

Causes for Schisms in Christianity

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Schism is a willful separation from unity or ecclesiastical communion. It may refer also to the state of separation or the Christian group constituted in such a state for eg. the great schism. A schismatic is one who causes schism, whether he be a formentor, one who bears responsibility for it, or one who adheres to it by conviction, or simply as a matter of fact (Congar). The word comes from the Greek through its use in the NT passed on to ecclesiastical, Latin, and then into modern languages. In a proper sense it signifies a gap or a tear. In a figurative sense it refers to dissent, divergence of opinion. In the NT its use by Paul gives it its ecclesiastical use. It appears three times in 1 Cor., where it refers to the troubles occupying the church at Corinth : 'I beg you, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to agree in what you say. Let there be no factions; rather be united be mind and judgment' (1 Cor. 1;10; cf. 11:18; 12:25). Paul does not speak of schism strictly speaking here, because he does not speak of sects or ecclesiastical groups separated from the communion, but speaks rather of parts within the communion who hold differing interpretations of Christianity.

The development and variations in the meaning of schism are due to two main factors: the manner in which one conceives of the unity of the church, and the actual schisms in the church at a given time and in a determined place. The Apostolic Fathers had a very rich sense of the unity of the church, but the notion of schism had not developed the technical meaning it would have later. Schism was simply envisioned as a rupture of unity within the framework of the local church, and the act of schism was understood in relation to the legitimate local theology of church as seen as a rupture in the understood as a community of exercise of the means of of which the bishop is the chief Patristic period one often against altar (Ignatius of Antioch, Cyprian). A schism was first committed in relation to the altar and the bishop within the context of the Local Church. However, since the communion is universal in as much as the bishops are in communion with one another, a person in communion with his bishop is so with the whole church, and can participate everywhere at the same altar.



The notion of schism develops simultaneously with the directions of ecclesiology. In the Roman Catholic Church with progressive centralization of the church in the Roman See, schism came to be understood in terms of a rupture of communion with the Pope. The most significant modification of the meaning of schism occurred in the Counter

Reformation. Until this time, provided that grave differences in matters of faith were not involved, and provided that a breach with legitimate authority did not occur, the sacramental, hierarchical organism of the church remained in tact, and hence, the dissenting portion of the church was still regarded as in communion. An imbalance occurred when the church was understood primarily in its hierarchically constituted, societal dimension under the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome, and when the church was identified simply with the Roman Catholic Church. At this point, schism came to signify separation from the church itself.

The 2nd Vatican Council returned to an ecclesiology of communion and centered again on the notion of the church as mystery. In this understanding the Church of Christ is not perceived as confined within the limits of the Roman Catholic Church, which is its fullest manifestation. Other churches and ecclesial bodies participate in the reality of the church as mystery in varying degrees that those not in full communion participate in some way in the re-examination of the meaning of theology of church of the now must be viewed from two perspectives. Canonically, it signifies a breach in jurisdictional relations with the See of Rome (CIC, c 751). But theologically, schism is understood to place an obstacle to the full and manifest realization of unity in faith, and participation in the church as the one, unique, sacramental and hierarchical reality. Schism is an obstacle to the manifestation of the unity of church, in sacraments and specially in the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity. But this does not deny that ‘some even very many of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the church itself can exist outside the visible boundaries of the church’ (UR 3).



In the contemporary ecumenical climate, Roman Catholic theology believes that it is possible within history to achieve a truly universal unity that is both spiritual and visible. It does not reserve the achievement of this unity to an ultimate eschatological fulfillment. This is because the kingdom of God has already begun, and moves forward in history to its full manifestation. So, even though there are divisions, differences and tensions, the church is gifted with a unity in faith, sacramental life, communion, and a unity, which is universal in extension.

There were two major schisms in the catholic church, the first was due to the controversy surrounding the *Filioque*, the second on account of the Reformation.

a. **Filioque (11th Century)**

In Christian theology the filioque clause (filius meaning "and [from] the son" in Latin) is a heavily disputed clause added to the Nicene Creed in 589. It forms a divisive difference in particular between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church centered on the relative divinity of the Father compared to the Son. In the place where the

original Nicene Creed reads "We believe in the Holy Spirit ... who proceeds from the Father", the amended, Roman Catholic version reads "We believe in the Holy Spirit ... who proceeds from the Father and the Son". The addition is accepted by Roman Catholic Christians but rejected by Eastern Orthodox Christians. Many Eastern Catholic churches (Eastern in liturgy but in full communion with the pope) do not use the clause in their creed, but profess the doctrine it represents, as it is a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith. Insofar as Protestant churches take a position on the doctrine, acceptance of the filioque has been historically normative as seen in their authorized liturgies and confessions. (Church of England- see Book of Common Prayer 1549 - 1662; Episcopal Church- see Book of Common Prayer 1789 - 1979; Lutherans- see Lutheran Book of Worship 1978.) However, in light of the many Ecumenical dialogues between Protestants and the Orthodox Churches today this historic position cannot be taken for granted as normative today.



