

History of Catholic / Anglican relations

The rupture with the Catholic Church officially began on the continent with a German ex-friar called Martin Luther who ignited the Reformation.

The main cause of the rupture in England was a dispute between King Henry VIII and the Pope over the king's need to annul his marriage. In making himself head of the Church he all but severed his catholic roots.

The Anglican Communion became the 'state church' of England and still is. The Prime Minister, for instance, selects its bishops. It now consists of many affiliated provinces (national bodies) across the world, such as the *Episcopal Church, USA* and the *Anglican Church of Canada*.

During the past two centuries, there have been efforts made towards reunion. According to Eamon Duffy, an authority on Church history of the period in question, the Reformation was imposed on the people of these islands. It wasn't a grass roots movement.

England was a devoutly catholic country before the Reformation. The dissolution of the monasteries speeded up the reformation process because King Henry gave the confiscated monastic lands to his friends. The reformation was a god-send for them because it made them rich landowners overnight. Most of their decedents still have the land to this day.

- The Catholic Church's historical position was that reunion

with Protestants would take the form of individual members converting to Catholicism.

- In the 18th century, William Wake (the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury) tried to promote reunion between Anglicans and Catholics. He was unsuccessful.
- In 1870, the *First Vatican Council* declared the primacy and infallibility of the Pope. This quickly became a major disagreement between Catholics and Anglicans. Other points of conflict were:
 - The developing Protestant world-wide missionary movement
 - The role of Mary in the Catholic Church, as evidenced by dogmas that she was assumed body and soul into the glory of Heaven at the time of her death, and that she was conceived without sin.
- In 1908, the Catholic Church started an annual practice of setting aside a *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* each year to pray for unity through "the return of heretics and schismatics to the Church of Rome."
- At their Lambeth conference of 1920, Anglicans called for unity between the two churches.
- In 1928, Pope Pius XI issued an encyclical "*Mortalium animos*" (*On fostering true religious unity*), which stated that the Catholic Church at that point could not become involved in the ecumenical movement. As before, non-Catholics

would be welcome if they individually left their church of origin and returned to "the one true Church of Christ."

- In 1948, Pope Pius XII did not accept the invitation from the World Council of Churches (WCC) for the Catholic Church to become a member.
- In 1950, the Holy Office recognised the ecumenical movement for the first time. Individual Catholics were given permission to attend ecumenical meetings as long as church dogma is not discussed. For the first time in centuries, Anglicans and Catholics were able to recite the Lord's Prayer together.
- Christian theologians and pastors from Protestant denominations were given active observer status at the four official sessions of the *Second Vatican Council* (1962-1965).
- In 1965, Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI met in Rome to initiate an earnest search for unity. They agree to set up the *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* (ARCIC).
- The 1968 Malta Report of the ARCIC recognised that one of the "urgent and important tasks" would be to examine the question of authority.
- *The Final Report* of the ARCIC was published in 1981. Half of it was devoted to the dialogue about authority in the Church, with two agreed statements and an elucidation.

- In 1994, American Catholic and Episcopal bishops made a joint ecumenical pilgrimage to the Vatican at Rome, and to Canterbury in England.
- In 1996, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, and Pope John Paul II stated very frankly the need for this work on authority: "Without agreement in this area we shall not reach the full, visible unity to which we are both committed."

The gaps between the Catholic Church & Anglican communion

Catholics and Anglicans have gradually drifted apart on theological grounds. During the 20th century, both have also adopted different policies on various matters, particularly those related to human sexuality. Some points of conflict between the two churches are:

- The Catholic Church refuses to recognise that Anglican priests (both male and female) have been legitimately ordained and that their bishops have been legally consecrated. This means, for example, Catholics and Anglicans cannot have inter-communion.
- Catholics believe in the existence of Purgatory as a place and state after death. Most Anglicans do not.
- Catholics believe that the bread and wine become the actual blood and body of Christ during the Eucharist (transubstantiation). The vast majority of Anglicans do

not.

- Catholics believe that the Pope has authority over all of Christianity. Anglican Archbishop George Carey said that he has no problem with the idea of a "*universal*" primate. It is the nature, jurisdiction and authority of that primacy that must be settled.
- The Catholic Church believes that the Pope is infallible when he pronounces doctrine *ex cathedra* ("from the chair") on matters of faith and morals.
- The Pope has the final say on matters relating to faith and morals in the Catholic Church, and he possesses primacy of jurisdiction. Decisions in the Anglican communion require separate affirmative votes by the laity, clergy and bishops.
- Most Anglicans do not believe in the *Immaculate Conception* (the dogma that Mary was without sin when she was conceived). They do not believe that she was transferred bodily to heaven at her death. These concepts are quite foreign to many Protestant and Anglican denominations.
- Catholic priests and bishops are not allowed to marry. Exceptions are sometimes made for married Protestant clergy who convert to Catholicism and become Catholic priests. This discipline has been definitively established in the Western Church for around a millennium (the Eastern Churches allow a man to marry *before*

ordination, but not afterwards).

- Catholic women are not eligible for ordination to the priesthood. The Pope considers the matter a closed subject and has forbidden discussion on it. In 1971, two Anglican women in Hong Kong became the first female regularly 'ordained' women in the Anglican Communion. This was followed by 'female ordination' in many other Anglican churches and finally — in 1992 — in the Church of England.

Women have also been consecrated as bishops in some Anglican jurisdictions.
 - Catholics do not recognise the possibility of divorce and remarriage; Anglicans do. (An annulment can in no way be seen as 'Catholic divorce' – it is a declaration that a valid marriage never existed. For example, if it can be shown that one party had no intention of keeping their marriage vows, this would mean that there was no marriage to begin with, and thus an annulment can be granted.)
 - Abortion and contraception, since both are anti-life, are forbidden in the Catholic Church. Anglicans leave these issues up to the person so they have no overall consensus of these important moral issues.
 - Catholics are forbidden to use artificial methods of conceiving children, such as *in vitro* fertilization (IVF). Most Anglicans have no issue with IVF.
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