

Comment on the Draft Paper "Apostolic Succession" by
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In its use of scripture the Final Draft on the Apostolic Succession seems to me pretty satisfactory, though I do see that the dissenting member must have found it a big jump into the high doctrine of the penultimate paragraph. There are just a few small points which are perhaps worth mentioning:

1. "As a group the apostles are seen to exercise authority over the first christian communities" - only over Jerusalem, and that only at the beginning; by the end of Acts it is presbyters who seem to be in charge. I find the bracket rather meaningless; in the picture of harmony given by Acts, such qualifications are quite out of place.
2. Use of Acts 6.6. only in the Western text, with its Petrine tendencies, is it clear that the apostles are the ones who lay hands on the Seven. In other texts, it could well be the community as a whole who present them to the apostles, pray over them and lay hands on them. So who is doing the commissioning, the community (as they commissioned Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13.3) or the apostles?
3. "But we have no clear picture of 'apostolic succession'" - I wonder whether it should somewhere be said that the early communities seem largely to have taken over the structure of the Jewish communities of the Diaspora, with their council of presbyters (it is pusillanimous of the sub-commission not to mention the episcopate!); definitely some structure and authority existed.
4. Distinction between Twelve and apostles (largely in the footnote) - I think it worth remarking that Luke in Acts distinguishes clearly between the Twelve and the rest, and will not call Paul an apostle, whereas Paul himself uses apostles more widely, to **include** others as well as himself.
5. I think it is a slight pity that more use is not made of the Holy Spirit, e.g. Christ breathing on them after the resurrection; but perhaps it does not fit in.