

The Heresy of the Recognition Quest

The question *who is recognized by whom* can sometimes be challenging. For instance, we could not say by whom SCOBA (Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America) or the Assembly of Canonical Bishops (as they call themselves) is recognized (as what?) and by whom, since there are so many “non-SCOBA” jurisdictions. It all depends on more or less subjective opinions. The same applies to any Orthodox jurisdiction, even outside Orthodoxy, such as the Roman Catholic Church, which is not recognized by Catholic traditionalists, for example.

The Ukrainian Orthodox world, similar to Greek Old Calendarism, is quite colorful and multi-faceted. This may indeed be confusing. Hence, we had issued a *Grammata on Canoncity* to clarify such matters.

Personally, we are not concerned about striving for recognition, especially in the general administrative disunity of Eastern Orthodoxy. We are too ecumenical-minded, conciliatory and fraternal as to be focused on whether or not our efforts are acknowledged by someone else. As long we are at a spiritual home where genuine Orthodoxy is practiced, we will always be in the right place. The Gospel truth is clear about this matter.

It is needless to point out that so-called organic connections to selected Patriarchates can never be a determination factor of validity in Orthodoxy. This is a modern-day heresy and naturally not supported by patristic teaching, Orthodox ecclesiology and Canon Law. Thus, the Greek State Church, which is under the Constantinople Patriarchate, would not recognize (in writing) the validity of the Old Calendar jurisdictions; the Orthodox Church would not recognize Roman Catholic orders — even to the extent that Orthodox faithful may receive Holy Communion in Roman Catholic churches under certain circumstances, and vice versa; the Orthodox Church would not recognize the validity of the Oriental Churches, which are in schism with all the Byzantine Patriarchs since the 4th century; and so forth.

In regards to independent Apostolic succession, the truth is, that when an Orthodox hierarch openly commits heretical acts in defiance – thus separating himself from his synod or patriarch – church Canons deny him validity only on the grounds that he had broken Orthodox apostolic succession (which is intrinsically connected to Orthodox teaching and practice), but not on the premises of administrative unity, if he had otherwise remained Orthodox. This differs from the Roman Catholic, i.e. Augustinian, view, to which Eastern Orthodoxy does not hold.

By virtue of being in the One Holy Orthodox Church, all canonical jurisdictions are naturally in communion. However, due to church politics, this communion is not always expressed or explicitly recognized by each branch.

In all due respect, being part of a particular branch or Synod or carrying prestigious labels does not make one Orthodox. This is especially crucial, as certain parts of Orthodoxy in modern times seem to have changed the Orthodox understanding of canonical into a new version of papacy. Their definition of Orthodoxy is focused on being recognized, for instance, by the Patriarch of Constantinople (as if he were some sort of Eastern pope), whereas there is no such rule in the entire Canon Law. They appear to have adopted the corrupted Roman ecclesiology by making legitimacy or canonicity dependant upon recognition by a particular Patriarch or Pope. This “neo-papal” concept has no historical precedent in Orthodoxy and contradicts centuries of Eastern tradition back to the times of the Holy Apostles. It is as if by being in communion with a particular segment of Orthodoxy, whether patriarchal or not, somehow would make one Orthodox.

Seeking worldly recognition in the eyes of men and a fallen world by merely emphasizing the

administrative, legal entity of the church instead of true unity in Orthopraxis, is spiritually detrimental, utterly false and not at all Orthodox. From a spiritual aspect, the forming of self-styled synods in mutual recognition with the sole purpose of denouncing others or in proclaiming themselves as an elite organization, exemplifies the grave sin of “condemning one’s brother and sister” (St. Ephraim Prayer).

Contrary to worldly recognition, here is where our focus should be:

- We reflect the love of God to those around us, regardless of class, creed, race, walk of life (John 13:35; 1 Cor 13; Galatians 3:28).**
- We strengthen and encourage the existence and growth of community (Ephesians 2:19 - 22; 1 Corinthians 12:12 - 14; Acts 2:42-47).**
- We teach and practice the Orthodox Christian faith as handed down by the Holy Church throughout the ages (Jude 1:3; Deuteronomy 6:6-7).**
- We are a place of peace, healing and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 13:11; Psalm 69:30; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; James 5:13-16).**