

TOMASZ SIEMIENIEC
Kielce

DIVISION (*SCHISMA*) AS A REACTION TO SELF-MANIFESTATION OF JESUS' PERSON IN THE LIGHT OF JOHN 7,43

The popular meaning of the term “schism” means “division” and it is attributed to divisions within Christianity, which led to the formation of denominations that are not in full unity with the Catholic Church. Strictly speaking, schism meant such a division which consisted in breaking communion with the Bishop of Rome with maintaining the unity of the faith (doctrine)¹. The term “schism” itself has, however, a biblical origin. It occurs several times in the New Testament. In addition, the Greek verb *schidzō* which is cognate with it, appears in the Greek Bible, too. The purpose of this article is to examine the meaning of the term *schisma* in the text John 7,43. This will allow to answer the question to what extent the today's popular meaning of this term corresponds to the biblical meaning.

1. Terminology

The Greek noun *schisma* as well as verb *schidzō* derive from the root *sk(hi)id-* expressing an idea of division. It may mean sharing some things into smaller parts (e.g. tearing clothes, ship-wreck). It may also mean the separation of a part from the rest of the human body (e.g. decapitation). This use is the most popular in Greek literature. *Schisma* may mean too such a division which were not radical (i.e. division in somewhat figurative sense), e.g. the statement that the Nile

¹ Cf. D. OLSZEWSKI, *Schizmy*, in: *Słownik Teologiczny*, ed. A. ZUBERBIER, Katowice 1998², 523.

divides Egypt through the middle. However, the meaning of this verb (and noun) more rarely occurs as a division of opinions².

In the Septuagint *schidzō* occurs 11 times, predominantly used as the equivalent to Hebrew root *bq'*. This root most often means “to tear apart”, “to split”, to rend”. In Gen 22,3, 1 Sam 6,14, Eccl 10,9, Isa 36,22; Isa 37,1 it means chopping or tearing something apart. In Wis 5,11 the meaning is different: it concerns air which is cut by rush movement of wings of a bird. Thence it has not a literal meaning here. In 1 Macc 6,45 *schidzō* means separating soldiers from their unit. Four times the verb *schidzō* refers directly to action of God. In Exod 14,21 it means division of the Red Sea, whereas in Zech 14,4 a split of the Mount of Olives, which is to be a split between East and West. Next in Isa 48,21 it is referred to splitting a rock (by God) in order to deliver water for the people wandering in the desert. In the Greek addition to the Book of Daniel (called *Story of Susanna*), the verb *schidzō* means tearing a man apart, which is interpreted as a sign of divine punishment. So such meaning is to be understood figuratively³.

Apart from the verb *schidzō*, there are compound verbs such as *anaschidzō* in the Septuagint (used e.g. to describe cutting a pregnant woman in Amos 1,13 or a fish in Tob 6,4-5), *diaschidzō* (it appears in Wis 18,23 in a figurative sense – it means cutting the way to the living), *kataschidzō* (regarding to tearing up sacred books in 1 Macc 1,56). Once, in Num 16,21, the verb *aposchidzomai* denotes separating the righteous men from the sinful people⁴.

In the New Testament the term *schidzō* appears apart from the Gospel of John nine times: Matt 27,51 (twice), Mark 1,10; 15,38; Luke 5,36 (twice), 23,45, Acts 14,4 and 23,7. In the synoptic Gospels it denotes tearing up something (clothes, wine bags, veil in the Temple⁵), whereas in Acts it comes to an internal division within some group of people (a division among the inhabitants of Iconium, a division among observers the dispute between Sadducees and Pharisees)⁶.

² Cf. CH. MAURER, *Schidzo, schisma*, in: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. KITTEL, G. FRIEDRICH, vol. VII, Grand Rapids 1971, 959. Maurer states that the noun *schisma* rarely occurs in secular Greek literature and it generally is referred to division of the body into smaller parts and to parts of plants.

