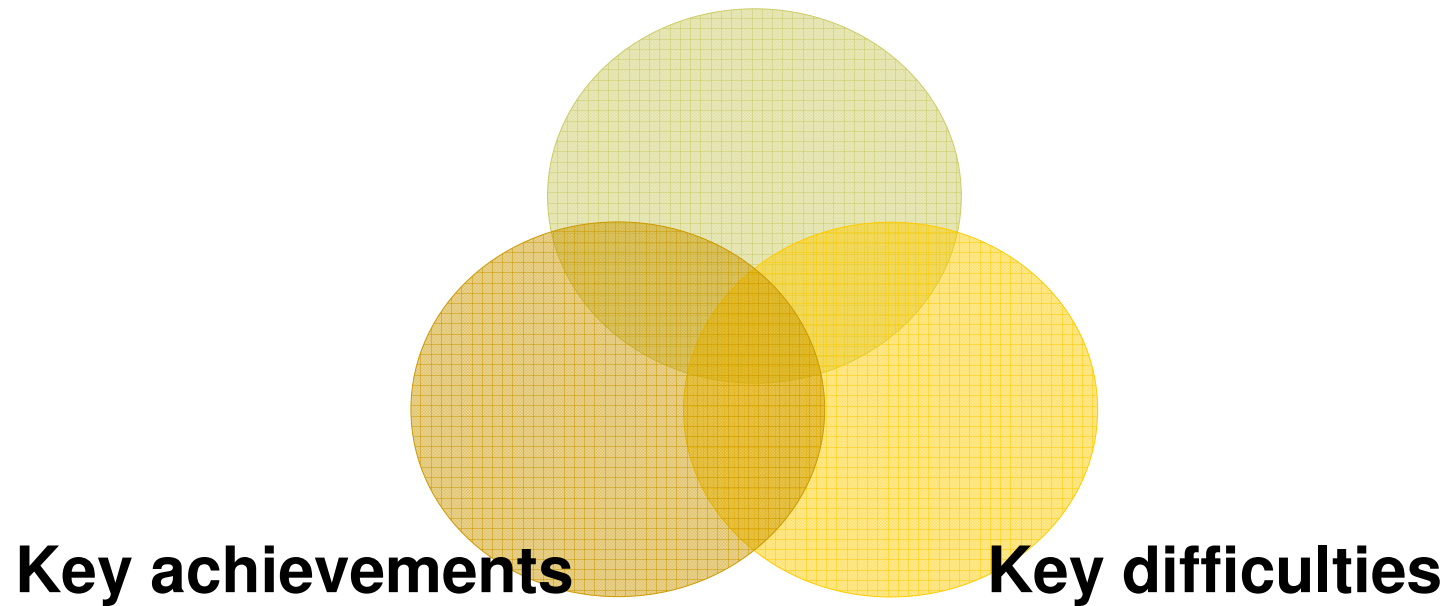
LCRE Section B Topic 5.2
Higher Level

SLSS Religious Education Support

Description of content	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ the search for Christian unity OR Christian worship as remembering Jesus □ contemporary issues in Christianity 	<p><i>As a result of studying this section, students should be able to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ outline some of the key achievements and key difficulties in the search for Christian unity OR explain the ways in which two rites of Christian worship remember Jesus □ explain 2 contemporary understandings of Jesus & name the writer with which each is associated

Search for Christian Unity = Ecumenism

Ecumenism



Ecumenism seeks to promote respect & tolerance among Christians and Christian denominations

Background to ecumenism:

- Ecumenical = '*oikoumene*' in Greek = 'whole world'
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- History of Christianity has witnessed many schisms, resulting in suspicion & division between denominations
 - Difference was emphasised over shared beliefs
 - Return to origins
 - Seeks to focus on what Christian denominations share in common

- Reconciliation & forgiveness
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- Christians have a shared faith in Jesus Christ
- Not trying to establish 1 homogenous Church
- Diversity is valued as a creative expression of Christianity

Vatican II 1962 – 1965

- **Decree on ecumenism**: Catholic Church recognised work of Holy Spirit in other Christian Churches

- Relations with Protestant denominations (Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists etc)
- Relations with Orthodox Christians (Eastern Orthodox) – patriarch
- Pope Paul VI visited Patriarch Athenagoras

Examples of key achievements in Ecumenism:

- **Taizé** in France attracts people from all Christian denominations
- **Corrymeela** community in Co. Donegal seeks to overcome obstacles between Catholic – Protestant divisions
- **‘One Bread One Body’** document on the Eucharist in the life of the Church in 1998 from Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of England & Wales, Ireland & Scotland
- This documents emphasised shared unity in baptism, faith in Christ, faith in the one true God, the same Holy Spirit
- **World Council of Churches** emphasises role of education in ecumenism

- **Christian Unity week** – January (18-25) Ecumenical prayer services
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- Examples of denominations working & praying together at local level – **Christmas carol services, Bible study** etc

- Annual **Women's World Day of Prayer**: across Christian denominations

- 2001 **Cardinal Walter Kasper** appointed as head of Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

- 2003 Archbishop of Canterbury visited Rome
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- Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism

- Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity

Theological dialogue on important matters e.g. Eucharist

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- Opened up more **positive relations** between Christian denominations
 - Easing of Catholic Church's **regulations on mixed marriages**
 - **Northern Ireland:** cordial dialogue and exchanges between Churches & sometimes sharing of Church buildings for worship when one building was attacked or burned
 - **Educating for Peace** programmes

