Is the Old Apostolic Church a Sect?

Revision 1.3 · 15 October 2026
By Arend Botha · Sources checked 15 October 2026 · Sources and bibliography

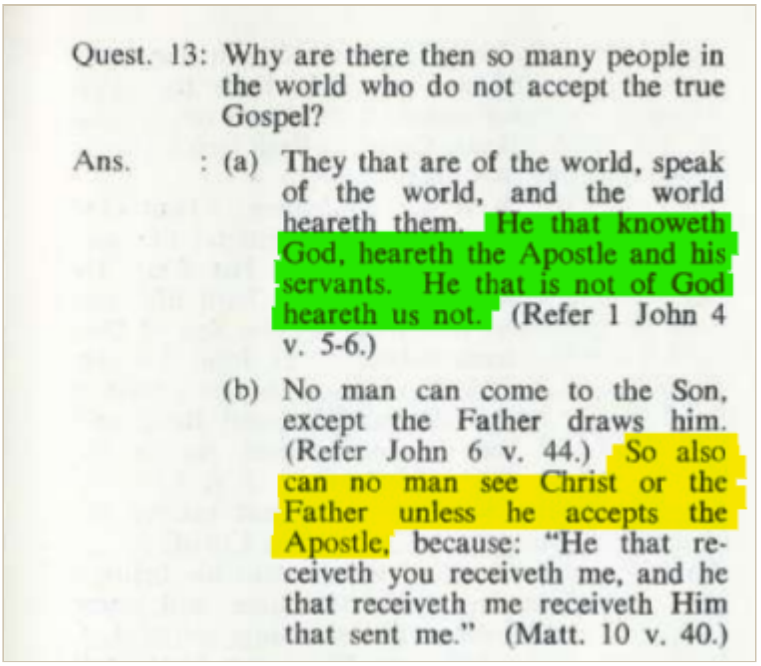
Short answer: Yes, the Old Apostolic Church (OAC) can reasonably be described as having sectarian characteristics. Its distinctive apostolic authority and membership boundaries deserve examination. That does not automatically make it a "cult", and the label alone proves neither abuse nor bad faith among its members. The strongest assessment tests documented teaching rather than relying on a hostile label.

Sect and cult: different questions

In Troeltsch's classical church–sect framework, summarized by historian Richard Kieckhefer, church-type bodies accommodate wider society, while sect-type bodies pursue purity by resisting compromise. [1] These are analytical models, not verdicts on the OAC. A full sociological classification requires evidence about community life. Here the conclusion is a Christian doctrinal assessment. It asks how the documented teachings compare with historic Christian confession and Scripture, rather than treating numerical size or unfamiliar worship as decisive. "Cult" often suggests coercion or exploitation; those behavioural allegations require separate evidence.

Apostolic authority and sealing

The archived *Catechism* connects seeing Christ and the Father with accepting the Apostle. [2] The 2021 constitution makes apostolic sealing a condition of OAC membership. [3] The issue is the spiritual necessity assigned to contemporary apostles, not merely the existence of church offices. A membership rule alone does not prove that every outsider is condemned.



Quest. 13: Why are there then so many people in the world who do not accept the true Gospel?

Ans. : (a) They that are of the world, speak of the world, and the world heareth them. He that knoweth God, heareth the Apostle and his servants. He that is not of God heareth us not. (Refer 1 John 4 v. 5-6.)

(b) No man can come to the Son, except the Father draws him. (Refer John 6 v. 44.) So also can no man see Christ or the Father unless he accepts the Apostle, because: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me." (Matt. 10 v. 40.)

Extract from the archived *OAC Catechism*, Part 2, Q13(a–b), printed p. 53 (PDF p. 28). Highlighting added. [2]

The confession associates receiving the Holy Spirit with apostolic laying on of hands. [4] Acts 8:14–17 describes such laying on of hands; Acts 10:44–48 records reception of the Spirit before water baptism. Neither automatically identifies today's OAC apostles with Christ's original witnesses. The confession also affirms both Testaments; the question is how Scripture's authority relates to apostolic interpretation.

The Confession and the Apostles' Creed

The OAC Confession shares the historic Apostles' Creed's affirmations of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, ascension and judgment, and explicitly affirms His divinity and humanity. [4] [5] It also professes faith in the contemporary Apostle sent to believers, apostolic sealing and sacraments for the dead: claims absent from the Apostles' Creed, which affirms the resurrection of the body. [6] These are substantive doctrinal differences. See our published introduction to the Apostles' Creed (Afrikaans). OAC Confession and Apostles' Creed: detailed comparison — Coming Soon.