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After the schism of 1054, the Eastern and Western churches attempted to reunite at two separate medieval councils, and the filioque was an issue at each. Despite Greek concessions, neither the Second Council of Lyon (1274) nor the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438 - 1535) achieved the desired union.

The clause is most often referred to as "the filioque" or simply filioque.

b. Martin Luther

Martin Luther (November 10, 1483–February 18, 1546) was a German monk, theologian, and church reformer.

Luther's theology challenged the authority of the papacy by holding that the Bible is the sole source of religious authority and that all baptized Christians are a priesthood of believers. According to Luther, salvation was attainable only by faith in Jesus as the Messiah, a faith unmediated by the church. These ideas helped to inspire the Protestant Reformation and change the course of Western civilization.

His marriage to Katharina von Bora set a model for the practice of clerical marriage within Protestantism.

b.i. Indulgences Controversy and the Start of the Reformation

In 1516-17, Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar and papal commissioner for indulgences, was sent to Germany by the Roman Catholic Church to sell indulgences to raise money to rebuild St Peter's Basilica in Rome. In Roman Catholic theology, an "indulgence" is the remission of temporal punishment for a sin that has already been forgiven; the indulgence

is granted by the church when the sinner confesses and receives absolution. When an indulgence is given, the church is extending merit to a sinner from its Treasure House of Merit, an accumulation of merits it has collected based on the good deeds of the saints. These merits could be bought and sold.

On October 31, 1517, Luther wrote to Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg, protesting the sale of indulgences. He enclosed in his letter a copy of his "Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences," which came to be known as The 95 Theses. Luther objected to a saying attributed to Johann Tetzel that "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs," insisting that, since forgiveness was God's alone to grant, those who claimed that indulgences absolved buyers from all punishments and granted them salvation were in error. Christians, he said, must not slacken in following Christ on account of such false assurances.

The 95 Theses were quickly translated from Latin into German, printed, and widely copied, making the controversy one of the first in history to be aided by the printing press. Within two weeks, the theses had spread throughout Germany; within two months throughout Europe.

On June 15, 1520, the Pope warned Luther with the papal bull (edict) *Exsurge Domine* that he risked excommunication unless he recanted 41 sentences drawn from his writings, including the 95 Theses, within 60 days.

That autumn, Johann Eck proclaimed the bull in Meissen and other towns. Karl von Miltitz, a papal nuncio, attempted to broker a solution, but Luther, who had sent the Pope a copy of *On the Freedom of a Christian* in October, publicly set fire to the bull and decretals at Wittenberg on December 10, 1520, an act he defended in *Why the Pope and his Recent Book are Burned and Assertions Concerning All* Articles. As a consequence, Luther was excommunicated by Leo X on January 3, 1521, in the bull *Decet Romanum Pontificem*.



Articles.
on January

b.ii. Protestant Reformation

The **Protestant Reformation** was a movement in Europe that began with Martin Luther's activities in 1517, with roots further back in time. It ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The movement began as an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church. Many western Christians were troubled by what they saw as false doctrines and malpractices within the Roman Catholic Church, particularly involving the teaching and sale of indulgences. Another major contention was the practice of buying and selling church positions (simony) and the tremendous corruption found at the time within the Roman

Catholic Church's hierarchy. This corruption was systemic at the time, even reaching the position of the Pope.

On 31 October 1517, in Saxony (in what is now Germany), Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church, which served as a notice board for university-related announcements.[1] These were points for debate that criticized the Church and the Pope. The most controversial points centered on the practice of selling indulgences and the Church's policy on purgatory. Luther's spiritual predecessors were men such as John Wycliffe and Jan Hus. Other reformers, such as Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, soon followed Luther's lead. Church beliefs and practices under attack by Protestant reformers included Purgatory, particular judgment, devotion to Mary, the intercession of and devotion to the saints, most of the sacraments, the mandatory celibacy requirement of its clergy (including monasticism), and the authority of the Pope.

The most important denominations to emerge directly from the Reformation were the Lutherans, the Reformed/Calvinists/Presbyterians, and the Anabaptists. The Protestant Reformation is also referred to as the "German Reformation", "Protestant Revolution", "Protestant Revolt", and, in Germany, the "Lutheran Reformation". The process of reform had decidedly different causes and effects in England, where it gave rise to Anglicanism. There the period became known as the English Reformation. Subsequent Protestant denominations generally trace their roots back to the initial reforming movements.

b.iii. Anglicanism

Anglicanism is a term which refers to the beliefs and practices of Christian churches which either have historical connections with the Church of England or maintain a liturgy compatible with it. The word Anglican originates in *ecclesia anglicana*, a mediæval Latin phrase dating to at least 1246 meaning the English Church. Adherents of Anglicanism are termed, Anglicans.

