

# Seek The Old Paths

*"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths... and walk therein."*

(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 7, No. 1

January 1996

## MAY WOMEN SCRIPTURALLY TRANSLATE IN A MIXED ASSEMBLY?

Melvin Elliott

The above title was given to an article in the September, 1994, issue of "Contending For The Faith." The author was attempting to scripturally justify using women to translate the sermon of a preacher into the language of the audience. This practice has become a matter of considerable discussion in recent months.

The author of the article states, "...I have no intention of pushing the use of women in this capacity where qualified men are available to do the work. The practice is defended here because 1) there are occasions when some could not hear the truth without a woman translator and 2) because each of us has the obligation to refute doctrines which condemn that which is scriptural."

Two things are clear in these statements: 1) the author believes necessity establishes authority and 2) they infer that the near universal understanding of the scriptures among brethren regarding women teaching in public until recently is false; therefore, the practice is scriptural.

This is further indicated as the article continues under the heading, "WOMAN TRANSLATOR — AUTHORIZATION AS AN EXPEDIENT." The article states, "Surely a woman translator is justified as an expedient if such practice 1) provides an advantageous means of accomplishing a God-assigned obligation, and if that practice 2) does not itself constitute a violation of God's will."

Although these statements may sound reasonable, before they can be accepted he must find SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY for women to interpret a

"God-assigned obligation." He goes on to say,

"The use of chalkboard, pointer, microphone, electric lights and countless other aids or expedients not explicitly mentioned in the Bible can be shown to pass these two tests and accordingly have scriptural authority on the grounds of expediency."

A number of things are faulty in his reasoning. The writer is getting the cart before the horse as shown by the heading — "...AUTHORIZATION AS AN EXPEDIENT" and the statements, "Surely a woman translator is justified as an expedient..." and "...have scriptural authority on the grounds of expediency." First and foremost, EXPEDIENCY DOES NOT AUTHORIZE ANY PRACTICE! A practice must FIRST BE PROVEN LAWFUL OR AUTHORIZED and then we see if a certain method or aid, "...provides an advantageous means of accomplishing a God-assigned obligation...." It seems to me that the thinking driving his reasoning in this matter is that it is expedient because of necessity. This is proven by his statement, "Let it be understood that I have no intention of pushing the use of women in this capacity where qualified men are available to do the work." If the woman translator is authorized, WHY NOT push the use of women?

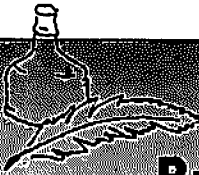
Further, the items listed as expedients are not comparable to women translators — it's comparing apples to oranges. It reminds me of those who try to authorize the instrument as an expedient by saying that we use song books, pitch pipes, communion trays, etc. In the matter of women translators, I know some say it is, "...no different than a microphone..." but this is a

total misfire. If they are the same, use a microphone and you will not need an interpreter. I heard the evangelist J. S. Winston answer this over 50 years ago. Someone had tried to justify the instrument on the grounds that it was an aid like the P.A. system he was using. Brother Winston answered by saying that when he spoke into the microphone, "...you hear Winston...." He showed when one uses the instrument you hear another KIND of music NOT AUTHORIZED in the Bible. When a woman in public assembly translates a man's sermon, her audience hears the voice of a person that is NOT AUTHORIZED to speak but rather she is FORBIDDEN to speak (preach) to a mixed audience in public assembly (1 Tim. 2:8-12; 1 Cor. 14:28-35).

The point is that the first order of discussion must be, IS A WOMAN AUTHORIZED TO SPEAK (TEACH) GOD'S WORD IN A PUBLIC ASSEMBLY BEFORE A MIXED AUDIENCE? If she is, GIVE THE PASSAGE! Whether a man translator is available or not, whether a man gives a woman permission to interpret or whether it is expedient when men are not available, has nothing to do with the question by all who respect the authority of the scriptures. For example, the instrument cannot be discussed as an expedient because it is not in that realm. It is a matter of AUTHORITY for introducing another KIND of music into the worship. If one could find that authority, then it is NOT a matter of expediency but of command.

When a man speaks, he is doing what God authorized him to do (Titus 3:15). A microphone is an expedient to him

(Continued on page 4)  
Women Translators...?



*Editorial...*

## Brother Guy N. Woods on Women Interpreters Setting The Record Straight

Garland M. Robinson

**M**uch has been said in the last year or two that the late brother Guy N. Woods supported the use of women interpreters. We have often been referred to his comments by someone asking, "Have you read what brother Woods said about it?" His name has been used almost as if he was THE ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY on the subject; and, since he supported women interpreters, then it has to be right! — because, who would oppose brother Guy N. Woods?