³ *Ibidem*, 959–960.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ On the subject of the figurative meaning of the rupture of the veil in the Temple at the moment of Jesus' death see: D.A. HAGNER, *Matthew 14-28* (Word Biblical Commentary 33b), Dallas 2002, 848; J. NOLLAND, *Luke 18,35-24,53* (Word Biblical Commentary 35c), Dallas 2002, 1156; R.E. BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, vol. 2, New York – London – Toronto – Sydney – Auckland 1994, 1099–1118.

⁶ Cf. CH. MAURER, *Schidzo*, 960.

The noun *schisma* itself does not occur in the Septuagint. In the New Testament apart from the Fourth Gospel it appears five times. In Matt 9,16 and Mark 2,21 it means tearing up clothes. In 1 Cor 1,10; 11,18; 12,25 it is referred to divisions inside the Christian community in Corinth. In the first of these texts the reason for such a division is the declaration of various groups of Christian disciples on the sides of various teachers. The rivalry for primacy between these groups has led to division⁷. According to 1 Cor 11,18 bad habits of some of the Christians could be the origins of the division, too. In 1 Cor 12,25 the noun *schisma* appears in the context of teaching about the Church which has to be like one body and there may not be any division within it. This teaching links to the exposition of the doctrine about spiritual gifts (*charismata*) made prior/before by the Apostle. Spiritual gifts, although they are various, should not lead to division because the source of them is the same Spirit.

2. The context of the term *schisma* in John 7,43

In John 7,43 the term *schisma* appears for the first time in the whole Gospel of John. It is the first of the three places where it occurs. The remaining occurrences are 9,16 and 10,10. In John 7,43 is mentioned that the people could not agree about Jesus (*schisma oun egeneto en tō ochlō di'auton*). In order to find the reason for this division this verse must be examined in its context. The section John 7-8 provides the nearest context for this text. Both chapters are closely related together⁸. What makes this connection is the reference to the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. 7,1.37b and 8,59 where it is mentioned, that Jesus left the Temple)⁹.

⁷ Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *1 Corinthians* (Anchor Bible 32), New Haven – London 2008, 140–141. Fitzmyer notices that most of the Greek manuscripts of 1 Cor read the plural (*schismata*) in 1,10. Only one papyrus (P 46) and one minuscule codex (33) read the singular (*schisma*).

⁸ We are skipping here the problem of including the pericope about adulteress (8,1–11) in the text of Johannine Gospel. The question concerning its origins is widely discussed. More on this subject see: G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary 36), Dallas 1999, 143; J. RIUPS-CAMPS, *The Pericope of Adulteress Reconsidered: The Nomadic Misfortunes of a Bold Pericope*, „New Testament Studies” 53 (2007), 379–405; CH. KEITH, *The Initial Location of the 'Pericopae Adulterae' in Fourfold Tradition*, „Novum Testamentum” 51 (2009), 209–231; C.B. BRIDGES, *The Canonical Status of the 'Pericope Adulterae' (John 7,53–8,11)*, „Stone-Campbell Journal” 11 (2008), 213–221.

⁹ One should notice, that two customs are connected to the Feast of Tabernacles: drawing out water from the Pool of Shiloah and ascending of the festive lights. More on this subject see: M.B. SPAULDING, *Commemorative Identities. Jewish Social Memory and the Johannine Feast of Booths*, London – New York 2009, 63–65.

The chapter 7 can be divided into the following smaller units: 7,1-9 (Jesus' conversation with his relatives, which reveals their infidelity); 7 10-13 (reaction of the crowds); 7,14-24 (Jesus' speech during the Feast of Tabernacles); 7,25-31 (discussions about who Jesus is); 7,32 (an attempt to arrest Jesus); 7,33-36 (a speech about Jesus' leaving to the Father); 7,37-39 (prophecy about Spirit); 7,40-44 (the next controversy concerning Jesus' dignity and division among people)¹⁰ 7,45-52 (reaction of Jewish authorities). The analysis of the smaller units mentioned above shows that they are of two kinds. On the one hand, they present Jesus' speeches (or recite his conversations): 7,1-9; 7,14-24; 7,33-39, on the other hand, they exhibit reactions of Jesus' audience. These reactions consist both in asking questions and in making decisions: for Jesus or against him: 7,10-13; 7,32; 7,40-44; 7,45-52.

