



## Articles

# Apostolic Succession

by Bryan Matthew Dockens

A number of religions practice so-called apostolic succession. Roman Catholics believe the man they call "Pope" is the successor of the apostle Peter. Mormons claim twelve to fifteen apostles at all times. Many Pentecostal congregations identify their preachers as apostles. Such claims are totally inconsistent with the scriptures.

## The Apostles of Christ Were Not Replaced Upon Their Deaths

It is written, "*Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword*" ([Acts 12:1-2](#)). There is absolutely no record, not even the slightest implication, that a replacement apostle was named when James was murdered.

Judas Iscariot was succeeded, but it was not his death which prompted the vacancy. In the process of replacing him, the eleven prayed and spoke of the "*apostleship from which Judas by **transgression** fell*" ([Acts 1:25](#)). It was not his death, but his sin which removed Judas from office. Therefore, to suggest a need for modern apostles is to incriminate all previous apostles.

## The Qualifications of Apostleship are No Longer Attainable

When the eleven sought out Judas' successor, they identified the qualifications, saying, "*Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection*" ([Acts 1:21-22](#)). The criteria for an apostolic candidate were that the man was a companion of Jesus and the twelve from the days of John's ministry until the ascension of Christ, and that he was a witness of the Lord's resurrection. These conditions were so limiting that, even in those early days, just two men could be found who met them ([Acts 1:23](#)). Those who claim to be modern-day apostles ignore the severely limiting qualifications of the original.

Furthermore, apostles were chosen by Christ ([Luke 6:13](#)). Even Judas Iscariot's replacement was decided by the Lord. "*They cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles*" ([Acts 1:26](#)). Scripture affirms this was God's doing, for "*The lot is cast into the lap,*

but its every decision is from the Lord" ([Proverbs 16:33](#)). None who claim modern apostleship can substantiate the notion that they were chosen by Jesus.

## The Apostleship of Paul was Exceptional

He wrote, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. **Then last of all he was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.** For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" ([I Corinthians 15:3-10](#)).

Paul claimed to have been the last person to witness the resurrected Christ. Not even his detractors disputed this ([I Corinthians 9:1](#)). Certainly, none since him can accurately claim this most essential qualification.

Moreover, Paul identified his role as an apostle by describing himself as "one born out of due time." He was the unique apostle, the only one exempt from the qualification to have accompanied the other apostles during Jesus' earthly ministry, although he was most definitely chosen by Christ ([Acts 9:15](#)), like the rest.

If dozens, scores, even hundreds of apostles have walked the earth since Paul, his claim to have been "born out of due time" is altogether meaningless. In fact, if the claims of the so-called modern-day apostles are true, then those "born out of due time" were the original twelve! Modern claimants must turn the scriptures upside-down or ignore them altogether to assert their contrived apostolic authority.

## Beware of False Apostles!

Just as Satan, the master of deception and father of lies, can transform himself into an angel of light, so those who serve him can transform themselves into righteous ministers, even apostles of Christ ([I Corinthians 11:13-15](#)). "Those who say they are apostles and are not" will be found liars when tested ([Revelation 2:2](#)).

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# Ramblings

This started out as just whatever was on my mind on any given day. Somewhere along the way I found out that what is on my mind should be more important than the muddled and mundane, and this has turned into a discussion of scripture.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2007

## Apostolic Succession

On July tenth, Pope Benedict issued a [statement](#) to the effect that Protestant churches are not churches in the proper sense. This [upset](#) a lot of people. I'm not entirely sure why he felt that he had to make that statement, and I'm also not sure that anybody should be upset by it.

First of all, what did the Pope mean by 'churches in the proper sense?' Let's face it, the Roman Catholic church has long thought of itself as 'The Church,' and all others as 'churches.' The statement goes on to refer to products of the Protestant reformation as 'ecclesial communities.' What exactly is an ecclesial community? I don't claim to know, but I suspect that it is something close to what the rest of us would consider a church, just not under papal authority, and thereby not granted papal recognition.

Secondly, I suspect that a good portion of the motivation behind the timing of the statement, if not the statement itself, is the fact that the Roman Catholic Church has, in recent times, been more and more liberal about recognizing other denominations--particularly those whose doctrine is closest. Lately, though, there have been some events that threaten that relationship (an openly gay [bishop](#), a [priest](#) who claims to be both Christian and Muslim). I suspect that Pope Benedict felt that it was time to reiterate the Catholic belief that there is only one true church--the Roman Catholic Church.

The claim rests on the doctrine of [Apostolic Succession](#). The logic is, that there were the original twelve apostles, and they only ordained men that they knew had a good understanding of the precepts of the faith. Those men, in turn, ensured that the men that they ordained to the clergy also had good understanding. Part of the reasoning behind Apostolic Succession is that, on occasion, heretics arise and debate the accepted interpretation of Scripture, twisting the words of Scripture to support their own doctrine. In those instances, since the dispute cannot be resolved strictly by the authority of Scripture, then one can rely on the source of knowledge (that is, who did you study under? Where did you learn this idea that you are proposing?) That makes good sense. At the same time, some Protestant churches branched off from the Roman church with substantial numbers of clergy. These men continued the practice of Apostolic Succession within their denominations. Pope Benedict has stated that this is not true Apostolic Succession, because there was a break with 'The Church' (for some reason, this logic does



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not apply to the Orthodox Church). To be honest, this smacks of circular logic to me (you aren't a true church because you don't practice Apostolic Succession. Well, you do, but it isn't true Apostolic Succession, because you aren't part of the true church). Maybe there's more to it that I don't understand.

Something else that bothers me about this. When exactly did Apostolic Succession become such an important part of doctrine? I can see why it's an important part, but I can't help but wonder: When Peter was teaching and ordaining new clergy, did he sign ordination papers? I suspect that he did not. During times of persecution, the possession of such papers could make one a serious target. So when did ordination papers come about? Probably not until after Constantine, at least. When did written records showing Apostolic Succession come about? I'm thinking probably not until later still. So, how does one go back and trace three hundred years of ordinations with no written records? Probably not very well.

Look, the bottom line is this: You can't be an effective leader in any Christian church unless you are well founded in Christian doctrine. If you have a piece of paper that shows that you were ordained (and, presumably verified as knowing your stuff) by someone who was ordained by... and that piece of paper traces your succession all the way to the Apostles, that's nice. But if you know your stuff, and you don't know who ordained the bishop that ordained you, what of it? I can't help but think about what the Wizard of Oz told the scarecrow, "Back where I come from, we have universities, seats of great learning, where men go to become great thinkers. And when they come out, they think deep thoughts and with no more brains than you have. But they have one thing you haven't got: a diploma." A diploma is a piece of paper that really says more about what learning one was exposed to than what one has actually learned, and I suspect that the papers showing succession are very much the same.

Posted by Pete Shepherd at [1:26 PM](#) 

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# Apostolic succession

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Apostolic succession** (Hebrew: הירושה האפיפיורית, Greek: Αποστολική διαδοχή) is a doctrine, held by some Christian denominations, which asserts that the chosen successors (properly ordained bishops) of the Twelve Apostles, from the first century to the present day, have inherited the spiritual, ecclesiastical and sacramental authority, power, and responsibility that were conferred upon them by the Apostles, who in turn received their spiritual authority from Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, Oriental Orthodox churches, the Anglican Communion and some Lutheran churches are the predominant proponents of this doctrine.<sup>[1]</sup> To them, present-day bishops, as the successors of previous bishops, going back to the early days of Christianity, have spiritual and ecclesiastical power by this unbroken chain of ordinations stemming from the Apostles. This link with the Apostles guarantees for them their authority in matters of faith, morals and the valid administration of sacraments. This is reaffirmed every Sunday in the reciting of the Nicene Creed by priests and congregants, with the words, "We believe in one holy and catholic and apostolic Church..." All adherents view proper consecration of bishops as essential to maintaining apostolic succession.

The Catholic Church additionally believes that a bishop's authority on matters of faith and morals is infallible when what he teaches is universally taught by all the college of bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome (the Pope), who in turn is seen as the successor of Saint Peter the Apostle and the Vicar of Christ on Earth. Nevertheless, Apostolic succession is to be distinguished from the Petrine supremacy (see Papacy and Coptic Pope).

Most Protestants consider the authority given to the apostles as unique, proper to them alone. They reject any doctrine of a succession of their power. The Protestant view of ecclesiastical authority differs accordingly.<sup>[2]</sup>



Apostolic succession is transmitted in an episcopal consecration by the laying on of hands.

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## Defining features

Adherents maintain that apostolic succession "is one of four elements which define the true Church of Jesus Christ"<sup>[3]</sup> and legitimizes the sacramental offices, as it is considered necessary for a bishop to perform legitimate or "valid" ordinations of priests, deacons and other bishops. Apostolic succession is transmitted during episcopal consecrations (the ordination of bishops) by the laying on of hands of bishops previously consecrated within the apostolic succession. This lineage of ordination is traceable, according to "Apostolic" churches, to the original Twelve Apostles, thus making the Church the continuation of the early Apostolic Christian community.