I feel confident that no one has intended to use him as an authority equal to the Bible, none the less, I have gotten that impression many times. Every time we turn around we hear the appeal made to brother Woods and very little appeal being made to the Bible. Brethren, let's appeal to the scriptures, not men! It is easy to line up men who support "this" or oppose "that." A long list of well respected brethren could be cataloged in this article both for and against women interpreters. But what would that prove? We could stack up name after name, but to what end? Is it politics? Do we reason that if brother so-in-so, or a certain church or school, supports or opposes a practice then I must also or be cut out of his/their circle? Brethren, I prefer to be right with God more than any man, congregation, school or brotherhood clique! Should not everyone say the same? Certainly so!

Brother Woods' comments which have caused so much concern on the subject were made as an editorial note at the close of an article which appeared in the September 20, 1979 issue of the Gospel Advocate. The article was concerning women being used in the capacity of signing for the deaf.

Found below and on the facing page are photo-copies of two letters.

One sent by brother Edward Short to brother Woods on April 8, 1981, and the other is brother Woods' reply dated April 21, 1981. Brother Short was a missionary in Taiwan at the time. The problem of using women interpreters had arisen in Taiwan. Brother Woods was being used to support it then, just as he is being used now. Read carefully these two letters.

As is plain from brother Woods' letter, HE DID NOT believe a woman could vocally interpret in public. He said his editorial comments "WOULD NOT EXTEND TO

COPY

HSIAO GANG P.O. BOX 29-10  
KAOHSIUNG, TAIWAN 812  
REPUBLIC OF CHINA

April 8, 1981

VIA AIR MAIL

Mr. Guy N. Woods, Associate Editor  
The Gospel Advocate  
P. O. Box 150  
Nashville, TN 37202  
U. S. A.

Dear brother Woods:

Greetings in the Lord. I am a missionary sponsored by the Paragon Mills church of Christ there in Nashville.

In the September 20, 1979 issue of the Gospel Advocate (pp. 580, 593) you wrote an endorsement to the article "Women Interpreters" by brother Billy Leavell. You stated that "We do not believe that the use of women interpreters violates any principle of New Testament teaching." Of course the context of this statement was interpreting via one's hands, not with the voice, since the interpretation was for the deaf.

In recent weeks the subject of women interpreters has been discussed here in Taiwan, R. O. C. In our situation the interpreting is vocal of course, usually from English into Chinese. Brother Leavell's article has been circulated among the missionaries and some of the Chinese preachers as raison for using a woman to interpret in the worship service; the inference has been drawn that your endorsement would cover vocal interpretation by women. Others of us however wonder if you meant to include the latter in your endorsement. I suggested that the best way to find out would be to write you and ask.

I realize that you are a very busy man, but I will deeply appreciate your taking the time to consider this letter. Although I have lived in Taiwan a rather long time, since all my preaching to Chinese people is done directly in the Chinese language I admit that until recently I had had little opportunity to give consideration to the question of women translators in the worship service. Therefore I will read your reply with great interest. Thank you in advance for this.

Very truly yours in Christ,

  
Edward Short

P.O. BOX 190  
NASHVILLE TENNESSEE 37202  
615-254-8781

PUBLISHERS OF  
GOSPEL ADVOCATE  
SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE  
VBS MATERIALS  
RELIGIOUS BOOKS  
TRACTS  
BIBLE FOUNDATIONS



**GOSPEL ADVOCATE**

GUY N. WOODS, Associate Editor

April 21, 1981

**COPY**

Mr. Edward Short  
Hsiao Gana P. O. Box 29-10  
Kachsiung, Taiwan 812  
Republic of China

Dear brother Short:

We are glad to hear from you in far-away Taiwan!

My comments regarding women interpreters for the deaf would apply only to the situation described in the article and would not extend to speaking in public by women in translation. The two are not parallel. If it is right for a woman to translate a speech and vocalize it, it would be equally acceptable for her to READ a speech written in her own tongue to the audience and then to memorize it and deliver it. Interpretation for the deaf is a silent, mechanical action far short of a speech delivered and thus not in violation of the principle taught in 1 Timothy 2:11, 12.

Best wishes in your work there.

Faithfully yours,  
*Guy N. Woods*  
GUY N. WOODS  
Associate Editor

GNW:vp

**SPEAKING IN PUBLIC BY WOMEN IN TRANSLATION. ... IF IT IS RIGHT FOR A WOMAN TO TRANSLATE A SPEECH AND VOCALIZE IT, IT WOULD BE EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE FOR HER TO READ A SPEECH WRITTEN IN HER OWN TONGUE TO THE AUDIENCE AND THEN TO MEMORIZE IT AND DELIVER IT."** Surely, this will set the record straight regarding brother Woods' position on using women to audibly interpret in public. He being dead yet speaketh!

I knew brother Woods, though not nearly as much as many others. We've talked at length either on the

phone or in person. He expressed great delight and gave us much encouragement in the work in which we are involved with **Seek The Old Paths** and the work in general of the East Corinth Church of Christ. I esteemed him for his knowledge of the scriptures. He was, and is, one of those brethren that all of us would do well to read and consider what he had to say regarding the scriptures. There are so many other men, both of the past and present, that when they speak, we would all do well to listen. These men have spent a lifetime in a deep and reverential study of God's Word. However, no one ought to take what any of these men

say as "gospel." No one ought to have the attitude that says, "If brother \_\_\_ said it, believed it, taught it, it must be so!" If we have no higher authority than that of men, then we are not any better off than any denomination! As long as we quote men we will always be divided. On the other hand, if we speak where the Bible speaks, we will stand united (cf. 1 Peter 4:11).