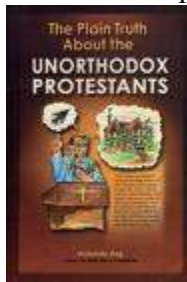
The faith of Anglicans is founded in the Scriptures and the Gospels, the traditions of the Apostolic Church, the historic episcopate, and the early Church Fathers. Anglicanism, in its structures, theology, and forms of worship, is understood as a distinct Christian tradition representing a middle ground between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism or a *via media* (middle way) between these traditions.

Unique to Anglicanism is the Book of Common Prayer, the collection of services that worshippers in most Anglican churches used for centuries. Whilst it has since undergone many revisions and Anglican churches in different countries have developed other service books, the Prayer Book is still acknowledged as one of the ties that bind the Anglican Communion together. There is no single Anglican Church with universal juridical authority, since each national or regional church has full autonomy. As the name

suggests, the Anglican Communion is an association of those churches in full communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In the time of Henry VIII the nature of Anglicanism was based on questions of jurisdiction—specifically, the belief of the Crown that national churches should be autonomous—rather than theological disagreement. The official position of the Anglican Communion is that, like the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions, it is a full and distinct branch of the "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," created by Christ.

For 'High Church' Anglicans, doctrine is neither established by a magisterium, nor derived from the theology of an eponymous founder (such as Lutheranism or Calvinism), nor summed up in a confession of faith (beyond those of the creeds). For them, the earliest Anglican theological documents are its prayer books, which they see as the products of profound theological synthesis. They emphasise the expression of Anglican doctrine. prayer books as a guide to the called by the Latin name *lex orandi, lex credendi* ("the law of prayer is the law of belief"). called fundamentals of Anglican Creeds, the Athanasian Creed nowadays), the scriptures (via the lectionary), the sacraments, daily prayer, the catechism, and apostolic succession in the context of the historic threefold ministry.



Evangelical Anglicans point more to the more Protestant Thirty Nine Articles, with their insistence on justification by faith and predestination, and their hostility to the Roman Catholic church (see Anti-Catholicism). Following the passing of the 1604 Canons, all Anglican clergy had formally to subscribe to the Articles. Nowadays, however, they are no longer binding, but are seen as an historical document that has played a significant role in the shaping of Anglican identity.

Anglicans look for authority in their so-called "standard divines" (see below). Historically, the most influential of these - apart from Cranmer - has been the sixteenth century cleric and theologian Richard Hooker who after 1660 was increasingly portrayed as the founding father of Anglicanism. Hooker's description of Anglican authority as being derived primarily from Scripture, informed by reason (the intellect and the experience of God) and tradition (the practices and beliefs of the historical church), has influenced Anglican self-identity and doctrinal reflection perhaps more powerfully than any other formula. The analogy of the "three-legged stool" of scripture, reason, and tradition is often incorrectly attributed to Hooker. Rather Hooker's description is a hierarchy of authority, with scripture as foundational, and reason, and tradition as vitally important, but secondary, authorities.

Many Anglicans look to the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 as the "sine qua non" of Communal identity. In brief, the Quadrilateral's four points are the Holy Scriptures, as containing all things necessary to salvation; the Creeds (specifically, the

Apostles' and Nicene Creeds), as the sufficient statement of Christian faith; the dominical sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion; and the historic episcopate.

c. Conclusion



I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

For Paul, the unity of Christ is unchangeable; it is a given; it is a constant in the equation involving many members in the one body.

‘For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free -- and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body ... If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require ... If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together’ (1 Cor. 12:13-26).

Paul’s conviction that Christians are members of the one body of Christ is based on the ‘Damascus Experience,’ where the Risen Lord confronted him saying, ‘Saoul, Saoul, why do you persecute me’ (Acts 9:4-5). Communion with Christ implies communion with members of the one body of Christ. Schism is a death-dealing separation from the body of Christ.

The Second Vatican Council cited an ecclesiology of communion, and mystery. The church of Christ which subsists in the Catholic Church was not perceived as confined within the limits of the Catholic Church. Other churches and ecclesial bodies participate in the reality of the church as mystery in varying degrees. Hence, schism viewed from the perspective of jurisdiction signified a breach of relations with Rome, but theologically, it is to be understood as placing an obstacle to the full and manifest realization of unity in faith, and participation in the church as one, unique, sacramental, and hierarchical unity.