Within the sacramental theology of these churches, only bishops and presbyters (priests) ordained by bishops in the apostolic succession can validly celebrate or "confect" several of the other sacraments, including the Eucharist, reconciliation of penitents, confirmation and anointing of the sick. To those who claim it, apostolic succession is an important dividing line: the lack of it is the primary basis on which Protestant communities are not considered *churches* by the Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>[4]</sup>

While the Anglican claim of apostolic succession is recognized by some Eastern Orthodox churches, it is not officially recognized by the Catholic Church, based on Pope Leo XIII's papal bull *Apostolicae Curae*. However, since the promulgation of *Apostolicae Curae*, Anglican bishops have acquired Old Catholic lines of apostolic succession recognized by Rome.<sup>[5]</sup>

Eastern Orthodox theology and ecclesiology teach that each bishop is equal to the other bishops, even the Ecumenical Patriarch, who is *first amongst equals*. The Roman Catholic Church and many early Christian writers teach that Jesus gave Saint Peter a unique primacy among the apostles. Roman Catholics teach that this primacy has been passed on in the office of the Papacy.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Apostolicity as doctrinal continuity

While many of the more ancient Churches within the historical episcopate state that Holy Orders are valid only through apostolic succession, most of the various Protestant denominations would deny the need of maintaining episcopal continuity with the early Church. Such Protestants generally hold that one important qualification of the Apostles was that they were chosen directly by Jesus and that they witnessed the resurrected Christ. According to this understanding, the work of the twelve (and the Apostle Paul), together with the prophets of the twelve tribes of Israel, provide the doctrinal foundation for the whole church of subsequent history through the Scriptures of the Bible. To share with the apostles the same faith, to believe their word as found in the Scriptures, to receive the same Holy Spirit, is to them the only meaningful "continuity" with what such Protestants hold the early Christians to have believed, because it is in this sense only that men have fellowship with God in the truth (an extension of the new Reformation-era doctrines of *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*). The most meaningful *apostolic succession* for most Protestants, then, is a "faithful succession" of apostolic teaching. There is, of course, much disagreement among various Protestant denominations about the exact content of apostolic teaching, ranging from fundamental doctrinal disagreements to lesser side-issues.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

“ Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men<sup>[6]</sup> ”

—Tertullian

It is worth noting, however, that the First Epistle of Clement which is commonly dated to the 1st century and claims to be written by the Roman Church (the chair of St. Peter and the center of the unity of the Church, according to Catholic doctrine) which was established by the Apostles, suggests a belief in apostolic succession<sup>[7] [8]</sup>, as does also the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,<sup>[9]</sup> who was a personal disciple of the Apostles John and Paul. Also worth noting is the fact that others besides the twelve Apostles and Saint Paul are called "Apostles" in the New Testament. Also noteworthy is that the Apostle Paul, though given spiritual authority directly by Christ, did not embark on his apostleship without conferring with those who were apostles before him as he notes in his Epistle to the Galatians. By contrast, some Protestant groups such as the charismatic and the British New Church Movement include "apostles" among the offices that should be evident into modern times in "a true church", though they never trace a historical line of succession or attempt to confer, like Paul, with those who were "apostles" before them. The founders or senior leaders of a church grouping may be referred to as the apostles, and they may have been ordained by self-ordination, or appointed by a congregation. "Church planting" is seen as a key role of these present-day apostles.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

Those who hold to the importance of episcopal apostolic succession would counter the above by appealing to the New Testament, which, they say, implies a personal apostolic succession (from Paul to Timothy and Titus, for example) and which states that Jesus gave the Apostles a "blank check" to lead the Church as they saw fit under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>[10]</sup> They appeal as well to other documents of the early Church, especially the Epistle of St. Clement to the Church at Corinth, written around 96 AD. In it, Clement defends the authority and prerogatives of a group of "elders" or "bishops" in the Corinthian Church which had, apparently, been deposed and replaced by the

congregation on its own initiative. In this context, Clement explicitly states that the apostles appointed bishops as successors and had directed that these bishops should in turn appoint their own successors; given this, such leaders of the Church were not to be removed without cause and not in this way. Further, proponents of the necessity of the personal apostolic succession of bishops within the Church point to the universal practice of the undivided early Church (up to 431 AD), from which, as organizations, the Latin Catholic and Eastern Orthodox (at that point in time one Church until 1054, see Great Schism), as well as Oriental Orthodox and Assyrian Churches have all directly descended. <sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

At the same time, no defender of the personal apostolic succession of bishops would deny the importance of doctrinal continuity in the Church. <sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

These churches hold that Christ entrusted the leadership of the community of believers, and the obligation to transmit and preserve the "deposit of faith" (the experience of Christ and his teachings contained in the doctrinal "tradition" handed down from the time of the apostles, the written portion of which is Scripture) to the apostles, and the apostles passed on this role by ordaining bishops after them. <sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

Catholic and Orthodox theology additionally holds that the power and authority to confect the sacraments, or at least all the sacraments aside from baptism and matrimony (the first of which may be administered by anyone, the second of which is administered by the couple to each other) are passed on **only** through the sacrament of Holy Orders, and an unbroken line of ordination of bishops to the Apostles is necessary for the valid celebration of the sacraments today. Roman Catholics recognize the validity of the apostolic successions of the bishops, and therefore the rest of the clergy, of the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Assyrian, Old Catholic (Union of Utrecht only). Since 1896, Rome has not fully recognized all Anglican orders as valid. The Eastern Orthodox generally recognize Roman Catholic orders, but have a different concept of the apostolic succession as it exists outside of Eastern Orthodoxy. This is also the case with Anglicans or other groups having apostolic succession. The validity of a priest's ordination is decided by each autocephalic Orthodox church.<sup>[4]</sup> Neither the Catholic Church nor the Orthodox churches recognizes the validity of the apostolic succession of the clergy of the Protestant denominations, in large measure because of their theology of the Eucharist and the abandonment of more traditional views of the sacraments and sacramentalism. <sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## Traditional doctrine

The early Nicene Creed of the Church, in the form given to it by the First Council of Constantinople, affirms that the Church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic". Of these "four marks" of the true Church, the "apostolic" mark has historically been understood principally as a reference to apostolic succession. Even so, the practice of the ancient church has also been to designate churches as apostolic, even without a succession of bishops, simply for holding to the doctrines professed by the twelve apostles.

The literature on this traditional doctrine is substantial. Many inferences have been drawn from it. For example, the unbrokenness of apostolic succession is seen as significant because of the promise made by Jesus Christ that the "gates of hell" (Matthew 16:18 (<http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Matthew%2016:18;&version=NRSV;>) ) would not prevail against the Church, and his promise that he would be with the apostles to "the end of the age". <sup>[*Matthew 28:20* (<http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Matthew%2028:20;&version=NRSV;>) ]</sup>

According to this interpretation, a complete disruption or end of such apostolic succession would mean that these promises were not kept. The same would be true if an intact apostolic succession should completely abandon the teachings of the apostles and their immediate successors. An abandonment hypothetical example might imagine all the bishops of the world agreeing to abrogate the Nicene Creed or to repudiate the Bible. <sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

Some Eastern Christians hold that the Western papal Catholic Church lost all claim to apostolic succession by an illegitimate addition of the Filioque clause to the Nicene Creed incorporated by the Western church, which began with the teachings of Augustine. They see the rift as resulting in the loss of apostolic succession in the western churches. <sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> This is a minority view, however.

Papal primacy is different though related to apostolic succession as described here. The Catholic Church has traditionally claimed a unique leadership role for the Apostle Peter, believed to have been named by Jesus as head of the Apostles and as a focus of their unity, who became the first Bishop of Rome, and whose successors accordingly became the leaders of the worldwide Church as well. Even so, Catholicism acknowledges the papacy is built on apostolic succession, not the other way around. As such, apostolic succession is a foundational doctrine of authority in the Catholic Church. <sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## Churches claiming apostolic succession

Churches that claim the historic episcopate include the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Assyrian, Independent Catholic, the Anglican Communion, and several Lutheran Churches (see below). The former churches teach that apostolic succession is maintained through the consecration of their bishops in unbroken personal succession back to the apostles or at least to leaders from the apostolic era.<sup>[12]</sup> The Anglican and some Lutheran Churches do not specifically teach this but exclusively practice episcopal ordination.

“ Wherefore we must obey the priests of the Church who have succession from the Apostles, as we have shown, who, together with succession in the episcopate, have received the mark of truth according to the will of the Father; all others, however, are to be suspected, who separated themselves from the principal succession.<sup>[11]</sup> ”

—Irenaeus

These churches generally hold that Jesus Christ founded a community of believers and selected the apostles to serve, as a group, as the leadership of that community.

## Catholic Church

On June 29, 2007 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under the prefecture of Cardinal William Levada, explained why apostolic succession is integral to, and indeed, "a constitutive element" of the Catholic Church.<sup>[4]</sup> The Vatican was asked why the Second Vatican Council and all Catholic statements before and after the Council do not consider Protestant Christian Communities as *Churches*. The Vatican responded that "according to Catholic doctrine, these Communities do not enjoy *apostolic succession* in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. These ecclesial Communities which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called 'Churches' in the proper sense".<sup>[4]</sup>

In Roman Catholic theology, the doctrine of apostolic succession states that Christ gave the full sacramental authority of the Church to the Twelve Apostles in the sacrament of Holy Orders, making them the first bishops. By conferring the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders on the apostles, they were given the authority to confer the sacrament of Holy Orders on others, thus consecrating more bishops in a direct lineage that can trace its origin back to the Twelve Apostles and Christ. This direct succession of bishops from the apostles to the present day bishops is referred to as apostolic succession. The Catholic Church also holds that within the College of Apostles, Peter was picked out for the unique role of leadership and to serve as the source of unity among the apostles, a role among the bishops and within the church inherited by the pope as Peter's successor today.<sup>[14][15]</sup>

Catholicism holds that Christ entrusted the Apostles with the leadership of the community of believers, and the obligation to transmit and preserve the "deposit of faith" (the experience of Christ and his teachings contained in the doctrinal "tradition" handed down from the time of the apostles and the written portion, which is Scripture). The apostles then passed on this office and authority by ordaining bishops to follow after them.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

Roman Catholic theology holds that the apostolic succession effects the power and authority to administer the sacraments except for baptism and matrimony. (Baptism may be administered by anyone and matrimony by the couple to each other). Authority to so administer such sacraments is passed on only through the sacrament of Holy Orders, a rite by which a priest is ordained (ordination can be conferred only by a bishop). The bishop, of course, must be from an unbroken line of bishops stemming from the original apostles selected by Jesus Christ. Thus, apostolic succession is necessary for the valid celebration of the sacraments today.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

In the early 18th century, Pope Benedict XIII, whose orders were descended from Scipione Rebiba, personally consecrated at least 139 bishops for various important European sees, including German, French, English and New World bishops. These bishops in turn consecrated bishops almost exclusively for their respective countries causing other episcopal lineages to die off.<sup>[16]</sup>

Roman Catholics recognize the validity of the apostolic successions of the bishops, and therefore the rest of the clergy, of the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Assyrian, Old Catholic, and some Independent Catholic Churches. Rome does not fully recognize all Anglican orders as valid. This conflict stems over the Anglican Church's revision of its rite of ordination for its bishops during the 16th century. Most of today's Anglican bishops would trace their succession back through a bishop who was ordained with the revised form and thus would be viewed as invalid. However, all Anglican bishops in Europe today<sup>[5]</sup> can claim a line of succession through bishops who had only been ordained through the old rite. This was achieved through several different means: ordinations by the schismatic Catholic bishops of the Old Catholic and Independent Catholic Churches who converted to Anglicanism.