Though what learned men say regarding the scriptures is well worth considering, we must not place our confidence in men. No one ought to have, nor can have, that much authority and influence. This is certainly true regarding me. It frightens me when I hear someone say, "If Garland Robinson said it, you know it's sound." I'm glad some have confidence in me, but please brethren, do not have the attitude toward me (or anyone else) that if I said it, you believe it. Those of Berea "*...were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*" (Acts 17:11). Rest assured, I would never knowingly mislead or misdirect anyone. I want, with all my heart, to believe and teach only the truth and nothing but the truth. However, each of us are subject to making mistakes. Do not blindly follow anyone. Each one must do their own study and follow only God's Holy Divine Word. We must follow Jesus the Christ. As the Lord said, "*...it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (Matt. 4:10). God "*...hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...*" (Heb. 1:2). On the mount of transfiguration, a voice out of heaven said, "*...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*" (Matt. 17:5).

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Anonymous.....	\$50
Verona Church of Christ.....	\$50
Sherran Upchurch.....	\$10
Bob Douglas.....	\$20
Chuck Verkist.....	\$20
Church of Christ, Crossville, TN...	\$400
Anonymous.....	\$100
Mrs. W. H. Dell.....	\$10
Joe McPhail.....	\$5
David Dozier.....	\$20

## Women Translators...?

(Continued from page 1)

because it helps him to do what he is AUTHORIZED to do, and therefore, does not "...constitute a violation of God's will..." because when he uses it you hear only that which is authorized. If a woman was preaching and the audience could not hear, would a microphone be an expedient to her? We all say NO! Why? Because a woman is not AUTHORIZED to preach and there are no SCRIPTURAL expedients to do a forbidden thing.

It is the case that expedients are only PERMISSIBLE but not COMMANDED. To be commanded we must have a statement, example or implication of scripture to that effect. Such does not exist for matters of expediency and it is good that they do not. I am PERMITTED to use a microphone because it will expedite teaching that God commanded me to do, but if I was commanded to use it then I could not teach without one. An expediency is permitted when the matter to be expedited is authorized and it, "...does not itself constitute a violation of God's will." However, God said of women, "...it is not permitted unto them to speak..." and, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man..." (1 Cor 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12).

If one could prove that a woman translator was an expedient, that would not change anything because God still forbids a woman to speak. Therefore, it would be an expedient that violated God's will and thus forbidden as the author stated! The question is NOT whether a woman is an expedient to a man in preaching the gospel but do we have AUTHORITY to introduce a woman into preaching! If so, GIVE THE PASSAGE! Certainly some will deny that a woman translator is preaching but if a man is preaching when he delivers a teaching discourse from the Bible, how can a woman not be preaching when she says the same thing he says?

Man complicates things. The article under review uses about 2,000 words in an attempt to find authority for a practice, and most have nothing to do with scriptural authority but attempts to authorize by expediency. I'm using many words to show the fallacy of his method when the Bible settles the matter in 14 words. "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man..." (1 Tim. 2:12). Another place settled it in just 8 words. "Let your women keep silence in the churches..." (1 Cor. 14:34). These 22 words settle the matter — it is outside the realm of expediency because it is forbidden. The matter is simple when we LET THE BIBLE SPEAK!

Again he states that it is, "...an advantageous means of accomplishing a God-given obligation..." when men are not

available. It is obvious that expediency, because of necessity, has clouded the reasoning of some, or it is intended to cloud the issue before us. Whether such an approach is intentional or not, the results are the same. Several congregations in my area have no man to preach. Could they use a woman to read a sermon to "...accomplish a God-given obligation..." because men are not available?

It is affirmed that the woman translator, "Does not Constitute a Violation of God's Will." The author denies that such occurs in every setting. However, he does admit that, "...by an abuse of the practice...she might thereby become a second preacher..." (One may abuse his position as a preacher but whoever saw a person, man or woman, BECOME a preacher by abuse?) He further admits an authority problem would arise if the male preacher were not present. NOT SO! The authority problem arises because of the SCRIPTURE! He discusses a number of situations, under which,

"...unauthorized conduct would occur if the woman translator indicated by her words or actions, including her tone, volume, pitch, inflection, facial expressions, gestures, or other conduct that she was teaching or preaching in place of, or in addition to the male teacher, exerting her personal control..."

Where in God's Word is such nonsense stated or taught? There are no biblical statements for such restrictions but she is forbidden to speak. What person thinks he is such an accomplished expert of the thoughts and intentions of the human mind to set the standard by which we judge at what point such a far-reaching list of restrictions becomes abuse?