What does "Second Coming" mean?

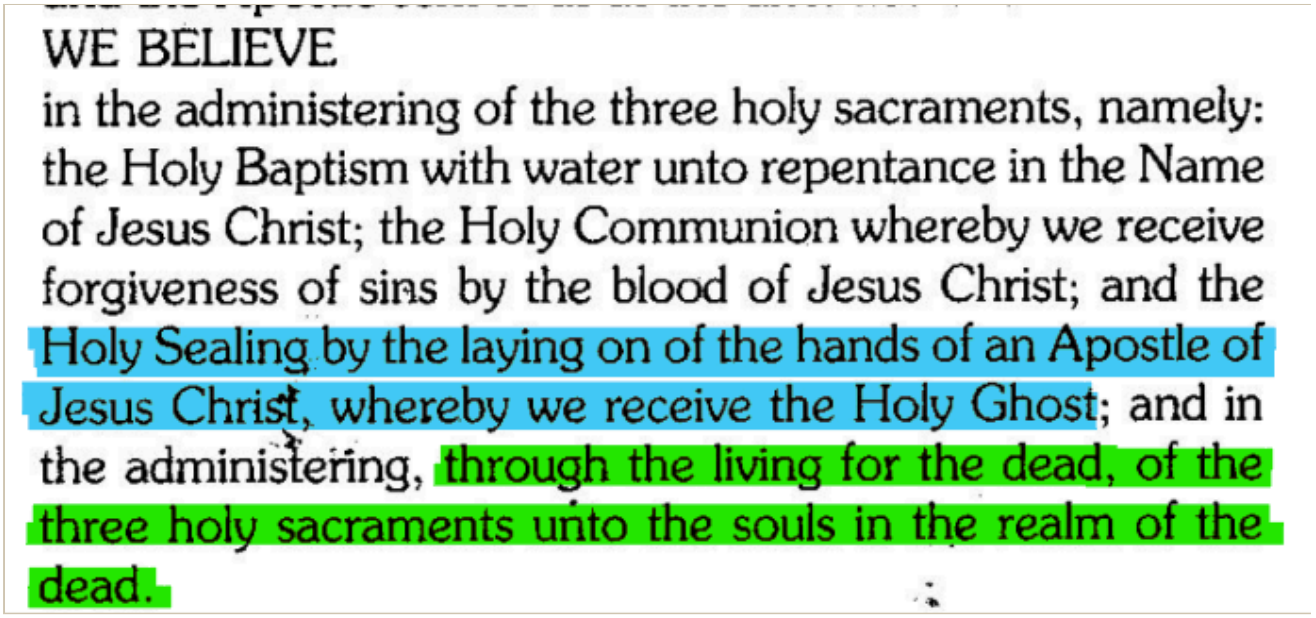
The confession professes Christ's coming again to judge. The archived catechism nevertheless interprets Christ as already come, discerned spiritually, and the clouds as witnesses rather than natural clouds. [2] This spiritualized account differs from the bodily return described in Acts 1:9–11, where the departing Jesus is promised to return in the same manner. A present spiritual encounter does not by itself account for that promise. Belief about Jesus becoming human is a separate question from belief about His return. Our preterist background guide (Afrikaans) is context, not proof of OAC doctrine.

Did Jesus physically exist?

The OAC's written Confession of Faith affirms that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, suffered, died and rose from the dead. It is therefore inaccurate to claim that the denomination officially denies His physical, historical existence. Some reported member interpretations differ from this written confession, raising a question of doctrinal consistency; those reports should not be treated as the denomination's official teaching. John 1:14 affirms that the Word became flesh, and 1 John 4:2–3 makes confessing Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh a test of the spirits. For a related study of the incarnation, see Het Jesus Werklik Mens Geword?. Related video study — Coming Soon.

Sacraments for the dead

The confession explicitly extends Baptism, Communion and Holy Sealing through living people to souls in the realm of the dead. [4]



WE BELIEVE
in the administering of the three holy sacraments, namely: the Holy Baptism with water unto repentance in the Name of Jesus Christ; the Holy Communion whereby we receive forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ; and the Holy Sealing by the laying on of the hands of an Apostle of Jesus Christ, whereby we receive the Holy Ghost; and in the administering, through the living for the dead, of the three holy sacraments unto the souls in the realm of the dead.

Archived *OAC Confession of Faith*, third profession, English page (PDF p. 1). Blue: Holy Sealing by an Apostle. Green: the three sacraments administered through the living for the dead. Highlighting added. [4]

Domestic Rules §3.1.7.5 regulates departed sealing; §4.6.1, specifically §4.6.1.7.4, applies Communion procedure during it. [8] This is a major doctrinal issue, not merely an unusual custom. Whether 1 Corinthians 15:29 and 1 Peter 3:18–20 authorize this complete practice requires argument, not assertion. Sacraments for the dead: detailed study — Coming Soon.