### Debate over 'bishop' role in apostolic succession a church-dividing issue

According to liberal Catholic theologian Richard P. McBrien, debate over the role of "bishop" in apostolic succession is a church-dividing issue. He calls for rejection of what he terms the passing-the-baton theory which he characterizes as "an overly simplistic, mechanistic notion." McBrien says many Catholics accept the commonly-understood definition of the doctrine; specifically, the claim that each validly ordained Catholic bishop can trace his episcopal consecration in an unbroken line back to one of the original apostles or to the apostles, collectively. He quotes Jesuit Professor Francis Sullivan's two reasons for opposing such a view:

- The apostles were not bishops in the present-day meaning of the word. They were missionaries and founders of local churches.

“ Since, however, it would be tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.<sup>[13]</sup> ”

—Irenaeus, d. 202



- Second, while some local churches had pastoral leaders who were called bishops, [\[Ac 20:17-35 \(http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Ac%20:17-35;&version=;\)\]](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Ac%20:17-35;&version=;) it remains unclear whether these “bishops” were appointed or ordained by the apostle Paul, or by any other apostle.

McBrien, professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, has no complaint with the succession doctrine, but with the way it is so often explained. He says that Catholic theologians today would point to Vatican II’s declaration that apostolic succession is “by divine institution” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church). McBrien maintains this interpretation should *not* be understood to mean that Christ explicitly determined the episcopal structures of either the local churches or dioceses. Boston College theologian Francis Sullivan says that “apostolic succession in the episcopate remains a church-dividing issue,” a source of debate even within the Catholic Church. There are the differing interpretations offered by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the one side, and by many Catholic theologians on the other.<sup>[17]</sup> Of course, from a Catholic point of view, the bishops in communion with the Pope (the Church’s Magisterium) have the final say in the matter, as they, not theologians, are the successors of the Apostles and have doctrinal authority.

## Orthodox Churches



Consecration of a Bishop, by Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexius II (left) and other bishops.

Orthodox Christians view apostolic succession as an important, God-ordained mechanism by which the structure and teaching of the Church are perpetuated. While Eastern Orthodox sources often refer to the bishops as "successors of the apostles" under the influence of Scholastic theology, strict Orthodox ecclesiology and theology hold that all legitimate bishops are properly successors of Peter.<sup>[18]</sup> This also means that presbyters (or "priests") are successors of the apostles. As a result, Orthodox theology makes a distinction between a geographical or historical succession and proper ontological or ecclesiological succession. Hence, the bishops of Rome and Antioch can be considered successors of Peter in a historical sense on account of Peter's presence in the early community. This does not imply that these bishops are more successors of Peter than all others in an ontological sense.<sup>[19]</sup>

According to ancient canons still observed with the Orthodox communion, a bishop must be consecrated by at least three other bishops; so-called "single handed ordinations" do not exist. Moreover, bishops are never ordained "at large" but only for a specific Eucharist community, in

due historical and sacramental succession.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

### Traditional Western churches as seen by Eastern churches

The Eastern Orthodox have often permitted non-Orthodox clergy to be rapidly ordained within Orthodoxy as a matter of pastoral necessity and economia. Priests entering Eastern Orthodoxy from Oriental Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism have usually been received by "vesting" and have been allowed to function immediately within Eastern Orthodoxy as priests. Recognition of Roman Catholic orders by the Russian Orthodox Church was stipulated in 1667 by the Synod of Moscow,<sup>[20]</sup> but this position is not universal within the Eastern Orthodox communion.

In addition to a line of historic transmission, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches additionally require that a person who holds a high position in a hierarchy maintain Orthodox Church doctrine, which they hold to be that of the apostles and communion with other Orthodox bishops.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

The Armenian Apostolic Church, which is one of the Oriental Orthodox churches, recognizes Roman Catholic episcopal consecrations without qualification.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Apostolic Founders

The Patriarchate of Constantinople claims unbroken succession to the Throne of Saint Andrew.

The Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria claims unbroken succession to the Throne of Saint Mark<sup>[21]</sup>

The Russian Orthodox Church claims unbroken succession to the Throne of Saint Andrew<sup>[22]</sup>

The Armenian Apostolic Church claims unbroken succession to the Thrones of Saint Bartholomew and Saint Jude Thaddeus<sup>[23]</sup>

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria claims unbroken succession to the Throne of Saint Mark<sup>[24]</sup>

The Assyrian Church of the East claims unbroken succession to the Throne of Saint Thomas<sup>[25]</sup>

The Orthodox Church of Cyprus claims unbroken succession to the Throne of Saint Barnabas<sup>[26]</sup>

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church claims succession to the Throne of Saint Philip<sup>[27]</sup>

The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem claims succession to the Throne of Saint James the Just,<sup>[28]</sup> although this line includes Patriarchs in exile.<sup>[29]</sup> (see Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem )

The Roman Papacy of the Catholic Church claims unbroken succession to the Chair of Saint Peter, who is called by them the "Prince of the Apostles".

## Anglican Communion

The Anglican Church's claim to apostolic succession is rooted in its evolution as part of the Western Church.<sup>[30]</sup> Apostolic succession is viewed not so much as conveyed mechanically through an unbroken chain of the laying-on of hands, but as expressing continuity with the unbroken chain of commitment, beliefs and mission starting with the first apostles; and as hence emphasising the enduring yet evolving nature of the Church.<sup>[31]</sup> The Anglican—Roman Catholic International Commission report expressed broad agreement in the nature of apostolic succession as the 'effective sign' of the apostolicity of the whole people of God, living in fidelity to the teaching and mission of the apostles.<sup>[32]</sup>

When the Church of England declared independence from the Pope in the 16th century, the Church of England retained the episcopal polity and apostolic succession inherent in the Catholic Church. At first the Church of England continued to adhere to the doctrinal and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church. However, in the years following the split, the Church of England was increasingly influenced by the Protestant theology popular on the continent. English Reformers such as Richard Hooker rejected the Catholic position that Apostolic Succession is divinely commanded or necessary for true Christian ministry.<sup>[33]</sup>

## Orthodox judgments

In the 20th century there have been a variety of positions taken by the various Eastern Orthodox Churches on the validity of Anglican orders. In 1922 the Patriarch of Constantinople recognized them as valid.<sup>[34]</sup> He wrote: "That the orthodox theologians who have scientifically examined the question have almost unanimously come to the same conclusions and have declared themselves as accepting the validity of Anglican Orders."

Succeeding judgments, however, have been more conflicting. The Eastern Orthodox churches require a totality of common teaching to recognize orders and in this broader view find ambiguities in Anglican teaching and practice problematic. Accordingly, in practice Anglican clergy who convert to Orthodoxy are treated as if they had not been ordained and must be ordained in the Eastern Orthodox communion as would a lay person.<sup>[35]</sup>

## Roman Catholic judgments

In the Catholic Church, Pope Leo XIII stated in his 1896 bull *Apostolicae Curae* that the Catholic Church believes specifically that the Anglican Church's consecrations are "absolutely null and utterly void" because of changes made to the rite of consecration under Edward VI, thus denying that Anglicans participate in the apostolic succession. Anglican clergy, then, are ordained as Catholic priests upon entry into the Catholic Church.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

A reply from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York (1896) was issued to counter Pope Leo's arguments: *Saeptius Officio: Answer of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Bull Apostolicae Curae of H. H. Leo XIII.*<sup>[36]</sup> It was argued in their reply that if the Anglican orders were invalid, then the Roman orders were as well:

For if the Pope shall by a new decree declare our Fathers of two hundred and fifty years ago wrongly ordained, there is nothing to hinder the inevitable sentence that by the same law all who have been similarly ordained have received no orders. And if our Fathers, who used in 1550 and 1552 forms which as he (the Pope) says are null, were altogether unable to reform them in 1662, (Roman) Fathers come under the self-same law. And if Hippolytus and Victor and Leo and Gelasius and Gregory have some of them said too little in their rites about the priesthood and the high priesthood, and nothing about the power of offering the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Church of Rome herself has an invalid priesthood...<sup>[37]</sup>

However, Catholics argue, this argument does not consider the sacramental intention involved in validating Holy Orders. In other words, Catholics believe that the ordinands were reworded so as to invalidate the ordinations because the intention behind the word substitution was a fundamental change in Anglican understanding of the priesthood.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

It is Roman Catholic doctrine that the teaching of *Apostolicae Curae* is a truth to be "held definitively", as evidenced by commentary by then-Cardinal Ratzinger, currently Pope Benedict XVI:

With regard to those truths connected to revelation by historical necessity and which are to be held definitively, but are not able to be declared as divinely revealed, the following examples can be given: the legitimacy of the election of the Supreme Pontiff or of the celebration of an ecumenical council, the canonizations of saints (dogmatic facts), the declaration of Pope Leo XIII in the

Apostolic Letter *Apostolicae Curae* on the invalidity of Anglican ordinations...<sup>[38]</sup>

"While firmly restating the judgment of *Apostolicae Curae* that Anglican ordination is invalid, the Catholic Church takes account of the involvement, in some Anglican episcopal ordinations, of bishops of the Old Catholic Church of the Union of Utrecht who are validly ordained. In particular and probably rare cases the authorities in Rome may judge that there is a 'prudent doubt' concerning the invalidity of priestly ordination received by an individual Anglican minister ordained in this line of succession." This was a statement issued by Cardinal Basil Hume to explain the conditional character of his ordination of Graham Leonard, former Anglican bishop of the Diocese of London, to the priesthood,<sup>[39]</sup> but is not widely endorsed. Since *Apostolicae Curae* was issued many Anglican jurisdictions have revised their ordinals, bringing them more in line with ordinals of the early Church. The Nag's Head Fable discrediting Matthew Parker's ordination was dismissed as an invention long before the issuance of *Apostolicae Curae*.

Timothy Dufort, writing in *The Tablet* in 1982, argued that by 1969 all Anglican bishops had acquired apostolic succession fully recognized by Rome,<sup>[5]</sup> since from the 1930s Old Catholic bishops (whose orders Rome recognizes as valid) have acted as co-consecrators in the ordination of Anglican bishops. This view is not accepted by the Roman Catholic Church itself, which continues to require that Anglican clergy be ordained absolutely (not conditionally) if they are to exercise a ministry in that church.