The author goes on to state that it is not right for those who object to the practice to cite such abuses and thereby declare the correct(?) use of women translators to be wrong. Then he charges that those of us who object to every use of women in such situations should realize, "...that they have built and destroyed "a straw man" with their objections instead of dealing with the "real issues." Maybe some have based their objections on abuses but that's NOT why we declare them to be wrong! Don't we understand the thing itself must be AUTHORIZED by scripture? The author is the one guilty of building "straw men." Since when does the absence of "abuses" authorize anything? God authorized MEN to preach in public mixed assemblies (1 Tim. 2:8; Titus 2:15). He may abuse or not abuse the privilege but that has nothing to do with the fact that God AUTHORIZED men to preach and neither does it have anything to do with the fact that God FORBAD women to preach in such cases! The straw man is built by him and those who

may be like him because they are the ones who are NOT dealing with the "real issues." We object on the basis of both a total lack of AUTHORITY for the practice and the fact that God specifically FORBAD the woman to exercise such authority.

Next, the illustration of a judge using a translator is discussed to show the woman translator is not exercising authority. Cannot we see that no necessity, no expediency, no abuse, no illustration, etc., ad infinitum ad nauseam, has anything to do with these matters? It is the AUTHORITY of the scriptures that is at issue here. Everything thus far said has absolutely nothing to do with the matter for all those who believe in "Speaking where the Bible speaks." The only reason I considered such is to show the fallacy of such to those who are not familiar with these things so they will not be confused by this fallacious reasoning.

Finally, the author gets to the real issue, but his explanation of 1 Tim. 2:11-12 and 1 Cor. 14:34 is in complete error and a total misfire. He says of the Timothy passage (since the word "silence" does not mean "absolute silence"),

"It is here contended that the woman translator can simply receive the preached or taught message of a man, mentally translate the man's message and then with the biblically prescribed "silence" or quietness speak the words of the man's message in the hearing of an audience..."

Further,

"...The woman translator, if her job is done as specified, serves simply as an expedient means of conveying the message of the man who is in control and who is doing the preaching and teaching. She can do this task in all submission to the male speaker; thus she is learning in quietness or subjection."

Intentionally or otherwise (I'm making no charges), I have not read in a long time a more artful choice and misapplication of words in order to obscure the scripture and thus mislead one's readers. The man is NOT in "control" over the audience nor doing the "preaching and teaching" because no communication is taking place between him and his audience! Further, did you notice that he said repeatedly she was translating the "...message of a man...man's message...?" We are dealing with the WORD OF GOD. If the man is preaching the WORD OF GOD, the woman is preaching the translated WORD OF GOD, and so she violates the scripture. It is true that the word "silence" in 1 Tim. 2:11 does not mean absolute silence but it does in the Corinthian passage. Further, the word "silence" in this passage applies

to “learning” and not “teaching.” He totally ignored the part that says, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man....” So, his attempt to justify his doctrine on only the word “silence,” misfires. His explanation would let a woman preach on Sunday morning provided she was not a domineering loud-mouthed female. (Pardon me ladies, but that sums up his abuses).

Now the real deception! Did you notice the last sentence in the quote above? “...Thus, she is learning in quietness or subjection.” Since when is the woman translator used to LEARN in quietness or subjection? SHE IS USED TO PREACH A SPEAKER’S WORDS which she translates INTO THE LANGUAGE OF HER AUDIENCE! If the male preacher is preaching the Word of God and she is “...simply reproducing the male preacher’s message in a different language...” then she is simply doing the same thing in a different language — PREACHING! If not, why not? Observe, please, how clear this principle is stated in 1 Tim. 2:11-12 in Berry’s Interlinear New Testament: “A woman in quietness let learn in all subjection, but a woman to teach I do not allow, nor to exercise authority over man, but to be in quietness....” Read carefully — silence and subjection refers to the manner in which she is to learn — NOT TEACH! She is NOT ALLOWED to teach and exercise authority over the man, but “...to be (i.e., learn, M.E.), in quietness.”

There are so many things wrong with his explanation of 1 Cor. 14:34 that it would take more discussion than this article will allow, but we will summarize. He admits the passage forbids a woman to speak as a translator as it is written. Well, since that is the way it is written, does that not settle the matter? Obviously, he can’t allow that so he brushes it aside, saying it NO LONGER APPLIES. His statements, attempting to show why the passage does not apply today, have such far-reaching implications as to be frightening. As we shall see, his own statements shoot himself in both feet, at best makes second rate the authority of the written word, and would allow a woman to preach. He admits if the Corinthian passage APPLIED TO US TODAY, “...certainly women would be FORBIDDEN to speak as TRANSLATORS...” (Emphasis mine, M.E.). If the passage applied, he would certainly have to admit that we couldn’t have women preachers. But since, according to him, the Corinthian passage no longer applies, how could he be against women preachers? For if 1 Tim. 2:12 and 1 Cor 14:34 does not forbid women preachers, what passages will he cite to forbid such?