- **Cross border co operation** & visits e.g. schools

- Initiatives between Christian communities to encourage meeting & overcoming differences

- Ecumenical **studies** courses

- Ecumenical Christmas **carol services**

- Joint **publications**

Key Difficulties: some examples

- Theological / doctrinal understanding of the **Eucharist**

- Different interpretations of religious & social issues
- **Married clergy, ordination of women to priesthood, marriage**: different interpretations
- Different understandings of **Church authority**
- Past conflicts & divisions left '**physic wounds**' across denominations

• **Geographical divisions** of Catholics & Protestants across the border of N. Ireland

• Political history, **sectarianism**, insufficient integration of the 2 communities in N. Irl

• Lack of inter communion

• Russian obstacles to proslytheism from Catholic & Protestants

2 Contemporary Understandings of Jesus

- Dermot Lane
- Karl Rahner


Who was Karl Rahner?

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- 20th Century German Catholic theologian (Jesuit)
 - Advisor to Vatican II
 - Author of volumes of theological publications:
 - ‘Foundations of Christian Faith’
 - ‘Theological Investigations’

Rahner's Christology:

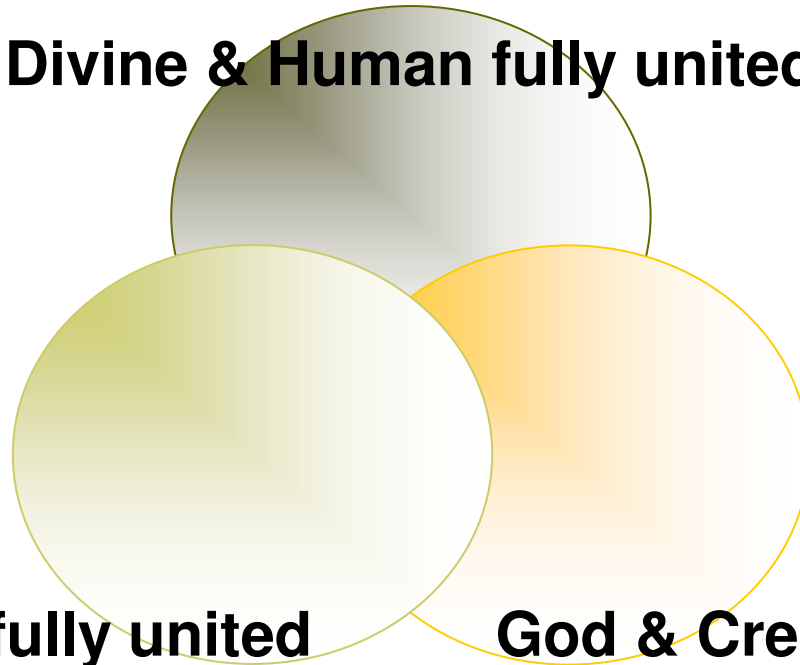
- Begins from below: Christology (begins with humanity)
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- Jesus is understood as God's self-communication
- The Incarnation: Jesus is the Word Made Flesh – implications for human efforts to achieve transcendence
- There is a gap between God and humans

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- The divine & the human are fully united in Jesus Christ
 - Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) declared Jesus to be truly God & truly human
 - God & Creation are fully united in Christ
 - Matter & Spirit are fully united in Christ
 - Jesus is the beginning & goal of creation, alpha & omega

Jesus Christ

Divine & Human fully united



Matter & Spirit fully united

God & Creation fully united

Rahner's Christology was concerned with:

- Method of transcendence
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- Self transcendence

- World is moving to become something higher than it is, through evolution

- Capacity for self transcendence is rooted in the presence of God

- God's self communication is grace



The beginning and the assurance of self-transcendence is the

HYPOSTACTIC UNION

where matter & spirit are united in the Word (God) and flesh (human) of Jesus Christ

• **History entered its final phase in this hypostatic union**


• **Jesus Christ is God's self-communication to humans and the worlds**

• **This self-communication of God to humans in Jesus (God and Man) allows humans to achieve self-transcendence**

•Jesus is Grace. Grace is God's self-communication

•which allows humans self-transcendence

•Jesus is the KINGDOM OF GOD which he proclaims

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- **For Karl Rahner Jesus is Grace**
 - **Grace is God's self-communication**

Who is Dermot Lane?

- A living Irish theologian, monsignor, president of Mater Dei and author of publications e.g. The Experience of God; The Reality of Jesus
- Lane speaks of the return to origins of Christianity
- Approaching the mystery of Jesus in the life, death & resurrection of Jesus

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- The mystery of Jesus continues in the significance and understanding of this Christ event for all believers
 - Lane emphasises the life, death & resurrection of Jesus. This began Christology but it continues to evolve
 - **He balances the historical reality of Jesus with the belief that Jesus was the Son of God: human & divine**

- We must appreciate the **humanity of Jesus** and see that he was one of us – to understand that he truly became human
- We must appreciate the **divinity of Christ** to understand the importance of faith in Christ
- Jesus of history, Christ of faith
- Humanity & Divinity of Christ belong together

- A **low-ascending Christology**

- Begins with exploring the historical Jesus

- Then moves to how Jesus became known as the Lord and the Christ

- These two components form the study of the mystery of Christ