## Porvoo Communion of Churches

Negotiated at Järvenpää, Finland, and inaugurated with a celebration of the eucharist at Porvoo Cathedral in 1992, this agreement of unity includes the mutual recognition of the traditional apostolic succession among the following Churches:

- Lutheran Churches: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, Church of Norway, Church of Sweden, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania, Church of Denmark, observer: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia.<sup>[40]</sup>
- Anglican Communion: Church of Ireland, Scottish Episcopal Church, Church of England, the Church in Wales, the Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church, and the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church.

Of note is the fact that at least one of the Scandinavian Lutheran Churches in the Porvoo Communion of Churches, the Church of Denmark has bishops, but strictly speaking they were not in the historic apostolic succession prior to their entry into the Porvoo Communion, since their Episcopate and Holy Orders derived from Dr. Johannes Bugenhagen, who was a pastor, not a bishop.<sup>[41]</sup> In 2010, the Church of Denmark joined the Porvoo Communion of Churches.

## Lutheran churches

Wide variations exist within Lutheranism on this issue. Most Lutheran churches in Scandinavian countries (see immediately above and below) are favorable to the traditional doctrine of apostolic succession. Others de-emphasize it, e.g., many German Lutheran churches in former Prussian lands, resulting from their state-ordered union with Reformed (Calvinist) churches in 1817.<sup>[42]</sup>

In recent years a number of Lutheran churches at the most Catholic edge of the Evangelical Catholic High Church Lutheran spectrum in the United States of America have accepted the doctrine of apostolic succession and have successfully recovered it, generally from Independent Catholic Churches.<sup>[43]</sup>

## Claim to Apostolic Succession

In Scandinavia, most Lutheran churches participating in the Porvoo Communion,<sup>[44]</sup> those of Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and Lithuania, believe that they ordain their bishops in the apostolic succession in lines stemming from the original apostles.<sup>[45][46]</sup> This view is not supported by the Roman Catholic Church,<sup>[47]</sup> nor by all of Orthodoxy. Two other Lutheran churches of Scandinavia, those of Denmark and Latvia, were observers at Porvoo.

Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church, representing the earliest Lutherans in America, has autonomous and congregationally-oriented ministries and believes it consecrates deacons, priests and bishops in valid and historic apostolic succession. This must be done through the laying on of hands during the celebration of Holy Communion. Only bishops may ordain deacons, priests and other bishops into apostolic succession. The newly consecrated bishop's name is added to the apostolic lineage.<sup>[48]</sup>

The Lutheran Orthodox Church traces its historic lineage of apostolic succession through established lines.<sup>[49]</sup> In 2004 it had broken away from the Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church.<sup>[50]</sup> The two church bodies remain on amicable terms. The Lutheran Orthodox Church maintains its complete book of apostolic lineages in its archives, adding a new bishop's name following consecration.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, North America's largest Lutheran body, became united in the historic episcopate of the Episcopal Church in 2000, upon the signing of *Called to Common Mission*. By this document the full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church was established.<sup>[51]</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is headed by a

presiding bishop who is elected by the churchwide assembly for a six year term.<sup>[52]</sup>

The Anglo-Lutheran Catholic Church recovered the apostolic succession from Old Catholic and Independent Catholic churches, adopted a strict episcopal polity, and all of its clergy have been ordained (or re-ordained) into the historic apostolic succession.<sup>[53]</sup> This Church was formed in 1997, with its headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>[54]</sup>

Another North American Lutheran church which has also successfully recovered the historic apostolic succession is the International Lutheran Fellowship.<sup>[43]</sup>

Similarly, in the High Church Lutheranism of Germany, some religious brotherhoods like Hochkirchliche St. Johannes-Bruderschaft and Hochkirchlicher Apostolat St. Ansgar have managed to arrange for their own bishop to be re-ordained in apostolic succession. The members of these brotherhoods do not form into separate ecclesia.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

### Indifferent to issue

Many German Lutherans appear to demur on this issue, which may be sourced in the church governance views of Martin Luther.<sup>[55]</sup> Luther's reform movement, however, usually did not as a rule abrogate the ecclesiastic office of Bishop.<sup>[56][57]</sup>

An important historical context to explicate the wide differences among German Lutheran Churches is the Prussian Union of 1817, whereby the secular government directed the Lutheran Churches in Prussia to merge with non-Lutheran Reformed Churches in Prussia. The Reformed Churches generally oppose on principle the traditional doctrine of ecclesiastic Apostolic Succession, e.g., not usually even recognizing the church office of Bishop.<sup>[58]</sup> Later in the 19th century, other Lutheran and Reformed congregations merged to form united church bodies in some of the other 39 states of the German Confederation, e.g., in Anhalt, Baden, Bremen, Hesse and Nassau, Hesse-Kassel and Waldeck, and the Palatinate.<sup>[59][60]</sup> Yet the partial nature of this list also serves to show that in Germany there remained many Lutherans who never did unite with the Reformed.<sup>[61]</sup>

Other Lutheran Churches seem indifferent as a matter of understood doctrine regarding this particular issue of ecclesiastical governance. In America, the conservative Missouri Synod places its church authority in the congregation rather than in the bishop, though its founder, C.F.W. Walther, while establishing congregational polity for the Missouri Synod, did consider Polity (a Church's form of government) to be a matter of *adiaphora* (something indifferent.)<sup>[62]</sup>

The Missouri Synod is, however, not in what it calls "Pulpit and Altar Fellowship" (full communion) with Churches which are not governed by Congregationalist polity. It has its own international communion structure, the International Lutheran Council, the member Churches of which are all of Congregationalist polity.<sup>[63][64]</sup>

Beyond indifference, some conservative Lutherans are in principle outright against the traditional doctrine of Apostolic Succession, e.g., Confessional Lutheranism (see also subsection *Confessional Lutheranism* herein below). Other conservative Lutherans, however, may favor High Church Lutheranism which remains generally favorable to the traditional doctrine of Apostolic Succession (see above).

### Methodist churches

In the beginnings of the Methodist movement, adherents were instructed to receive the sacraments within the Anglican Church; however, the Methodists soon petitioned to receive the sacraments from the local preachers who conducted worship services and revivals.<sup>[65]</sup> However, the Bishop of London refused to ordain ministers in the British American colonies.<sup>[65]</sup> Rev. John Wesley, the founder the movement, was not prepared to allow unordained preachers to administer the sacraments.<sup>[65]</sup>

We believe it would not be right for us to administer either Baptism or the Lord's Supper unless we had a commission so to do from those Bishops whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the Apostles.<sup>[66]</sup>

– Rev. John Wesley, *A.D. 1745*

In 1763, Greek Orthodox bishop Erasmus of the Diocese of Arcadia, who was visiting London at the time,<sup>[67]</sup> consecrated Rev. John Wesley a bishop,<sup>[68][69]</sup> and ordained several Methodist lay preachers as priests, including John Jones.<sup>[70]</sup> However, Wesley could not openly announce his episcopal consecration without incurring the penalty of the *Præmunire Act*.<sup>[71]</sup> In light of Wesley's episcopal consecration, the Methodist Church can lay a claim on apostolic succession, as understood in the traditional sense.<sup>[72]</sup> Since the Rt. Rev. John Wesley ordained and sent forth every Methodist preacher in his day, who preached and baptized and ordained, and since every Methodist preacher who has ever been ordained as a Methodist was ordained in this direct "succession" from Wesley, then the Methodist Church teaches that it has all the direct

merits coming from apostolic succession, if any such there be.<sup>[73]</sup> This apostolic succession is recognized by Unity Catholic Church, an autocephalous Catholic Church.<sup>[74]</sup>

Despite this fact, most Methodists view apostolic succession outside its high church sense. This is because Rev. John Wesley believed that bishops and presbyters constituted one order,<sup>[75]</sup> citing an ancient opinion from the Church of Alexandria.<sup>[76]</sup> Since the Bishop of London refused to ordain ministers in the British American colonies,<sup>[65]</sup> this constituted an emergency, and as a result, on 2 September 1784,<sup>[77]</sup> Rev. John Wesley, along with a priest from the Anglican Church and two other elders,<sup>[78]</sup> operating under the ancient Alexandrian habitude, ordained Rev. Thomas Coke a superintendent, although Rt. Rev. Coke embraced the title bishop.<sup>[79]</sup> Today, Methodism follows this ancient Alexandrian practice as bishops are elected from and by the order of the presbyterate:<sup>[80]</sup> the *Discipline of the Methodist Church*, in ¶303, affirms that "ordination to this ministry is a gift from God to the Church. In ordination, the Church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit."<sup>[81]</sup> It also uses sacred scripture in support of this practice, namely, 1 Timothy 4:12, which states:

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery*.<sup>[82]</sup>

– Paul of Tarsus, *KJV*

Methodism also buttresses this argument with the leg of Sacred Tradition of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral by citing the Church Fathers, many of whom concur with this view.<sup>[81][83]</sup>

## Protestant denominations against the traditional doctrine of apostolic succession

### Contra: Doctrinal continuity important, the Ecclesia not

#### Institutional background

Almost all Protestants deny the doctrine of apostolic succession, believing that it is neither taught in Scripture nor necessary for Christian teaching, life, and practice. Accordingly, Protestants strip the notion of apostolic succession from the definition of "apostolic" or "apostolicity." For them, to be apostolic is simply to be in submission to the teachings of the original twelve apostles as recorded in Scripture.<sup>[84]</sup> This doctrinal stance reflects the Protestant view of authority, embodied in the doctrine known as *Sola Scriptura*.

Among the original champions of Protestantism who rejected the doctrine of apostolic succession were John Calvin,<sup>[85]</sup> and Martin Luther.<sup>[86]</sup> They both said that the episcopacy was inadequate to address corruption, doctrinal or otherwise, and that this inadequacy justified the intervention of the church of common people. In part this position was also necessary, as otherwise there would have been no means to elicit or initiate reform of the church.