Although he says he does not believe in women preachers, the stubborn fact remains that his explanations(?) would allow them. In fact, he later says that, “There is Authorization for Her Speaking

the Translated message.” Since she is authorized to speak a “translated message” (all Bibles are translated by a man/men, certainly English versions are), how could he forbid her preaching a translated Bible in a “Worship assembly?” He could not! Consistent with this implication and in conflict with his opposition(?) to women preachers, he immediately follows with the plain statement that, “A woman is authorized to speak and to be heard in a mixed Bible class OR WORSHIP ASSEMBLY so long as such speaking is not done in a WAY which teaches or usurps authority over man...” (Emphasis mine, M.E.). Again I ask, WHERE IS THE PASSAGE FOR HIS LIST OF ABUSES — or is Bible authority no longer necessary? To him, it is a question of how it is done and not who is doing it. But the Bible says it is WHO can/cannot teach! As long as HIS RULES are followed, he would have us ignore the scripture, “But I suffer not a WOMAN to teach...” (Emphasis mine, M.E.).

The author correctly states that the word “silence” in 1 Cor. 14:34 means absolute silence (she is not permitted to speak at all) although he misapplies the speaking to another matter. By implication (others have stated such plainly) he says if this passage was in force today that a woman could not sing or confess Christ (which she is commanded to do) and so we have forced a conflict by our saying this scripture applies today and therefore forbids her translating. But since the author states it was, “...applicable exclusively to the miraculous age...” then a woman could not sing nor confess Christ during the “miraculous age” according to his own statements — thus one foot is shot.

He then takes up an argument that is the most frightening of all. In fact, if his statements are so, our Bible has little if any authority. No wonder he has imposed HIS conditions on the woman translator and attempts to make void fundamental biblical principles dealing with the matter. I have no intention of telling you what the author believes but the stubborn fact remains that one can’t escape the plain implications of his arguments and his arguments are those that diminish, if not deny, the inspiration and authority of the written word. He correctly states that the speakers in Corinth were inspired but his CONCLUSIONS, because they were inspired, are TOTALLY false. He says their inspired speaking was “...speaking which INHERENTLY involved the speaker in an AUTHORITATIVE stance over others present...women could not therefore speak at all in such meetings lest they usurp AUTHORITY over the men present” (Emphasis mine, M.E.). The clear implication is, in translating inspired *written revelation*, she would NOT be exercising authority over man.

He says there is a “...notable difference...” (i.e., between inspired interpreta-

tion and translating man’s uninspired words, M.E.). Now watch the difference — GET IT PLEASE! —

“With an INSPIRED interpretation the woman would be receiving NOT ONLY the male speaker’s message and would be speaking NOT ONLY the translation of the MESSAGE DELIVERED BY THE MAN exercising authority by HIS speaking; she would ALSO be receiving supernatural direction APART from submission to any man then present. By virtue of SUPERNATURAL AID she would in essence be a SECOND PREACHER WITH AUTHORITY and thus her conduct would violate the woman’s role shown in 1 Timothy 2” (Emphasis mine, M.E.).

The point to understand here is that a woman violates 1 Tim. 2 when she violates what it says. Whether she receives supernatural aid or not has nothing to do with it.

His distinction between inspired oral revelation and inspired written revelation, as to its AUTHORITY, is proven by his further stating of 1 Cor. 14,

“...Paul applies that principle to a very special setting, a setting in which all of the speakers exercise divinely-superintended speech. Such speech therefore NECESSARILY EXPRESSED ALL AUTHORITY over the human auditors and consequently, the setting was one in which a woman had to be absolutely silent. It was a special setting, one which no longer exists” (Emphasis mine, M.E.).

The plain implication is: the written word does not have authority as the oral word and since today (according to him) she is speaking ONLY “...the male speaker’s message...” and “...the man exercising authority by HIS speaking...” (Emphasis mine, M.E.), the conclusion is she can speak because she is not expressing any authority because neither the man nor the woman are receiving inspired oral revelation. Would it not also follow that neither does the male speaker exercise authority for he is not receiving oral revelation? The author further stated, “GONE WITH IT [the instructions of 1 Cor 14, M.E.] ARE ITS PARTICULAR RESTRICTIONS.” If such was so, a man could come into our assembly and preach in a foreign tongue without an interpreter, a woman does not have to be silent, it is permitted unto her to speak and she is no longer commanded to be under obedience. Why? According to him, it is because miracles have ceased.

What a strange doctrine.