In John 7,1-9, one should pay attention to the term *kairos* appearing in the verse 6. This term denotes in biblical Greek a moment (right time) given by God in which a man has to make a decision. Jesus states that his moment has not come yet (v. 6: *ho kairos ho emos oupō parestin* and v 8: *oupō peplērōtai*), so it was not the right time established by God, when Jesus would have to go to Jerusalem in order to suffer death there. However, such right time (*kairos*) has come upon his relatives (*pantote estin hetoimos*), i.e. they have to make a decision: they will believe in him or not¹¹. It is interesting here the juxtaposition of the adverb *pantote* ("always") with the noun *kairos* ("right time"). It could seem self-contradictory. However, in this way John wants to show, that the decision of Jesus' audience has no temporary restrictions. On the other side, it can be implicitly placed here an accusation against "Jesus' brothers" that they were not able to take advantage of this *kairos*. Jesus's coming¹².

Then this term affects the whole discussion placed in John 7-8. The coming of Jesus who reveals Father becomes for his audience the *kairos* – right time when they have to declare: for or against him.

¹⁰ Cf. L. MORRIS, *The Gospel according to John. Revised Edition*, Cambridge 1975, 347–380.

¹¹ "By contrast the *kairos* of the brothers of Jesus is 'always present'; since they neglect God's *kairoi*, they determine their own lives, and so lead a meaningless existence in the world of which they are a part. That is why the world cannot hate them; the world loves its own". G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 107. See also: G. DELLING, *Kairos ktl.*, in: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. KITTEL, G. FRIEDRICH, vol. III, Grand Rapids 1965, 459ff.

¹² R. SCHNACKENBURG so annotates this matter: „Für Ihre [of Jesus' brothers – T.S.] Entschlüsse gibt es keinerlei Beschränkungen. Aber gerade diese „Freiheit“ ist das Furchtbare. Für den Juden ist jede Zeit eine von Gott „bestimmte“ Zeit, die dem Menschen zum Handeln gegeben und aufgegeben ist. Wenn Jesus seinen Brüdern dieses Stehen unter Gottes Anruf abspricht, dann liegt darin das vernichtende Urteil, dass ihr Leben der Bedeutungslosigkeit verfallen ist. Das Immer-Verfügbare welthafter Existenz wird zum Niemals-Erreichen der wahren Existenz, die angebliche Freiheit zur tiefsten Unfreiheit“, *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament IV/2*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2001, 195–196.

3. Reasons for discussion leading to division

Searching the answer to the questions about reasons for division according to John 7,1-53 one should first specify matters which caused debate among Jesus' audience. It seems that we can find these matters in the questions which were asked in this chapter. There are several such questions. In John 7,11 Jews ask: "Where is he?" (*Pou estin ekeinos*), then in 7,15: „How did he learn to read?" (*Pos houtos grammata oiden*). These questions concern the matter of the origins of Jesus' teaching. Furthermore, another question arises in a discussion which follows the first Jesus' speech made in the Feast of Tabernacles: "When the Christ comes, will he give more signs than this man has shown?" (*ho Christos hotan elthē mē pleiona semēia poiēsei hōn hutos epoiēsen*). This question emerges in the context of the search for the answer concerning Jesus' origin, i.e. in the context of the question "where does he come from" (*pothen estin*). Indeed, this question doesn't appear explicitly, but it is expressed implicitly in 7,28-29. The following questions refer to this one: in v. 41: „Would the Christ come from Galilee?" (*mē gar ek tēs Galilaias ho Christos erchetai*) and in v. 42: "Doesn't Scripture say that the Christ must be descended from David and come from Bethlehem?" (*ouk hē graphē eipen hoti ek tou spermatos Dauid kai apo Bēthleem*).