#### A Protestant Reformation-era re-definition of apostolic succession

Protestants may hold that one important qualification of the Apostles was that they were chosen directly by Jesus and that they witnessed the resurrected Christ. According to this understanding, the work of these twelve (and the Apostle Paul), together with the prophets of the twelve tribes of Israel, as all described in the Scriptures of the Bible, provide the doctrinal foundation for the whole church during our subsequent history. Such Protestants proclaim that to share with the historic apostles the same faith, to believe their word as found in Scripture, to receive the same Holy Spirit: this can be the only sense in which "apostolic succession" is meaningful. It is in this sense only that men have fellowship with God in the truth (an extension of the Reformation doctrines of *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*). The most meaningful *apostolic succession* for many Protestants, then, is construed as the "faithful succession" of apostolic teaching.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

Many Protestants point to episodes described in the Hebrew Bible when the Jewish leadership became disobedient or strayed from the Divine command; God would then bestow that position upon an individual who was more obedient to his will--regardless of any claims that any other person might have sourced in tradition. An example of this would be when King Saul of Israel was removed by God due to his disobedience so that King David could assume the throne.<sup>[87]</sup> Protestants see apostolic succession in much the same way. In the view of many Protestants apostolic succession is not a matter of tradition, rather it is a matter of God safe-guarding his church by means of bestowing authority on those who best exemplify sound doctrine.<sup>[citation needed]</sup><sup>[88]</sup>

In addition, many Protestant *contras* state that the teaching of apostolic succession did not arise until 170-200 AD. Others would differ, pointing out that the doctrine is mentioned and expounded upon by St. Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of John, and Clement of Rome, a disciple of Paul. They became bishops, and were later martyred.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

In the centuries following the Protestant Reformation, most debates about apostolic succession in the West concerned the Catholic Church's claim that apostolic succession, as traditionally defined, was essential for orthodox Christian ecclesiae and valid sacramental ministry. Protestants denied this and asserted that the traditional definition of apostolic succession was not revealed in the Bible, but was formulated later by the post-apostolic church.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

### Doctrines not uniform among the ancient churches

In the 20th century, there has been more contact between Protestants and Christians from Eastern traditions which also claim apostolic succession. These ancient churches of the various Eastern Orthodox may use the doctrine of apostolic succession in their apologetics against Protestantism. Many Protestants now feel that the claims made by advocates of apostolic succession have been proven false by multiple churches' claims to have apostolic succession, and the traditions and doctrines of these churches are, according to Protestants, at odds with each other. According to some Protestant apologists, apostolic succession is a failed theological hypothesis and continued debates about it are no more meaningful than debates about whether the Earth is flat. The following reasons are cited by some Protestant apologists for the doctrine's failure:

- Different churches that claim apostolic succession insist that they alone are the true Church, and other churches in apostolic succession are false.<sup>[89]</sup> Some apostolic churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, do recognize the apostolic succession of other churches, but may consider their holy orders 'illicit' yet essentially valid. Other apostolic churches, however, appear to deny the validity of churches other than themselves.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>
- The doctrines of the various "apostolic" churches are often as different from each other as Protestant doctrines are from Catholic or Orthodox doctrines. For example:
  - Oriental Orthodox churches define the union of divine and human natures in Christ differently from the dual-nature doctrine held by the Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodoxy, and reject Church councils that the other Churches regard as foundational to their religion.<sup>[90][91]</sup> The Eastern Orthodox define the relationship of the Holy Spirit to other members of the Trinity differently than Roman Catholics (see Filioque).
  - The Catholic Church has dogmatically proclaimed beliefs such as Papal Infallibility, and the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which are rejected with varying degrees of vehemence by other apostolic churches.
  - The Syriac Orthodox Church rejects the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the dogma that the bread and wine used in the Eucharist are transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ during Mass, and believes that the bread and wine are only symbolic.<sup>[92]</sup>
  - Many of the practices of the various churches are mutually contradictory. Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches perform confirmation, which they call chrismation, on infants immediately after baptism, while the Catholic Church delays the rite until adolescence or adulthood, although in some parts of the world confirmation is administered to infants immediately after baptism by Catholic bishops.
  - The Roman Catholic Church insists (although not as a matter of faith) that in general, for the Latin Rite, priests be taken from the unmarried (though married priests are occasionally allowed if they were originally ordained in other apostolic churches and desire to continue their calling to ministry serving as Catholics). Both the Eastern Orthodox and the Eastern Catholic churches (which are another branch of the worldwide Catholic Church) permit married men into the priesthood. Some Oriental Orthodox churches, like the Egyptian Copts, insist that parish priests be married. Universally, monastics, by their vocation, and bishops, by tradition, are chosen from among widowers or the never-married in the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox,<sup>[93]</sup> and of the Eastern Catholic Church.
  - Apostolic churches cannot agree on issues as basic as the contents of the Biblical canon. The Eastern Orthodox churches believe that the Septuagint is divinely-inspired and authoritative, while the Roman Catholic Church uses Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament, and to some extent, the Latin Vulgate, as its canon. The Ethiopian Copts include books in the Biblical canon that no other church recognizes, such as the Book of Enoch.<sup>[94]</sup>
  - The Ethiopian "Copts", who have been geographically isolated since the early centuries of the Christian era, also show other doctrinal innovations that no other denomination accepts, except perhaps for some recent Messianic Jews. The Jewish Law is held in high regard by the Ethiopians, the Ark of the Covenant is revered, and Adoptionism is regarded as a valid Christology by this denomination. If apostolic succession gave bishops the power to remain in the true faith, then an isolated line of bishops should have produced virtually the same theological consensus as the general Church. This clearly did not happen in the Ethiopian church.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

According to some Protestants, it is evident from these facts that claims regarding the necessity of apostolic succession to preserve Christian orthodoxy are false. Continued debates regarding the doctrine would therefore be meaningless. Catholic apologists may reply that these arguments against apostolic succession overstate the Church's teachings about apostolic succession's effect on Christian unity and downplay the doctrine's sacramental aspects. Nonresponsive, however, some Protestants wonder what meaning such a doctrine might possibly have, if those with legitimate ministry, according to the doctrine, fail to preserve sound Christian teaching.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> On the other hand the doctrine of succession relates not only to the preservation of doctrine but also to the power to administer the sacraments. As such, those in succession are not infallible (or not necessarily so), but are given the position of administering the sacraments. Since Protestants frequently hold to the priesthood of all believers, they reject the need for a special episcopal class to administer the sacraments.

Yet such arguments may not be persuasive to the apostolic churches.<sup>[95]</sup> Some favoring the traditional ecclesia see the 'contra' Protestant denominations as vulnerable existentially because of their late origins in the 16th century, a millennium and a half after the ministry of Jesus

Christ and his Apostles. Some Protestants dismiss the claims made by Catholics and by Orthodox that their episcopal institutions, in their current forms, date directly back to Christ and are in harmony with the early Christian church. To the contrary, it seems clear that these churches, the Orthodox and the Catholic who share a similar ecclesia, have evolved considerably during the great historical changes of the last two millennia. Several elements of their traditions were instituted by later church leaders, e.g., by Patriarches and by Popes, and sometimes by secular emperors. The dates when the Christian Church became fragmented into different denominations is not truly relevant to an ahistoric discussion of theology. Moreover, apostolic church criticism against *contra* Protestants appears to presuppose an approved ecclesiology of the Church that is not plainly stated in the Bible: namely, that the Christian Churches should be identical with authoritarian, episcopal institutions rather than simply indicating the worldwide community of Christians, each church interpreting scripture differently, as many Protestants maintain.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

All Christians who have a genuine relationship with God through and in Christ are part of the "True Church," according to exemplary statements of evangelical Protestant theology, notwithstanding condemnation of the Catholic Church by some Protestants.<sup>[96]</sup> Claims that one or more denominations might be the "True Church" appear as nothing more than propaganda which has evolved over centuries to support authoritarian claims---based on tradition or based on scripture---of merely human institutions. Such claims can be found among the worldwide community of Christians. Yet all appear to treasure the truth that liberates.<sup>[97]</sup>

It should also be noted that Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Eastern Orthodox consider both the Oriental Orthodox and the Coptic Orthodox churches to have been anathematized in the early ecumenical councils. Therefore, although maintaining that these churches have valid sacramental power in their succession, they would hold that this is distinct from maintaining fully sound doctrine.

## A traditionalist response to the redefinition

### Broad uniformity among the ancient churches

An apologist for the traditional ecclesiastic form of apostolic succession would suggest taking a long view to survey the *coherence* among the ancient churches. That approach will find a *general agreement* over the course of two millennia regarding historic practice and church doctrine, e.g., the liturgy, the sacraments, regarding the monasteries, concerning Mary, and in other matters, like church governance (hence their agreement about the necessity of apostolic succession). Yet such *coherence* among the ancient churches is not exact; the broad uniformity exists notwithstanding their well-articulated differences.<sup>[98]</sup> Further, among those Protestant churches claiming traditional apostolic succession (see section above), their doctrines and practices can now generally be seen in light of the ecumenical movement and in the context of the 21st century, and compared with those of the ancient churches: there remain differences but in many areas, following a long process of discussion and prayer, significant reconciliation has been reached.<sup>[99][100]</sup>

On the other hand, in the 500 years since the Reformation, the Protestant churches not following ecclesiastic apostolic succession have come to differ markedly in several fundamentals, especially 'contra' churches that derive from the Protestant reformation. Such would include, e.g., the Unitarians whose name reflects their early rejection of the Trinity; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints {LDS Church} (although not Protestant) claim new scripture on par with the Bible and a restored apostolic order by angelic ordination;<sup>[101]</sup> and the Jehovah's Witnesses who largely reject secular society. Yet many Protestants disavow these three churches as not Protestant for not following sola scriptura, the defining principle of Protestantism.<sup>[102]</sup> Yet the Adventist as well as Dispensationalist doctrines, both based on a new reading of Scripture, are generally considered Protestant.<sup>[103]</sup> In sum, while all practice many teachings of Christianity, a minority of such 'contra' churches, either Protestant or merely deriving therefrom, have also become---for good or ill---a source of profound innovation.<sup>[104]</sup>

### Common ground

One reason often given for traditional apostolic succession is the need for institutional continuity so that Christian doctrine, not only the written texts (pre-Gutenberg (1397–1468) an important consideration) but also their proper orthodox interpretation, could be better maintained. Many Protestants *contra* to traditionalist apostolic succession would not deny the importance of continuity and consistency in the true interpretation of Christian doctrine. At the same time, traditionalists defending apostolic succession would agree that ecclesiastics must remain orthodox in their teaching, or be disciplined or excommunicated.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## Charismatic and British New Church Movement new apostles

