



## True Apostolic Succession

The greater problem with many “independent” churches or religious groups is that their *Apostolic Succession*, which they typically claim as legitimization, stands clearly outside of Orthodoxy, i.e. some, if not most, of their predecessors were holding to heretical tenets or simply were not Orthodox in practice and belief. Hence, their action of wanting to transmit Apostolic validity to their successors automatically has put them outside Orthodoxy, regardless of how many lineages they have claimed themselves. In such case, the succession is broken and hence can no longer be validly transmitted. From an Orthodox dogmatic as well as canonical point of view, the validity of such succession can hence not be substantiated. In short, any so-called apostolic lineage outside of Orthodoxy cannot be accepted as Orthodox doctrine and Canon Law so demand.

Subsequently, we are neither in a position to accept their Orders, if they wish to join the Orthodox Church, nor to enter into any form of sacramental relations. However, by recognizing our responsibility to work for the repair of the fragmentation that has occurred within Christianity at large, we have adopted certain criteria, which may serve as guideline in the feasibility of entering into relationships of mutual cooperation in charitable efforts (Concordat) with other ecclesial bodies. This noble venture, however, does not necessarily convey recognition beyond such Concordat.

When an Orthodox hierarch openly commits heretical acts in defiance, thus separating himself from his synod or patriarch, the church Canons deny him validity on the grounds that he had broken Orthodox apostolic succession. The so-called Augustinian view (that recognizes succession outside Orthodoxy) should be of no concern, since the Orthodox Church does not hold to Augustinian ecclesiology.

On the other extreme, being part of a selected Patriarchate, Synod or autocephaly can never be a determining factor of validity in Holy Orthodoxy. This is a modern-day heresy and naturally not supported by patristic teaching, genuine Orthodox ecclesiology and Canon Law. By virtue of holding to the *One Holy Orthodox faith in teaching and practice*, which makes one *canonical*, all Orthodox bishops are naturally in communion. However, due to church politics, this communion is not always expressed or explicitly recognized by each branch of the Church.