

CHOOSING ELDERS AND DEACONS

NUMEROUS inquiries have come to us indicating that some of the brethren have difficulty in applying the suggestions given in Vol. VI, on the subject of election of servants for the Classes – elders and deacons.

It was not our thought there to lay down an invariable rule on the subject. The Bible gives none, and no one else has a right to establish such a rule. Our suggestion was that wherever possible the election should be unanimous, and unless seventy-five per cent. of the Class, or more, favored a brother's election, it would be rather unwise for him to accept the office – the service. We did not by this mean that a minority of twenty-five or thirty per cent. should be encouraged to obstruct the Class and hinder an election.

Strictly speaking, a majority of *one* in a Class would decide any matter except as love might come in to urge a consideration of the sentiments of others. If, for instance, a Class numbered one hundred, fifty-one of these would have a *right* to decide respecting who should be the servants of the Church, and the other forty-nine should very quietly acquiesce, recognizing the fact that they constitute only a minority, and should loyally strive to support the will of the majority.

Only the spirit of love and the best interests of all in the Class suggests more than fifty-one per cent. Love should strive for a unanimous vote. But how might this be obtained? We will offer a suggestion.

Suppose that in a Class of one hundred six Elders were considered necessary for the service. A, B, C, D, E, F would represent available candidates of more or less ability. A might have a hundred votes; B, ninety; C, eighty; D, seventy; E, sixty; F, fifty.

Under a strict voting on the lines of preference only two would be selected on a ninety per cent. basis; but our thought would be that the entire six might be unanimously elected, if they were on the average as good material as the Class possessed, and if nothing were known derogatory to their moral characters.

It is a mistake to think that the standards established by St. Paul are to be taken literally, for no one would be found fully up to all the requirements. The Apostle has stated what the *ideal* Elder would be. Each voter should have this ideal before his mind in thinking of the will of the Lord; but the Class is not to be left without an Elder unless there are serious blemishes.

Our Lord similarly set a perfect standard before us when He said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) Who is perfect in the sense that God is perfect? "There is none righteous; no, not one." (Rom. 3:10.) The Master evidently meant that we should not measure ourselves by a low standard, but by the perfect standard, that thus we would be assisting ourselves up to the grandest ideals in respect to our own lives and characters and in respect to those chosen to be Elders and ensamples to the Flock.

Be it always remembered that none are to vote except those professing full consecration, manifested by the usual symbol – immersion in water. Such as have not symbolized their consecration are not to be disowned as brethren, but should be considered so immature as not to be competent to express an opinion in respect to who would be qualified to serve the Church, and, of course, would not be qualified to be servants themselves.

Another question which here and there is obtruding itself is, Should any one be chosen as a servant of the Church who has not taken the special Vow which so many of us have found very helpful, and which has been recommended to all? We cannot make the Vow a test of brotherhood, for, even though we believe that the Lord has specially brought it forth at this time, and that to a certain extent He

intends it to serve as a test amongst the consecrated, nevertheless the Bible does not authorize us to make this a test of brotherhood. It is a matter of judgment rather than of Divine direction, just as the candidate's misuse of the English language, or uncouthness of manner might properly enough be taken into consideration, although not mentioned in the Bible amongst the qualifications for eldership.

It would rejoice us greatly to know that all the dear Elders and Deacons amongst the Lord's people everywhere could see eye to eye with respect to the reasonableness of the Vow, and its harmony with the Divine Word and with our consecration Vow, to which it is, as it were, a blue fringe, or border and finish. One can scarcely refrain from wondering what objection any Christian brother or sister could have to that Vow. To some of us it seems as though it would imply either something wrong as respects their heart intentions or something defective in their reasoning faculties. However, we are not competent to judge so closely. The Master said, "Judge not."

Our thought is that in selecting Elders or Deacons a preference might well be given to those who have taken the Vow and who see eye to eye on this subject. Nevertheless, if the brethren who are competent to lead Classes [R5337 : page 319] are acceptable in every other way and are not *opposers* of the Vow, they might be chosen. This would be especially true of those who declare that they are living up to all the requirements of the Vow to the best of their ability, and merely decline to take it because of fear that somehow or other the taking of this simple Vow might injure *them* while it helps *others*. We may not understand the processes of their reasoning, nor the attitude of their hearts, but we may under such circumstances pass over what we cannot understand nor appreciate.

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