Some Protestant charismatic and British New Church Movement churches include "apostles" among the offices that should be evident into modern times in a true church, though they never trace an historical line of succession. The founders or senior leaders of a British New Church Movement group will frequently be referred to as the apostles. Church planting is a key role of these present-day apostles.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## Confessional Lutheranism

Confessional Lutheranism rejects Apostolic succession, stating that that there's no evidence the Popes have historic succession to Peter other than their own claim that it is so. Furthermore, they claim that in the Bible there's no evidence showing that the office must be conveyed by laying on of hands and no Biblical command that it must be by a special class of bishops (the laying on of hands is repeatedly used to give a

commission to some person in scripture, however; for example, it was done to St. Paul before his missions work; St. Paul also instructed St. Timothy to not be hasty in laying on hands). Confessional Lutherans claim that the churches claiming apostolic succession have not preserved apostolic doctrine, therefore their leaders have no meaningful apostolic succession.<sup>[105]</sup>

## See also

- Apostle (Latter Day Saints)
- Episcopi vagantes
- List of Bishops
- Mormonism and Christianity
- New Apostolic Church

- Petrine Primacy
- Pope Linus
- Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (LDS Church)
- Valid but illicit

## Endnotes and references

- <sup>^</sup> Assyrian Church of the East and the Old Catholic Church all claim apostolic succession, as do Lutheran churches in some countries, the Mar Thoma Church in India, and the Polish National Catholic Church, Encyclopedia of American Religions, J. Gordon Melton, editor. 6th Ed., 1999. pp 93-94.
- <sup>^</sup> "Apostolic succession", Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Edition, 10/1/2009. Web: 20 February 2010. Apostolic Succession in Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia ([http://www.questia.com/library/encyclopedia/apostolic\\_succession.jsp](http://www.questia.com/library/encyclopedia/apostolic_succession.jsp))
- <sup>^</sup> Oskar Sommel, *Rudolf Stählin Christliche Religion*, Frankfurt 1960, p.19
- <sup>^ a b c</sup> "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church", published July 10, 2007. Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church ([http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20070629\\_responsa-quaestiones\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html))
- <sup>^ a b c</sup> Timothy Dufort, *The Tablet*, 29 May 1982, pp. 536–538.
- <sup>^</sup> The Prescription against Heretics: Chapter 32 (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0311.htm>)
- <sup>^</sup> Clement of Rome. *First Epistle of Clement*. pp. 1 Clement 42:44-45.
- <sup>^</sup> Clement of Rome. "First Epistle of Clement" (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-lightfoot.html>) . <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-lightfoot.html>. Retrieved 2 April 2011.
- <sup>^</sup> Ignatius. "Epistle to the Ephesians" ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene\\_Fathers/Volume\\_I/IGNATIUS/Epistle\\_to\\_the\\_Ephesians:\\_Shorter\\_and\\_Longer\\_Versions/Chapter\\_VI](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/IGNATIUS/Epistle_to_the_Ephesians:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions/Chapter_VI)) . [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene\\_Fathers/Volume\\_I/IGNATIUS/Epistle\\_to\\_the\\_Ephesians:\\_Shorter\\_and\\_Longer\\_Versions/Chapter\\_VI](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/IGNATIUS/Epistle_to_the_Ephesians:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions/Chapter_VI). Retrieved 2 April 2011.
- <sup>^</sup> Matthew 18:18 ([http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Matt%2018:18;&version=ESV](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Matt%2018:18;&version=ESV;);) and Acts Chapter 15, for example
- <sup>^</sup> Adversus Haereses (Book IV, Chapter 26) (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103426.htm>)
- <sup>^</sup> Apostolicity (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01648b.htm>) Catholic Encyclopedia article
- <sup>^</sup> Adversus Haereses (Book III, Chapter 3) (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm>)
- <sup>^</sup> "If the very order of episcopal succession is to be considered, how much more surely, truly, and safely do we number them from Peter himself, to whom, as to one representing the whole Church, the Lord said, 'Upon this rock I will build my Church'....<sup>[Matthew 16:18</sup> ([http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Matthew%2016:18;&version=ESV](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Matthew%2016:18;&version=ESV;);) ] Peter was succeeded by Linus, Linus by Clement, Clement by Anacletus, Anacletus by Evaristus..." (St. Augustine; Letters 53:1:2 [A.D. 412]).
- <sup>^</sup> The Roman Catholic position is summarized this way: "The Lord says to Peter: 'I say to you,' he says, 'that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it ...'<sup>[Mt. 16:18</sup> ([http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Mt.%2016:18;&version=ESV](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Mt.%2016:18;&version=ESV;);) ] On him [Peter] he builds the Church, and to him he gives the command to feed the sheep,<sup>[Jn 21:17</sup> ([http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Jn%2021:17;&version=ESV](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Jn%2021:17;&version=ESV;);) ] and although he assigns a like power to all the apostles, yet he founded a single chair [cathedra], and he established by his own authority a source and an intrinsic reason for that unity.... If someone [today] does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he [should] desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church?" (Cyprian of Carthage; The Unity of the Catholic Church 4; first edition [A.D. 251]). [http://www.catholic.com/library/Peter\\_Successors.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/Peter_Successors.asp) early Christian writings on papal succession
- <sup>^</sup> Apostolic succession in the Roman Catholic Church (<http://mysite.verizon.net/res7gdmc/aposccs/>)
- <sup>^</sup> McBrien, Richard P. "Debate over role of 'bishop' in apostolic succession is a church-dividing issue." The National Catholic Reporter, Sept 19, 2008. Web: 21 February 2010. <http://ncronline.org/node/1862> "Debate over role of 'bishop' in apostolic succession is a church-dividing issue."
- <sup>^</sup> See Meyendorff J., Byzantine Theology
- <sup>^</sup> Cleenewerck, Laurent. His Broken Body. Washington, DC: EUC Press, 2007. p. 86-89
- <sup>^</sup> Cleenewerck, Laurent. His Broken Body. Washington, DC: EUC Press, 2007. p. 138
- <sup>^</sup> Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria Official Website (<http://www.greekorthodox-alexandria.org/index.php?module=news&action=details&id=20>)
- <sup>^</sup> History of the Russian Church (<http://russian-crafts.com/customs/russian-church-history.html>)
- <sup>^</sup> Official Website of the Armenian Church (<http://66.208.37.78/index.jsp?sid=1&id=2342&pid=5>)
- <sup>^</sup> website of the Coptic Orthodox Church Network (<http://www.copticchurch.net/topics/synexarion/mark.html>)
- <sup>^</sup> Syro Malabar Catholic Church (<http://www.smcim.org/>)
- <sup>^</sup> Cyprian Orthodox Church Official Website (<http://www.churchofcyprus.org.cy/article.php?articleID=89>)
- <sup>^</sup> Ethiopian Orthodox Official website (<http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/ethiopian/prechristian.html>)
- <sup>^</sup> "Eusebius Pamphilus: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine" at the Christian Classics Ethereal Library (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.xii.xx.html>)
- <sup>^</sup> Life of St. Sophronius (<http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=100777>)
- <sup>^</sup> The Anglican Domain: Church History (<http://www.anglican.org/church/ChurchHistory.html>)
- <sup>^</sup> Document Library (<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/pmreview/pmraappendix1.doc>)
- <sup>^</sup> Council for Christian Unity ([http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/europe/ecumbackground/may\\_they\\_all\\_be\\_one.rtf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/europe/ecumbackground/may_they_all_be_one.rtf))
- <sup>^</sup> Archer, Stanley (1993). "Hooker on Apostolic Succession: The Two Voices" (<http://www.jstor.org/pss/2541798>) . *The Sixteenth Century Journal* **24** (1): 67–74. <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2541798>.