We can therefore notice that all questions above concentrated around the matter concerning Jesus' origins. It is expressed especially by means of two adverbs used in these questions: *pothen* ("from where") and *pou* ("where, to where"). Its accumulation in the Fourth Gospel is not accidental as well as their distribution – they occur in the theologically important moments of Johannine Gospel (*pothen*: John 1,46; 2,9; 3,8; 4,11; 6,5; 7,27-28; 8,14; 9,29-30; 19,9; *pou*: 1,38-39; 3,8; 7,11.35; 8,14.19; 9,12; 12,35; 13,36; 14,5; 16,5; 20,2.13.15)¹³.

What causes the appearance of such questions? Firstly, the fact that Jesus performs the works (v. 7,3: *erga*). It is not doubtful that there are works performed by Jesus in Galilee (changing water into wine; healing the son of an official in Capernaum, doing multiplication of bread and walking on the sea). Each of these works was considered as a sign (*semēion*: 2,11; 4,54; 6,2; 6,14). Watching them (*theorein*) forced to reflection¹⁴. In many cases the contemplation of

¹³ Cf. S. MĘDALA, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Nowy Komentarz Biblijny NT IV/1*, Częstochowa 2010, 645–646; the theological meaning of the adverb *pou* is best evident in the text John 1,38-39, where it is juxtaposed with the verb *menein*. On this subject see: R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel according to John (I-XII): Introduction, Translation and Notes*, New Haven – London 1966, 78.

¹⁴ „*Theōreō* shares in the variety of meanings found in the vbs. of seeing, from simple sense perception to inner comprehension of that which is not subject to sense perception”. M. VÖLKEL, *Theōreō*, in: *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. H. BALZ, G. SCHNEIDER, vol. II, Edinburgh 1990, 147.

these signs lead to the faith in Jesus. Secondly, the fact of Jesus's teaching itself, which – as he said – were not from himself but it had its origin in “the one who sent Jesus” (7,16). C.S. Keener notices that Jesus, even if he like other teachers used the Temple area to teaching, performed his teaching in other way than his contemporaries.

The reaction of the crowds who were astonished with his teaching shows that these teachings could function almost as a sign (7,15; cf. 5,20, where the verb *thaumadzō* – “be astonished” occurs too)¹⁵. Thirdly, it was about of Jesus's sayings concerning his dignity and origin. It is especially evident in John 7,25-29. Jesus's relationship toward the Father shown there shook directly the Jewish understanding of God. Therefore their violent reaction is not surprising (v. 30). This speech of Jesus appears to be an origin of the division, because on the one side we can see Jewish efforts to capture Jesus, on the other side – John states – that many in the crowd believed in him (v. 31). What specific factors could have caused this division? First of all, a superficial look at Jesus presented by a part of his audience (v. 27: “We all know where he comes from”). Such a superficial look causes that the way of thinking of this group is performed on the earthly level. A lack of knowledge of Jesus's origin and consequently an ignorance of the Father (*ouk oida*) is the result of it¹⁶. Fourthly, the Jesus' words concerning his destiny. Jesus was to go back to Father (7,33; cf. 8,14; 13,1, 33; 14,2-4.12.28; 16,7.10.28). It was to be accomplished by his sufferings and death (cf. 8,21-22; 11,8.11) but now it was hidden from the audience. Jesus alone was fully aware of it. Such awareness could have had the only one who was born from above (cf. 3,8), or who “walks in the light” (cf. 12,35). After all, the last factor being a source of division could be Jesus's words spoken in the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (7,37-38). These words Jesus spoke „with a loud voice”. It can denote their special significance (cf. 1,15; 7,28; 12,44). There is a discussion among scholars who is meant to be a source of living water, whether Jesus himself or a believer?¹⁷. In the former case, it would be Jesus, who possesses a Holy Spirit, who plays a decisive role in leading the divine revelation to its fulfillment. In the latter case, it would stress the fact, that it is the community of believers who have possessed the Holy Spirit (since Jesus's death – cf. 19,30.34)¹⁸. The Holy Spirit as an supernatural

¹⁵ Cf. C.S. KEENER, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary*, vol. 1, Grand Rapids 2003, 712.