The clear implication is that the Bible at best is less than, "...supernatural direction...supernatural aid...all authority..." and that by following it we do not have, "...divinely-superintended speech." Are the written words inspired today? Do they have the same authority as the inspired words spoken in the first century? If the Bible is not that, what is it? If the Bible is that, AND IT IS (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 3:3-5; Titus 3:15), when the first speaker quotes it he exercises all authority and therefore, when the translator interprets it, she speaks with all authority. The author of the article under review has denied this! Thus the author by his own arguments has not only shot himself in the other foot but both legs because if the Bible is not authoritative, his arguments do not have a leg to stand on. To contend that a woman translator today has no authority, is to contend that her words have no authority WHICH HE HAS IMPLIED. If they have no authority, the Bible is not authoritative and her listeners are not under obligation to heed anything she says. If her audience is obliged to obey her words, she does speak with authority. Therefore, either her speaking is worthless or she is speaking with authority and condemned! NOW WHICH IS IT?

The author concludes by giving a syllogism. I am not a logician so those who are will have to deal with that. However, I do know that his arguments have not proved the use of women translators to be authorized in the scriptures so his minor premise is false, and therefore, his conclusion is false. Do we not understand that even if 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12 did not apply, that still would NOT AUTHORIZE a woman to speak. The Bible authorizes men to do the things under discussion. Again, if women are authorized to do them, WHERE ARE THE PASSAGES? Are we going to use the argument of the promoters of innovations in the past — WE WILL DO ALL THINGS NOT EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN? Must we learn again the truth of this statement of the restoration, LET US BE SILENT WHERE THE BIBLE IS SILENT?!

What about the Corinthian passages? Miraculous inspired revelations were present at Corinth but miracles were never part of God's message, they never altered God's message and their going out of existence never changed one jot or tittle of God's message. The only difference in us and Corinth is that they received inspired revelation direct from God. Today, we receive inspired revelation by reading the Book! Will someone step forward and presume to tell us there is a difference in either the content or authority in their revelation and ours? The author apparently has! True, the Corinthians were receiving revelation, however 1 Cor. 14:28-37 is revelation WRITTEN to them by Paul — not

miraculous revelation direct to Corinth. How could the ceasing of miracles at Corinth or everywhere, change one thing Paul wrote to them? Where does the Bible teach such? It is simply more doctrine of men. The arguments made by the author on 1 Cor. 14 alleging a difference between authority in inspired oral revelation to the Corinthians and inspired written revelation that a man proclaims today, is opposed to everything the Bible claims for itself. They are simply forced in a futile effort attempting to sustain the practice of men doing that which God has forbidden (i.e., using and defending women translators in public assembly). It seems there is no end as to what man will do to make void the Word of God in an attempt to justify the practice of men.

A vital rule of understanding is to consider the context. The context is discussing public teaching. The same word "silent" is also used in verse 28 and applied to men. Does this absolute silence mean that men could not sing or confess Christ? What proves too much proves nothing. Paul applied it to TEACHING for both the man and the woman and to apply it to singing and confessing for women, is to PERVERT Paul's words. The word applied to TEACHING/PREACHING! Men were to be "silent," i.e., not to SPEAK/PREACH if no male interpreter was present. Women were to, "KEEP SILENT" in the assemblies because they were not TO SPEAK/PREACH, PERIOD! Therefore, they were FORBIDDEN to interpret for the men! Why? They were to be under obedience even as the LAW commanded and therefore, it was a shame for them to speak. Paul said the reason they couldn't preach/interpret is because of Law. He didn't say because of miraculous revelation you'll have to wait until they cease and then you can do both. Paul was NOT giving instructions regulating only miracles but also instructions regulating PREACHING! Paul shows what he wrote took precedent over any practice of theirs or others. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (v.37). Brethren, we simply need to acknowledge God's commandment, i.e. "...IT IS NOT PERMITTED UNTO THEM TO SPEAK..." Contextually, Paul in effect said, you men will have to remain "silent" if no MAN is present to interpret because a WOMAN IS NOT PERMITTED TO SPEAK! In fact, in the church assembled, she could not even speak to ask a question for her own information because, "...for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (v.35). "...THUS SHE CAN NEITHER ASK FOR EXPLANATION NOR IMPART INFORMATION TO OTHERS IN THE ASSEMBLED CHURCH!

One final thing. Paul told Titus (3:15), "These things speak, and exhort, and

rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." "These things" are what he had written to him and he was to speak them with "all authority." The authority resides in the WORD. Anyone under any circumstances who preaches the Word is preaching WITH AUTHORITY. Friends, that is what a woman is forbidden to exercise over the man (1 Tim. 2:8-12). For this reason (and simply stated), Paul said of women, "...when ye come together..." (1 Cor. 14:46), "...it is not permitted UNTO THEM to speak..." (1 Cor 14:34; emphasis mine, M.E.). As we have seen, both the man and the woman were told to be absolutely silent (i.e., not to speak/preach). There was an exception for the man — if he had a MAN interpreter. Friends, unto the women, he gave NO exception. THUS PAUL FORBAD HER TO INTERPRET!