- ""While he argues that the rank originated with the Apostles, enjoyed divine approval, and flourished throughout Christendom, he rejects the view inherent in the Catholic position that the office is divinely commanded or is a result of divine law.""
34. ^ The Ecumenical Patriarch on Anglican Orders (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucgbmxd/patriarc.htm>)
  35. ^ The Orthodox Web Site for information about the faith, life and worship of the Orthodox Church ([http://www.orthodox.clara.net/orthodoxy\\_and\\_anglicanism.htm](http://www.orthodox.clara.net/orthodoxy_and_anglicanism.htm))
  36. ^ <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucgbmxd/saepius.htm>
  37. ^ Archbishops of England: *Saepius Officio*: Answer of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Bull Apostolicae Curae of H. H. Leo XIII (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucgbmxd/saepius.htm>)
  38. ^ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Doctrinal commentary on the concluding formula of the professio fidei* (<http://www.evtm.com/library/CURIA/CDFADTU.HTM>)
  39. ^ Statement of Cardinal Hume on the Ordination of Anglican Bishop Graham Leonard as a Roman Catholic Priest ([http://www.angelfire.com/nj/malleus/hume\\_statement.html](http://www.angelfire.com/nj/malleus/hume_statement.html))
  40. ^ See below, section: "Lutheran Churches".
  41. ^ The Church of Denmark and the Anglican Communion (<http://anglicanhistory.org/lutherania/denmark.html>)
  42. ^ Also, evidently in some churches the title of bishop was re-introduced without reference to apostolic succession, which happened in most cases under Nazi influence. Christliche Religion, Oskar Simmel, Rudolf Stählin (Frankfurt 1960), at 164.
  43. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Pastor Zip's US Lutheran Web Links - Evangelical Catholics (<http://www.pastorzip.org/uslutheranlinx.html>)
  44. ^ See section immediately above.
  45. ^ Introduction to the World of Autocephalous Churches in the Apostolic Succession (<http://www.ind-movement.org/intro.html>) . As well, the Old Catholic Church.
  46. ^ Several new and often small churches claiming to be within the historic episcopate recognize the *Porvoo* churches, especially the Church of Sweden and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, as maintaining apostolic succession, despite their Lutheranism. Cf., Ind-Movement: Introduction to the World of Autocephalous Churches in the Apostolic Succession (<http://www.ind-movement.org/intro.html>)
  47. ^ Cf., Catholic Encyclopedia: Apostolic Succession (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01641a.htm>)
  48. ^ Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church (<http://www.orgsites.com/pa/lutheranepc/index.html>)
  49. ^ The lineages include the Episcopal, Anglican, Church of Sweden, and Old Catholic.
  50. ^ Its founder, Bishop Sam Guido, was once the Presiding Bishop of the Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church, (LEPC) when apostolic succession lineage was offered to LEPC bishops. He, along with the Executive Bishop, Ray Copp, then accepted the lines of apostolic succession from fellow bishops of the several denominations mentioned above; the ceremony was held in New York City on July 11, 2004. Many ministers of the LEPC, however, objected that the two LEPC bishops accepted apostolic succession; rather than upset church peace, Bishops Guido and Copp left the LEPC when their terms expired to form a new body: The Lutheran Orthodox Church. Yet any rift in the Council of Bishops was quickly reconciled. Later that year other bishops of the LEPC, including the then newly elected Presiding Bishop, the Rev. Nancy Drew, were consecrated into apostolic succession by Bishops Guido, Copp, and others, at St. Paul's Lutheran Orthodox Chapel in Pennsylvania.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>
  51. ^ <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion/The-Episcopal-Church/Called-to-Common-Mission/Liturgical-Changes.aspx>
  52. ^ Office of the Presiding Bishop - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (<http://www.elca.org/Who%20We%20Are/Our%20Three%20Expressions/Churchwide%20Organization/Office%20of%20the%20Presiding%20Bishop.aspx>)
  53. ^ ALCC Constitution, Article V, Section 4, lines 3,4 ([http://www.christalcc.org/files/Constitution\\_ALCC\\_3\\_.pdf](http://www.christalcc.org/files/Constitution_ALCC_3_.pdf))
  54. ^ Christ Lutheran Church ALCC (<http://www.christalcc.org>)
- /ALCC.html)
55. ^ Martin Luther, *An Appeal to the Ruling Class of German Nationality as to the Amelioration of the State of Christendom* (1520), reprinted in Lewis W. Spitz, editor, *The Protestant Reformation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1966) at 51-59. E.g., "When a bishop consecrates, he simply acts on behalf of the entire congregation, all of whom have the same authority." ... "[T]he status of priest among Christians is merely that of an office-bearer; while he holds the office he exercises it; if he be deposed he resumes his status in the community and becomes like the rest. ... All these are human inventions and regulations." *Ibid.* at 54, 55.
  56. ^ Defense of the Augsburg confession, Article XVI, lines 24 ([http://www.bookofconcord.org/defense\\_13\\_ecclesiasticalorder.php](http://www.bookofconcord.org/defense_13_ecclesiasticalorder.php))
  57. ^ Cf., Roland H. Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (Boston: The Beadon Press 1952) at 67-68.
  58. ^ Cf., Jean Calvin, *Ecclesiastical ordinances* (Genève 1541, 1561), reprinted in Lewis W. Spitz, editor, *The Protestant Reformation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1966) at 122-129, 122.
  59. ^ The Evangelical State Church of Anhalt, Evangelical State Church of Baden, Bremian Evangelical Church (union of Lutheran and Reformed in 1873), Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau, Evangelical Church of Hesse-Kassel and Waldeck, and the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate.
  60. ^ In 1866 the German Confederation dissolved; in 1871 most of its former member states joined the German Empire led by Prussia. Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany 1840-1945* [volume 3] (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1969) at 187-188, 194-199 [1866]; at 223-227 [1871].
  61. ^ E.g., the current umbrella federation of German protestant churches known as the EKD has as members 22 Church bodies: 9 regional Lutheran, 11 united Lutheran and Reformed, and 2 Reformed.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>
  62. ^ "The Church Polity of CWF Walther and its Context" (<http://reformationchurch.org/Informative%20Pages/The%20Church%20Polity%20of%20CFW%20Walther%20and%20Its%20Context.pdf>) . <http://reformationchurch.org/Informative%20Pages/The%20Church%20Polity%20of%20CFW%20Walther%20and%20Its%20Context.pdf>.
  63. ^ Pastor Zip's US Lutheran Web Links (<http://www.pastorzip.org/uslutheranlinx.html>) - the entry for The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
  64. ^ International Lutheran Council (<http://www.ilc-online.org/pages/default.asp?NavID=69>)
  65. ^ <sup>a b c d</sup> *Separated Brethren: A Review of Protestant, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox & Other Religions in the United States* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=sw9ILcqw2hsC&pg=PA71&dq=methodism+our+separated+brethren&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false>) . Our Sunday Visitor. <http://books.google.com/books?id=sw9ILcqw2hsC&pg=PA71&dq=methodism+our+separated+brethren&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "the Methodists were directed to receive baptism and Holy Communion from Episcopal priests. They soon petitioned to receive the sacraments from the same Methodist preachers who visited their homes and conducted their worship services. The Bishop of London refused to ordain preachers in the colonies, so in 1784 Wesley assumed the power to ordain ministers himself."
  66. ^ *John Wesley in Company with High Churchmen (Parallel Passages, Selected) by an Old Methodist (H.W. Holden)*. (<http://books.google.com/books?id=FtACAAAQAAJ&pg=PA57&dq=apostolic+succession+methodist&lr=&cd=5#v=onepage&q=apostolic%20succession%20methodist&f=false>) . Church Press Company. <http://books.google.com/books?id=FtACAAAQAAJ&pg=PA57&dq=apostolic+succession+methodist&lr=&cd=5#v=onepage&q=apostolic%20succession%20methodist&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "In 1745 Wesley said, "We believe it would not be right for us to administer either Baptism or the Lord's Supper unless we had a commission so to do from those Bishops whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the Apostles." (xxviii.

- 348)"
67. ^ *The life and times of the Rev. John Wesley, founder of the Methodists, Volume 2* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=EHpJAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA487&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley&lr=&cd=2#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20wesley&f=false>) . Regent College Publishing. <http://books.google.com/books?id=EHpJAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA487&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley&lr=&cd=2#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20wesley&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "Just at this juncture, Erasmus a bishop of the Greek church, visited London."
  68. ^ *Wesleyan-Methodist magazine: being a continuation of the Arminian or Methodist magazine first publ. by John Wesley* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=STVAAAAAYAAJ&q=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop+dare&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop+dare&lr=&cd=18>) . Wesleyan Methodist Magazine. <http://books.google.com/books?id=STVAAAAAYAAJ&q=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop+dare&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop+dare&lr=&cd=18>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "Mr. Wesley thus became a Bishop, and consecrated Dr. Coke, who united himself with ... who gave it under his own hand that Erasmus was Bishop of Arcadia, ..."
  69. ^ *English Spirituality in the Age of Wesley* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=yhqzG-kOic4C&pg=PA205&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop&lr=&cd=22#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20wesley%20bishop&f=false>) . Regent College Publishing. <http://books.google.com/books?id=yhqzG-kOic4C&pg=PA205&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop&lr=&cd=22#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20wesley%20bishop&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "By 1763, Wesley was desperate to obtain ordination for some of his lay preachers and when bishop after bishop refused, he took the dubious expedient -against the council of all his close friends and associates-of asking one Erasmus, who claimed to be bishop of Arcadia in Crete, to do the job. Erasmus knew no English, but agreed."
  70. ^ *The Churchman, Volume 40* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=fyDnAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA257&dq=erasmus+arcadia+ordained&cd=3#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20ordained&f=false>) . University of Michigan. <http://books.google.com/books?id=fyDnAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA257&dq=erasmus+arcadia+ordained&cd=3#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20ordained&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "Erasmus was the Bishop of Arcadia, in Crete. In 1763, he visited London. Wesley found his credentials unexceptionable, and Dr. Jones, one of the preachers whom he had ordained, obtained testimonials concerning him from Symrna."
  71. ^ *The historic episcopate: a study of Anglican claims and Methodist orders* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=mVVIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA145&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop&cd=5#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20wesley%20bishop&f=false>) . Eaton & Mains. <http://books.google.com/books?id=mVVIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA145&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop&cd=5#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20wesley%20bishop&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "Dr. Peters was present at the interview, and went with and introduced Dr. Seabury to Mr. Wesley, who was so far satisfied that he would have been willingly consecrated by him if Mr. Wesley would have signed his letter of orders as bishop, which Mr. Wesley could not do without incurring the penalty of the *Præmunire* Act."
  72. ^ *Separated Brethren: A Review of Protestant, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox & Other Religions in the United States* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=sw9ILcqw2hsC&pg=PA71&dq=methodism+our+separated+brethren&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false>) . Our Sunday Visitor. <http://books.google.com/books?id=sw9ILcqw2hsC&pg=PA71&dq=methodism+our+separated+brethren&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "Today the World Methodist Council represents twenty-nine million members of some sixty churches that trace their heritage to Wesley and his brother Charles."
  73. ^ *Why two Episcopal Methodist churches in the United States?: A brief history answering this question for the benefit of Epworth leaguers and other young Methodists* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=Qz3TAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA12&dq=apostolic+succession+methodist&lr=&cd=16#v=onepage&q=apostolic%20succession%20methodist&f=false>) . Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Qz3TAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA12&dq=apostolic+succession+methodist&lr=&cd=16#v=onepage&q=apostolic%20succession%20methodist&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "And since he himself ordained and sent forth every Methodist preacher in his day, who preached and baptized and ordained (except such as, like himself, had been ordained by a bishop of the established Church), and since every Methodist preacher who has ever been ordained as a Methodist was ordained in this direct "succession" from Wesley, then have we all the direct merits coming from apostolic succession, if any such there be."
  74. ^ "Constitution of the Unity Catholic Church" (<http://www.unitycatholic.org/page11.html>) . Unity Catholic Church. <http://www.unitycatholic.org/page11.html>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "+John Wesley was consecrated by +Erasmus, Bishop in the Greek Orthodox Church, Diocese of Arcadia in 1763."
  75. ^ *Cyclopædia of Biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical literature, Volume 6* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=NBAMAAAIAAJ&pg=PA170&dq=alexandria+wesley+ordination&lr=&cd=21#v=onepage&q=alexandria%20wesley%20ordination&f=false>) . <http://books.google.com/books?id=NBAMAAAIAAJ&pg=PA170&dq=alexandria+wesley+ordination&lr=&cd=21#v=onepage&q=alexandria%20wesley%20ordination&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "Wesley had believed that bishops and presbyters constituted but one order, with the same right to ordain. He knew that for two centuries the succession of bishops in the Church of Alexandria was preserved through ordination by presbyters alone. "I firmly believe," he said, "I am a scriptural ἐπίσκοπος, as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable which no man ever did or can prove;" but he also held that "Neither Christ nor his apostles prescribe any particular form of Church government." He was a true bishop of the flock which God had given to his care. He had hitherto refused "to exercise this right" of ordaining, because he would not come into needless conflict with the order of the English Church to which he belonged. But after the Revolution, his ordaining for America would violate no law of the Church; and when the necessity was clearly apparent, his hesitation ceased. "There does not appear," he said, "any other way of supplying them with ministers." Having formed his purpose, in February, 1784, he invited Dr. Coke to his study in City Road, laid the case before him, and proposed to ordain and send him to America."
  76. ^ *Cyclopædia of Biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical literature, Volume 6* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=NBAMAAAIAAJ&pg=PA170&dq=alexandria+wesley+ordination&lr=&cd=21#v=onepage&q=alexandria%20wesley%20ordination&f=false>) . Harper & Brothers. <http://books.google.com/books?id=NBAMAAAIAAJ&pg=PA170&dq=alexandria+wesley+ordination&lr=&cd=21#v=onepage&q=alexandria%20wesley%20ordination&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "Wesley had believed that bishops and presbyters constituted but one order, with the same right to ordain. He knew that for two centuries the succession of bishops in the Church of Alexandria was preserved through ordination by presbyters alone. "I firmly believe," he said, "I am a scriptural ἐπίσκοπος, as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable which no man ever did or can prove;" but he also held that "Neither Christ nor his apostles prescribe any particular form of Church government." He was a true bishop of the flock which God had given to his care. He had hitherto refused "to exercise this right" of ordaining, because he would not come into needless conflict with the order of the English Church to which he belonged. But after the Revolution, his ordaining for America would violate no law of the Church; and when the necessity was clearly apparent, his hesitation