¹⁶ The verb *oida* denotes in the Fourth Gospel a definite knowledge, which goes beyond merely intellectual sphere. Cf. A. HORSTMANN, *Oida*, in: *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. H. BALZ, G. SCHNEIDER, vol. II, Edinburgh 1990, 493–494.

¹⁷ Various proposals of interpretation see: S. MĘDALA, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana*, 649.

¹⁸ Currently the scholars assume that the Greek expression *paredoken to pneuma* in J 19,30 does not mean the death of Jesus, but it means the transmission of the Holy Spirit to the community

gift instructs a believer and conducts them to the fulfillment of the revelation, i.e. to "the complete truth" (16,13).

4. *Schisma* as a final result of debate among Jesus's audience

John announces the possibility of division already in 7,12 where he states "There was a great deal of talk about him in the crowds" (*kai goggysmos peri autou ēn polys en tois ochlois*). He uses here the noun *goggysmos* which means "grumbling, complaint, secret talk". Already here we can see that part of Jesus' audience is in opposition to him, i.e. denies him accusing that he deceives (*planā*) people¹⁹. Another group of listeners begins to grow in cognition of it who he is. This can be seen in the sequence of confessions in vv. 26,31 and 41. At the beginning there is an evident diffidence in these confessions, which results from the fact that they were afraid of the Jews" (*dia ton fobon tōn Ioudaiōn*)²⁰. In 7,40-44 the division becomes more evident. Here one can see three points of view. The first view claims, that Jesus is a prophet. It was possible that Jesus's words about water would suggest Moses who was considered as a prophet (cf. Deut 18,18). Moses was the one who gave a water to people (cf. Exod 17,1-7). The second opinion is that Jesus is the Christ, which means recognizing in him the Messiah (cf. John 1,41). The third standpoint could have an ironical nuance here. The reader probably knows from where Jesus comes (from Bethlehem), however, this question has been inserted here in the mouth of those, who were skeptical toward Jesus²¹.

We can then conclude that the term *schisma* in John 7,43 means the division which arouse among Jesus's audience (i.e. from the religious point of view: within Judaism). The reasons for this division are various opinions on the Jesus'

represented by the Mother and the Beloved Disciple standing near the cross. Cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Die Passion nach Johannes. Der Text und sein Geist*, Trier 1987, 129–131.

¹⁹ C.S. KEENER states: „The view that Jesus led “the multitude” astray (7:12; cf. 7:47) suggests two possible charges: the first was the aristocratic view of Jesus as a populist demagogue seeking influence with the masses (cf. 7:48-49). The second was the biblical injunction against false prophets leading astray the people. Although it may never have been implemented in the first century, the official penalty for this crime was death for both the prophet and the people who followed him (Deut 13:12-18)” (*The Gospel of John*, 711).

²⁰ H. WITCZYK notices that the expression *dia ton fobon ton Ioudaiōn* is to be understood as the *genetivus subiectivus*. In such situation the point is not fear of the Jews but rather the ambience of fear caused by Jews (more precisely: by Jewish authorities). The reason for this fear could be e.g. the threat of expulsion from the Synagogue (cf. J 9,22; 12,42; 16,2). Cf. H. WITCZYK, *Kościół Syna Bożego. Studium eklezjologii Czwartej Ewangelii*, Biblioteka „Verbum Vitae” 3, Kielce 2012, 499–500.

²¹ Cf. C.S. KEENER, *The Gospel of John*, 730.

person. As there are some mentions that some believed in Jesus in the whole chapter 7 (v. 31), we can state that the division which aroused here is a division into three groups. Members of the first group have already believed in Jesus as the Messiah, members of the second group consider Jesus as a someone exceptional (e.g. a prophet), but they have not reached the fullness of recognition of Jesus's person yet. The third group comprises those who endure in their unbelief. We can include to this group e.g. higher priests and Pharisees. This is indicated by the parallelism between the question in John 7,41b-42 and the words directed to Nicodemus in 7,52. Such division is understandable because it shows that in relation to the revealing word of Jesus no one can be indifferent. This word demands a response from men regardless of what it will be the answer²².