Leadership, dreams and oversight

The May 2009 *Domestic Rules* require written submission of dreams and visions to superior officers (§5.2), apostolic authorization and preparation for ordination (§7.1), and monthly teaching meetings intended to promote unity and uniformity (§7.3). [8] These are formal procedures, not proof of

appointment by dreams or inadequate training. Whether oversight works fairly requires evidence of actual practice. Member disagreement alone does not establish systemic failure.

A careful conclusion

The documented authority assigned to contemporary apostles, the catechism's spiritualized Second Coming, and sacraments for the dead provide substantial grounds for describing the OAC as sectarian from a historic orthodox Christian perspective. This assesses teachings, not every member's sincerity, character or standing before God. The historical documents establish what those editions teach, not every congregation's current practice. Acts 17:11 and Galatians 1:8–9 direct us to test the message and its authority; the label must follow the evidence.

Explore the questions

Further studies in preparation:

Living apostles and biblical authority — Coming Soon

Sealing and receiving the Holy Spirit — Coming Soon

Christ's return: related video study — Coming Soon

Sources and bibliography

Numbered citations include source context and precise locations. Undated scans and May 2009 rules are historical editions; archive upload dates are not publication dates. Scripture references identify the passages discussed.

1. Richard Kieckhefer. "Convention and Conversion: Patterns in Late Medieval Piety." *Church History* 67(1), March 1998, pp. 32–51. Opening extract, p. 32. DOI: 10.2307/3170770. The publisher's opening extract was inspected; this source does not classify the OAC. Open source ↗

2. The Old Apostolic Church of Africa. *Catechism, Parts 1 and 2*. Undated archived scan. Part 2: Q13, p. 53 (PDF p. 28); Q27, pp. 62–63 (PDF p. 33); Q31, pp. 65–66 (PDF pp. 34–35); Q54–58, pp. 76–78 (PDF pp. 40–41). Archive record. Open source ↗

3. The Old Apostolic Church. Constitution. Approved 19 May 2021. §4.2, printed p. 3 / PDF p. 5. Official governance source; used for the membership requirement. Open source ↗

4. The Old Apostolic Church of Africa. *Confession of Faith / Geloofsbelydenis*. Undated archived scan, English page (PDF p. 1), first to fourth professions. Archive record. Open source ↗

5. The Old Apostolic Church. *Confession of Faith*. Official public webpage, first profession and sacramental paragraph. Accessed 15 October 2026. Its wording is not identical to the archived scan. Open source ↗

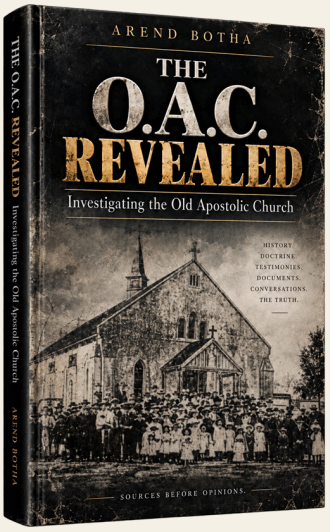
6. The Holy See. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "The Credo": Apostles' Creed (with the Nicene Creed in a separate column). Accessed 15 October 2026. Text used for comparison, not as an authority on OAC interpretation. Open source ↗

7. Nicky Verster. *Dividing Moment: Was Jesus a Physical Being?* Public YouTube video. 3:32; 4:26–4:42. Automatic transcript checked 15 October 2026; reported conversations were not independently verified. Used only for the speaker's attributed claims. Open source ↗

8. The Old Apostolic Church. Domestic Rules / Hausregeln. May 2009, Resolution 188. §3.1.7.5 (PDF pp. 15–16); §4.6.1.7.4 within §4.6.1 (PDF p. 43); §§5.2.1–5.2.4 (PDF pp. 47–48); §§7.1.1–7.1.3 and §§7.3.1–7.3.3 (PDF pp. 59–60). Historical rules; this copy does not establish current enforcement. Archive record. Open source ↗

Revision record: 1.2, 15 October 2026 — clarified doctrinal conclusion, Apostles' Creed comparison, departed sacraments and formal leadership procedures.

Revision record: 1.3, 15 October 2026 — updated article content, supporting illustrations and book image; PDF synchronized with this revision.



FORTHCOMING BOOK

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