- ceased. "There does not appear," he said, "any other way of supplying them with ministers." Having formed his purpose, in February, 1784, he invited Dr. Coke to his study in City Road, laid the case before him, and proposed to ordain and send him to America."
77. ^ *Appleton's cyclopaedia of American biography, Volume 6* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=takoAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA438&dq=Thomas+Coke+bishop+1780&cd=1#v=onepage&q=Thomas%20Coke%20bishop%201780&f=false>) . D. Appleton & Company. <http://books.google.com/books?id=takoAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA438&dq=Thomas+Coke+bishop+1780&cd=1#v=onepage&q=Thomas%20Coke%20bishop%201780&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "Being refused, he conferred with Thomas Coke, a presbyter of the Church of England, and with others, and on 2 Sept., 1784, he ordained Coke bishop, after ordaining Thomas Vasey and Richard Whatcoat as presbyters, with his assistance and that of another presbyter."
  78. ^ *A historic episcopate: a study of Anglican claims and Methodist orders* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=mVVIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA145&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop&cd=5#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20wesley%20bishop&f=false>) . Eaton & Mains. <http://books.google.com/books?id=mVVIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA145&dq=erasmus+arcadia+wesley+bishop&cd=5#v=onepage&q=erasmus%20arcadia%20wesley%20bishop&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "IN September, 1784, the Rev. John Wesley, assisted by a presbyter of the Church of England and two other elders, ordained by solemn imposition of the hands of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Coke to the episcopal office."
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  81. ^ <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> "Seven Days of Preparation - A Guide for Reading, Meditation and Prayer for all who participate in The Conversation: A Day for Dialogue and Discernment: Ordering of Ministry in the United Methodist Church" (<http://www.gbhem.org/atf/cf/%7B0BCEf929-BDBA-4AA0-968F-D1986A8EEF80%7D/DOM7DaysofPreparation.pdf>) . United Methodist Church. <http://www.gbhem.org/atf/cf/%7B0BCEf929-BDBA-4AA0-968F-D1986A8EEF80%7D/DOM7DaysofPreparation.pdf>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "The *Discipline* affirms that "ordination to this ministry is a gift from God to the Church. In ordination, the Church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit" (§303)."
  82. ^ *Episcopal Methodism, as it was, and is;: Or, An account of the origin, progress, doctrines, church polity, usages, institutions, and statistics, of the Methodist Episcopal church in the United States* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=jxZBAAAACAAJ&pg=PA223&dq=apostolic+succession+methodist&cd=7#v=onepage&q=apostolic%20succession%20methodist&f=false>) . Miller, Orton & Mulligan. <http://books.google.com/books?id=jxZBAAAACAAJ&pg=PA223&dq=apostolic+succession+methodist&cd=7#v=onepage&q=apostolic%20succession%20methodist&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. ""Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery*." Here it is plain that the ministerial gift or power which Timothy possessed, was given him by the laying on of the hands of the body of the elders who ordained him. And in regard to the *government* of the church, it is equally plain that *bishops*, in distinction from *presbyters*, were not charged with the oversight thereof, for it is said - Acts xx. 17, 28, that Paul "called the elders (not the bishops) of the Church of Ephesus, and said unto them, 'Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,' feed the church of God." On this passage we remark, 1st, that the original Greek term for the word "overseer" is "episcopos," they very word from which our term "bishop" is derived, and which is generally translated "bishop" in the English version of the New Testament. Now this term episcopos, overseer, or bishop, is applied to the *identical* persons called *elders* in the 17th verse, and to none other. Consequently, Paul must have considered elders and bishops as one, not only in office, but in order also; and so the Ephesian ministers undoubtedly understood him."
  83. ^ *Episcopal Methodism, as it was, and is;: Or, An account of the origin, progress, doctrines, church polity, usages, institutions, and statistics, of the Methodist Episcopal church in the United States* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=jxZBAAAACAAJ&pg=PA223&dq=apostolic+succession+methodist&cd=7#v=onepage&q=apostolic%20succession%20methodist&f=false>) . Miller, Orton & Mulligan. <http://books.google.com/books?id=jxZBAAAACAAJ&pg=PA223&dq=apostolic+succession+methodist&cd=7#v=onepage&q=apostolic%20succession%20methodist&f=false>. Retrieved 2007-12-31. "But if Scripture is opposed to modern high church claims and pretensions, so is *history*, on which successionists appear to lay so much stress."
  84. ^ Martin E. Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (New York: Meridian Books 1959) at 75-77 (traditional doctrine).
  85. ^ Cf., John Calvin, *Institutio Christianae Religionis* 1536, 5th ed. 1559; translated by John Allen as *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (London 1813; reprinted Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 6th ed. 1921), 2 volumes.
  86. ^ Martin Luther *The Bondage of the Will* (1525)
  87. ^ Yet here David did not self-select himself, but rather was chosen by another recognized leader, by Samuel a prophet of God.
  88. ^ Yet how God does so, a traditional ecclesia spokesperson may ask, would be the question. The example of the split into northern and southern protestant denominations in the U.S.A. during the Civil War (1861-1865) illustrates the problem. Certainly the traditional apostolic churches must also struggle in similar historic circumstances<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>.
  89. ^ For example, see "An Orthodox Response to the Recent Roman Catholic Declaration on the Church," available online at <http://www.uoc.ca/PDF/faithandspirituality/An%20Orthodox%20Response%20to%20the%20Recent%20Roman%20Church> In this article, Metropolitan Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church dismisses the Roman Catholic Church's claim to be the one true church and states, "The Orthodox Church is, according to Apostolic Succession, successor and heir to the old, undivided Church. Which is why everything contained in the Catholic document rightfully applies to the Orthodox Church."
  90. ^ Oriental Orthodox, available online at [http://orthodoxwiki.org/Oriental\\_Orthodox](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Oriental_Orthodox)
  91. ^ On the other hand, most Protestant denominations abide by the ancient councils of the apostolic churches, while there are other Protestant denominations that diverge, e.g., the Jehovah's Witnesses seem to have adopted some teachings of the Egyptian priest Arius condemned by the Council of Nicea in 325.
  92. ^ Jacobite Syrian Christian Church :: (<http://www.jacobitesyrianchurch.org/faith.htm>)
  93. ^ Encyclopedia Coptica: The Christian Coptic Orthodox Church Of Egypt (<http://www.coptic.net/EncyclopediaCoptica/>)
  94. ^ Ethiopian Old Testament Canon, available online at <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/bible/ethold.stm>
  95. ^ See here below the subsection "Broad uniformity among the ancient churches".
  96. ^ But cf., Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over? An evangelical assessment of contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2005).
  97. ^ Jesus taught his followers to love one another. John 13:35 (<http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=John%2013:35;&>

- version=ESV;).
98. ^ As to these differences see, e.g., the subsection here above "Doctrines not uniform among the ancient churches.
  99. ^ The initial but incomplete success of the ecumenical movement has evolved between different partners in dialogue and the general discussion, e.g., the ancient churches, Catholic and Orthodox; each also with various Protestant churches; and between the many Protestant churches. Some Protestant churches, however, reject the ecumenical movement as theology: often those who do so also reject *apostolic* bishops and traditional apostolic succession. Yet in charitable activity there can be welcome cooperation and mutual assistance across the full range of Christian denominations.
  100. ^ Cf., Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The Ecumenical Movement. An introductory history* (Westport CT: Praeger 2004).
  101. ^ <http://scriptures.lds.org/en/dc/128/20#20>
  102. ^ Yet, at least initially, the Unitarians claimed to follow Scripture, and the Jehovah's Witnesses today state that their beliefs are based solely on their interpretation of Scripture.
  103. ^ Compare *Protestant* churches arising out of the Second Great Awakening in the U.S.A. (and often following Restorationism), e.g., Adventism as well as other churches (yet here also would be the LDS Church). Compare also the emergence of Dispensationalism, a novel interpretation of scripture which divides biblical and church history into progressive periods ending in the *rapture*.
  104. ^ Cf., John A. Hardon, *The Protestant Churches of America* (Newman Press 1956; new edition by Doubleday Image 1969), Adventism at 29-41, Jehovah's Witnesses at 330-334, LDS Church at 154-168, Unitarians at 228-239.
  105. ^ WELS Topical Q&A - Apostolic Succession ([http://web.archive.org/web/20080630172953/http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic\\_topicID=942&culitem\\_itemID=22266](http://web.archive.org/web/20080630172953/http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic_topicID=942&culitem_itemID=22266))

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- Views on apostolic succession at WikiChristian ([http://www.wikichristian.org/Apostolic\\_Succession](http://www.wikichristian.org/Apostolic_Succession))
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