Various responses of men lead to divisions. These divisions highlight the difference in the understanding of the person of Jesus. A stark difference exists especially between those who believe in Jesus and those who are apparent enemies of him. This division shown in the Fourth Gospel reflect relationships which existed between Judaism and Christianity. In the first century CE the believers of Judaism considered the Christians as apostates. It has been expressed in the excommunication of Christians from the Synagogue, what happened after 85 AD. Repercussions of this excommunication are found in so called Jewish "blessing of heretics" (*birkat-ha-Minim*), which was in fact the curse of them²³.

* * *

The analysis of the term *schisma* in John 7,43 made in this article showed that the meaning of this term diverges from its popular understanding in our times? Today schism means division which does not involve a doctrinal field whereas in John 7 exactly this matter is in the foreground. It's about understanding of the person of Jesus. The division is a result of the reaction to words of Jesus in which he reveals himself. This division causes formation of the group of believers. For them Jesus is a Christ (i.e. Messiah). The other group considers Jesus as

²² G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY (*John*, 119) summarizes: "People confronted with the revelation of God in Christ are not allowed to remain neutral; they divide before him as before the judgment seat of God (cf. 3:19–21; 12:31–32, 46–49, and for further instances of such division see vv 12–13, 30–31; 9:16; 10:19)". In turn R. SCHNACKENBURG states: "Die Spaltung in der Volksmenge 'um seinetwillen' zeigt die kritische Funktion der Offenbarungsrede Jesu. Nur der Glaube, der Jesu Anspruch in seiner Totalität bejaht, vermag die Anstöße an seiner irdischen Erscheinung zu überwinden. Dies Bild bleibt bis zum Ende der öffentlichen Wirksamkeit Jesu unverändert (vgl. 9,10; 10,19ff; 12,34). Auch die großen Zeichen, die Jesus tut, verhindern den Zwiespalt nicht, weil der äußere Eindruck des Wirkens Jesu zwiespältig ist" (*Das Johannesevangelium 5–12*, 220).

²³ A comprehensive study on this subject have been made by M. WRÓBEL (*Synagoga a rodzący się Kościół*, "Studia Biblica" 3, Kielce 2002).

a prophet. Yet another group is extreme hostile toward him. This group includes Jewish authorities: they consider Jesus as a deceiver. This division among Jesus' audience foreshadows a drastic division which will occur between Judaism and Christianity in later years.

Podział (*schisma*) jako reakcja na samoobjawienie osoby Jezusa w świetle J 7,43

Streszczenie

Prezentowany artykuł przedstawia analizę greckiego rzeczownika *schimai* w J 7,43. Przeprowadzona analiza wykazała, że Janowe znaczenie tego terminu jest odmienne od popularnego znaczenia słowa „schizma” w naszych czasach. W popularnym rozumieniu schizma oznacza podział, który nie obejmuje sfery doktrynalnej, a jedynie jurysdykcyjną. Tymczasem w J 7 właśnie na pierwszym miejscu znajduje się wymiar doktrynalny. Podział (*schizma*) jawi się jako efekt różnych odpowiedzi na pytanie o rozumienie osoby Jezusa. Podział powoduje wykształcenie się różnych grup odmiennie nastawionych do Jezusa, który objawia sam siebie. Dla tych, którzy uwierzyli Jezus jest Chrystusem, czyli Mesjaszem. Inna grupa pojmuje Go jako proroka. Są i tacy, którzy zajmują krańcowo wrogie stanowisko względem Jezusa, nazywając Go zwodzicielem. Ta ostatnia grupa obejmuje przede wszystkim zwierzchników ówczesnego Izraela. Podział, jaki następuje wśród słuchaczy słów Jezusa zapowiada radykalny rozdział, jaki nastąpi między judaizmem a chrześcijaństwem w późniejszych latach. Należy pamiętać, że Jan pisał te słowa mając już w świadomości zaistnienie takiego podziału.

Keywords: self-manifestation of Jesus, John, schisma, synagogue, Christianity, Judaism.

Słowa kluczowe: samoobjawienie Jezusa, Jan, schizma, synagoga, chrześcijaństwo, judaizm.