Friends, why did not the author give scripture, an account of action or implication of scripture to establish his contention that a woman could interpret under the conditions he listed? Obviously, because there are none, or to them there would have been an appeal. Rather than first going to the scriptures to see what it teaches before we take a position, man is prone to take a position and then go to the Bible in an attempt to sustain what he has already affirmed. This often involves one in misapplying and denying scripture that is contrary to his assumed position. The best this author could do was to use false arguments in a futile effort to deny the clear teaching of the scripture and that involved him in fatal implications that I feel confident the author does not believe. In case I have said anything that appears to reflect personally upon the author, I assure all this is not my purpose or intention. However, one does sustain the affirmative to his arguments and, an argument that implies a false conclusion is itself false. Therefore, we are compelled to say he is stripped of all his arguments and his position is in error.

A person without agenda must go to the scriptures to see what they say and then order his convictions thereby. It is always exceedingly dangerous to reverse this order and it is probable, more often than not, one who does so will involve himself in error. I appeal to all to go to the scriptures and find the "thus saith the Lord" on the matter, submit to the Lord and state his position. If we will completely submit to his will, determining to be obedient to his bidding, most, if not all, these problem would have never occurred. Obeying God means: 1) Doing what God said, 2) Doing what God said like he said to do it, 3) Doing what God said like he said to do it for the reason he said to do it. Only then have we obeyed God.

May God help us to do so always.

3815 Exmoor Road  
Craig, CO 81625



# Elders COLUMN

## The Responsibility of the Elders to the Congregation #2

James W. Boyd

This is the second and final part of this lesson. The elders have responsibilities to the members of the congregation: as fellow members, as a part of the eldership toward each member individually, toward one another, and toward the congregation as a whole. This lesson deals with some more of these duties as revealed in Scripture (please refer to last month's lesson in *Seek The Old Paths*, Dec/95).

### ON GUARD

Elders are commanded to *"take heed."* Here, the elder is pictured as a watchman, on guard, being alert to the needs and dangers. He is to be attentive, informed, aware, up-to-date, with eyes and ears open, and able to detect what endangers the souls of his flock so he can protect them. Detect in order to protect!

This watchfulness begins with himself. He can never allow himself to become the tool of a faction that seeks to "take over the church" and run the other elders out. There are brethren, some preachers, who cast about the eldership seeking whom they may deceive, in order to use that elder to advance their own aims regardless of others of the eldership or congregation. Elders must ever be alert to such people and not fall prey to them.

He must take heed to himself. He cannot lead where he will not go. He cannot teach what he does not know. He cannot help others to be what he himself is not trying diligently and sincerely to be. Elders must give attention to their own lives as much, possibly more, than others because of their place of authority, guidance, and influence. He must give attention to his own study and knowledge. He must be very mindful of his family. He cannot allow them to do just as they please. One of his duties is to be an example. But what kind of example will he be if he does not rule his own family well? He must take heed to his speech, temper, habits, attitudes, motives, and faithfulness toward God. It is no little matter that he assumes when he becomes an elder.

He must also take heed over the

flock, his charge. He must know his members, their needs, their families. He must be willing to spend and be spent on their behalf. He must be on guard against false teachers and false doctrines, evil practices, inroads of digression that some attempt to promote. He has a duty to warn, protect, chastise, and enforce. Sometimes elderships will let bad situations just "rock along" and they "go along to get along" until the bad gets the upper hand over the entire church. They have the care for each soul and shall give an account for each soul. Knowing this, they should be very aware and attentive to each one and what goes on, both in the local church and the brotherhood generally. What an awesome responsibility he has before God and the brethren he loves and leads!

### A PRIME DUTY

The elders have the duty to *"feed the flock."* As already noted, we can see this means more than simply providing a preacher, while this is included. They have to be careful who they present before the church. They must be careful what they endorse, who they endorse, and even what they appear to endorse. They are derelict of duty to the congregation if they do not know the people they put before the flock to teach and preach. They should investigate and examine, question and measure before they present anyone before the church. Some elders never seem to accept their duty to know their man and for what he stands. They accept somebody's suggestion, and in comes someone that could cause the church headaches for years to come. We have heard of elders who learned that some preacher they invited was unsound, but because they had already invited him, or because it was "too late" to make other arrangements, they let him come, and the flock gets the idea that the elders approve of him and accept him and his influence. This is totally an unjustified neglect of duty.

They must not only drink deeply of the water of life themselves, but they must see that the pure truth of God is taught, either doing the teaching them-

selves or through others. They are ultimately responsible for what is done and taught. There should be no allowance for unsound people, unsound materials and unsound practices in their congregation. Their charge to *"watch"* means they must know the Word, be able to convict the gainsayer, refute error, defend truth, and not give place to false doctrines for an hour. When truth is taught they should stand with the ones who teach it because they stand for the truth.

