

Is Voting Non-Scriptural

Contrary to the popular mantra “voting is non-scriptural”, there is some fairly good evidence that voting was pervasive in the first century, including in the Church and it was used to select deacons and elders in the first century. Voting is mentioned as early as 508 B.C. in Greece and was very prevalent in New Testament times as a decision making tool among groups.

Consider even the case of elders: *Acts 14:23(NASB)* "And when they had **appointed** elders for them in every church, having prayed..."

The word "appointed" is Cheirotoneo (gk) and it means:

To elect or choose to an office by lifting up the hand; to choose to vote. (Lexicon to the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates).

To stretch out the hand; to constitute by voting. (The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, 1978, Harold K. Moulton)

(1)To vote by stretching out the hand, (2) to create or appoint by vote: one to have charge of some office or duty (3) to elect, create, appoint (The New Testament Greek Lexicon, 2002)

It's interesting to compare these definitions with the new Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words:

I've added a few comments (in red) to demonstrate a potential bias in this definition/interpretation.

Start of New Vine's

cheirotoneo primarily used of voting in the Athenian legislative assembly and meaning "to stretch forth the hands" (cheir, "the hand," teino, "to stretch"), is not to be taken in its literal sense; (WHY NOT?) it could not be so taken in its compound procheirotoneo, "to choose before," since it is said of God, Acts_10:41.

(that's true but the compound form is not used in Acts 14:23)

Cheirotoneo is said of "the appointment" of elders by apostolic missionaries in the various churches which they revisited, Acts 14:23, RV, "had appointed," i.e., by the recognition of those who had been manifesting themselves as gifted of God to discharge the functions of elders. It is also said of those who were "appointed" (not by voting, but with general approbation (no evidence for this assumption)) by the churches in Greece to accompany the Apostle in conveying their gifts to the poor saints in Judea, 2 Cor 8:19.

End of New Vine's

You can find a source today that will support the “voting in non-scriptural” argument but the definition given in Vine’s is careless and differs from other standard sources .

There appears to be justification for "voting" for officers.

Consider also:

*Acts 6:2-6 (NASB) And the twelve summoned the congregation ... “But **select from among you, brethren**, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit. But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” And the statement found approval with **the whole congregation; and they chose** Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.*

Some people believe this is the first mention of deacons being selected, if so .. they were "selected" by the congregation. Did they vote? I don't know, but they (the congregation) selected, most likely by voting.

*Acts 15:2 (NASB) And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, **the brethren** determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.*

*Acts 15:3 (NASB) Therefore, being sent on their way **by the church**, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.*

*Acts 15:22 (NASB) Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, **with the whole church, to choose men** from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,*

In each of these cases how did the “brethren”, “the church”, “the whole church”, choose or selected or determined – the normal method was voting, it was common-place both in the synagogue and the Sanhedrin. Remember Paul’s action in the Sanhedrin.

*Acts 26:10 (NASB) "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death **I cast my vote** against them."*

*1 Cor 6:4 (NASB) If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, **do you appoint them** as judges who are of no account in the church?*

Clearly judges were voted into office.

I believe there is sufficient evidence that voting was widespread in the Synagogue, Sanhedrin, society and the Church.