### WATCHFUL

Continuing this theme, if all elders had been more vigilant, the human legalism of yesteryear would never have found a home in many churches. Premillennialism would never have divided brethren nor been given the opportunity. The error on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, the wave of Pentecostalism, liberalism, modernism, and the modern perverted so-called translations would never have been given a place to destroy. It takes courage to withstand a false teacher, especially when he is a relative of some member or a friend. But elders owe it to the church they serve to be informed, keep informed, know what is going on in the world, in the church, in colleges that influence the church, in papers. We have seen in our time elders who do not know, do not want to know, and are jealous of anybody else who does know. They have adopted the position that it is their sole task to *"keep the peace"* at any price rather than *"keep the faith."* Many have sacrificed truth in order to keep peace. Such neglect of duty has taken many congregations into digression. Some elders had rather find some compromise, keep the members who promote error, collect their contributions, have their numbers, and be personally accepted by others than stand for the truth of God at all costs!

### "THE BUCK STOPS HERE!"

Most of us may be familiar with this classic expression by former President Harry Truman when expressing his responsibility to rightly use his authority. It is a good phrase. Elders have the duty and owe it to the church to take the oversight of matters pertaining to the local church. There is a difference between overseeing and overlooking. Many things are overlooked because elders are not attentive, not willing to work, uncaring, and not informed. But everything the congregation does is their responsibility. The lives their members live are their responsibility and they shall give account. They have the authority to discharge their duties but with that authority also goes responsibility. While they may solicit help from others, they cannot

be content to remain in indecision on matters that they must decide. Have not we seen matters drag on and on, month after month, even year after year, because elders will not "fish or cut bait?" They refuse to assume the duty they have.

Oftimes the choices that must be made are not easy, but they are the ones that must make them. They cannot neglect them. This is part of providing for the flock. We once encountered a neighboring congregation where their preacher stated some outright lies about another preacher from his pulpit. The offended preacher called his hand once he learned of it, and later also consulted the offending preacher's elders in the matter. Amazingly, not only would the offending preacher not apologize or prove his accusations, but his eldership would not require correction be made, stood behind the lying preacher, contending that, even though their preacher was in error, they were not responsible for what is said in the pulpit. Is it any wonder that church later suffered strife and division over the liberalism the lying preacher promoted?

Decisions have to be made. The local church is not to be operated like a democracy. The system of God calls for those who oversee the church to oversee it. Elders must be courageous enough to provide the oversight and if they are not, they should step aside and let some others do the work.

#### EXAMPLE

Something has already been mentioned about example. We are to imitate Christ. Those who lead should show what this entails. Just how elders who drink alcoholic beverages, smoke, dance, gamble, curse, etc. expect to properly lead anybody is beyond us! They will lead, but will lead members to hell if followed. If one is not willing to live a righteous life he should never be in the eldership. If already there, he should be removed.

The work of an elder requires time, energy, thought, prayer, sacrifice, good judgment, knowledge of the truth, as well as a "thick skin" when meeting criticism. Criticism comes, so many times unjustified. If one will not prorate his time to give to the work he ought not assume the responsibility for it. All he will do is retard the work. The cause of Christ will languish under him because he does not give time to attend to it. Thank God for the good elders who have made their work the major activity of their lives! And, there are many such men and it has been my good fortune to have been associated with just such elders time and again.

#### THEY HAVE AUTHORITY

We return to this point to emphasize how every institution must have those in authority. There is a difference between having authority and being authoritarian. Elders must rule but not obnoxiously as if they were so superior to others. They must rule and exercise the power they have with an open and considerate heart toward others. How many times has power and authority ruined otherwise good men and crushed churches because elders failed to see, use, and control their authority! And, how many times have we been privileged to see the Lord's cause move forward and win souls because men in leadership respected, appreciated, and rightly used their authority!

God's system of government for the church works and works efficiently when God's pattern and plan is followed. When something goes awry in a congregation it is because somebody, in some way, has left God's way of doing things. His way is perfect.

#### REWARD

There is a rich reward awaiting faithful elders. Many souls will be in heaven because of such men that otherwise would miss it. Peter said, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." A "well done" awaits them!

As stated, it has been my privilege to work under the oversight of several elders and elderships. With but few exceptions, they have been good men, trying to do what they ought and can to lead the church, and have been my guides and counsellors to my benefit. We have at times encountered some of the other sort, but thankfully, there have not been many. Some members and preachers have suffered under bad elders. Many of us have been blessed with fine elders. Most of us, especially those who have moved from one location to another, have seen both kinds. But we can confidently say that good elders and elderships are blessings to everyone with whom they come in contact. May their kind be numerous!

102 Edison St.  
McMinnville, TN 37110

Would you like to have an indexed  
bound volume of  
**Seek The Old Paths**  
for 1995?

Only 100 are being prepared. Make your  
check to *Old Paths Publishing* for \$5  
(price includes postage) and mail to:  
304 Ripley St., Corinth, MS 38834.  
One will be mailed to you as soon as they  
are available.

**Seek The Old Paths** is a monthly publication of the East Corinth Church of Christ and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed FREE upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

Editor: Garland M. Robinson  
Associate Editor: Jimmy Bates

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
P A I D  
Permit No. 253  
Corinth, MS

EAST CORINTH CHURCH OF CHRIST  
1801 CRUISE ST.  
CORINTH, MS 38834-5108

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED