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# IS JUNIA ALSO AMONG THE APOSTLES? ROMANS 16:7 AND RECENT DEBATES

*David A. Shaw*

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

Rom 16:7 (NRSV)

## Introduction

In his 100th lecture on Romans, the Scottish minister and theologian Thomas Chalmers comments on this verse, or rather, refuses to comment, as follows:

Ver. 7. We have no taste for ascertaining that which the Bible has left uncertain and on what ecclesiastical antiquity throws no light whatever. Why supersaturate the world with conjectures on matters which have no ground of evidence to stand upon?<sup>1</sup>

He then lists the uncertainties he has in mind: whether Andronicus and Junia are man and wife; whether Junia is actually Julia (as some textual variants say), or whether Junia was a woman at all; whether they are Paul's relatives or just fellow Jews (the Greek word could mean either); in what sense they are prominent among the apostles (there is also the question of whether Paul might mean they are well known *to* the apostles rather than prominent *among* them, as Chalmers assumes), and finally, when and where they were imprisoned. He concludes: 'Enough for us the generalities of Scripture, which are at the same time of themselves sufficiently interesting,' and with that he moves on to the next verse.<sup>2</sup>

So Rom 16:7: 'sufficiently interesting' but ultimately ambiguous and upon which church history sheds no light. The contrast to Junia's role today could not be more stark, for Rom 16:7 is commented upon at length and with frequent appeal to 'ecclesiastical antiquity.' In part this is a very good thing. Too many sermon series and bible studies have dispensed with Rom 16 as an anticlimactic appendix to the theological body of Rom 1–15. Probably Chalmers himself was suffering a little fatigue by his hundredth lecture! More recently, however, commentators are alert to the ways in which Rom 16 contributes to the argument of Romans and offers a window into the social and ethnic make-up of the church in Rome

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Chalmers, *Lectures on the Epistles to the Romans* (vol. 4, 4 vols.; Glasgow: William Collins, 1842), p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> Chalmers, *Lectures on the Epistles to the Romans*, p. 426.

and into Paul's ministry methods. This is welcome, but we should also note that Junia in particular plays a central role in two recent discussions which are worth outlining before we turn to the biblical text, because the claims they make for her have far reaching consequences. The first relates to her sex, the second to her apostleship.

### Junia: The Smoking Gun?

Several recent books highlight the appearance of a male name—Junias—in the place of Junia, in Greek New Testaments and English translations of Rom 16:7 in the 19th and 20th centuries, as evidence of the church's suppression of women in general and in particular of women who appear in leadership roles in the Bible.<sup>3</sup> Within this narrative Junia is the smoking gun, demonstrating the church's inability to deal with a female apostle and so conspiring to make a man of her. Scot McKnight's recent eBook, *Junia is not Alone*, is a good example. He writes that after the New Testament era

A new kind of logic about women began to dominate. The logic was simple: the person in Romans 16:7 is an apostle, and apostles can't be women, so Junia cannot have been a woman. Junia was a man. This was a sex-change operation by way of redaction.<sup>4</sup>

The villains in this particular narrative vary. For McKnight the focus is rather general: a sexism which has pervaded church history.<sup>5</sup> The press release accompanying Eldon Jay Epp's *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* describes how Junia's disappearance from 'the traditions of the church...happened in New Testament manuscripts, scribal traditions and translations of the Bible.'<sup>6</sup> For others, the blame lies at the feet of the Reformers, Luther chief among them.<sup>7</sup> As we shall see, Junia was indeed

<sup>3</sup> Junias first appears in the 19th century, and endures in translations such as the RSV, NIV 1984, NASB, The Message, and the NIV. Junia reappears in the NRSV, ESV, NIV 2011, and NLT. All but the NIV 2011 retain Junias as an alternate reading in the footnotes.

<sup>4</sup> Scot McKnight, *Junia Is Not Alone* (Patheos Press, 2011), loc. 105.

<sup>5</sup> His eBook is dedicated to 'ending the church's deafening silence on women in the Bible,' *Junia is Not Alone*, loc. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in John Hunwicke, 'Junia Among the Apostles: The Story Behind a New Testament Saint & the Egalitarian Agenda,' *Touchstone* 21, no. 8 (2008), n.p. [cited 3 January 2013]. Online: <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=21-08-022-f>.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. 'For centuries, beginning with the Reformation, translations have given the feminine Junia a masculine form' Frank J. Matera, *Strategies for Preaching Paul* (Collegetown, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 289. Or citing Luther specifically: 'Junia, taken by translators since Luther to be a man,' Marion Ann Taylor and Agnes Choi, eds., *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and*

briefly supplanted by a man in Rom 16:7, but the extent of the conspiracy is often exaggerated and some of the accused can be proven innocent.

### Junia: The Starting Point?

The second major role that Junia plays today is as an apostle and relates to the question of women's ministry within the church. Increasingly it is argued that Rom 16, featuring as it does nine women, is not just a piece of the puzzle, which it undoubtedly is, but the place to begin the discussion: the starting point. How other relevant passages are dealt with in this approach varies considerably, especially those that seem to exclude women from some roles in church life. Some reject those passages as later and more conservative insertions to Paul's letters (in the case of 1 Cor 14:33–35), or as belonging to non-Pauline letters entirely (1 Tim 2:11–15).<sup>8</sup> Others, unwilling to draw those conclusions, argue that those passages (sometimes dubbed 'disputed' or, less politely, 'tortuous') are best interpreted in the light of what they consider to be the relatively plain meaning of Rom 16.<sup>9</sup> Most recently, this approach was taken by N.T. Wright in an article in *The Times*: 'Yes, 1 Timothy 2 is usually taken as refusing to allow women to teach men. But serious scholars disagree on the actual meaning, as the key Greek words occur nowhere else. That, in any case, is not where to start.'<sup>10</sup> To his mind, that place is the significance of Mary as a witness of the resurrection in John 20, and then the prominence of Phoebe and Junia in Rom 16.<sup>11</sup> From a still more conservative perspective, Roger Nicole sets out his case for biblical egalitarianism, insisting that 'surely St Paul would not, in 1 Timothy 2:8–15, condemn on the basis of Genesis 1–3 what he had so freely commended in Romans 16.' After rejecting as a 'desperate expedient' the dismissal of 1 Timothy as non-Pauline he says

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*Biographical Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), p. 366; cf. Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minn.: Fortress, 2007), p. 961 which relies upon Bernadette J. Brooten, "Junia... Outstanding Among the Apostles' (Romans 16:7)," in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist, 1977), pp. 141–144.

<sup>8</sup> Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minn.: Fortress, 2005), p. 81.

<sup>9</sup> Midway between the two approaches is Beverly Gaventa in the foreword to Epp's work, speaking of Rom 16: 'Whatever Paul may have intended with the tortured lines of 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 and whether or not he actually wrote 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, here the evidence of women taking active roles in leadership appears straightforward' Epp, *Junia*, p. xii.

<sup>10</sup> N.T. Wright, 'It's About the Bible, Not Fake Ideas of Progress,' *The Times*, November 23, 2012, n.p. [cited 8 January 2013]. Online: <http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/page.cfm?ID=759>.

<sup>11</sup> Wright, 'It's About the Bible.'

The alternative appears to be that we are not at liberty to imagine that St Paul condemned in Timothy what he had sanctioned in Romans. Then, in interpreting Timothy, our exegesis of St Paul's prohibition would have to remain at all times conscious of what he has permitted.<sup>12</sup>

Of course on the one hand this is simply to observe Article 20 of the 39 Articles: the church may not 'so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.' On the other hand, exactly what Rom 16 permits has not yet been established, and as Chalmers reminds us, much is disputed. So we will also revisit the contribution of Rom 16:7 to discussions of women's ministry in the church, but only once we have examined the text in its own right. To that end, we will ask two questions: Was Junia a woman? And was she an apostle?

### Was She a Woman?

For most interpreters, the debate hangs on a single Greek accent. If Paul wrote Ἰουλίαν he meant a woman (Ἰουλίᾱ = Junia), if Ἰουνιᾶν, a man (Ἰουνιᾶς = Junias). So what did he write? Well, neither, because Greek at the time was written in capital letters (uncial script) without accents. It simply reads IOYNIAN. As a result, the earliest evidence comes from how that word in Rom 16:7 was translated and commented upon before accents were added from around the 7th century onwards. That evidence leans heavily towards her being a woman. The Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac and Coptic translations all have a female name, as do virtually all interpreters until the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> Reflecting this tradition, and quoted almost universally in discussions of Junia, is John Chrysostom (344/54–407AD):

<sup>12</sup> Roger Nicole, 'Biblical Egalitarianism and the Inerrancy of Scripture,' *Priscilla Pap.* 20, no. 2 (2006): p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> For details of translations see Linda Belleville, 'Ἰουνιᾶν... ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις: A Re-examination of Romans 16.7 in Light of Primary Source Materials,' *NTS* 51 (2005): p. 238n29. According to Grudem and Piper, evidence for a masculine reading in Origen (c.185–254) and Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (315–403) points towards a majority against a feminine reading but neither reference is reliable, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), p. 79–80. Origen's text actually has references to Junia as a woman and as a man, the latter probably the result of a mistake in the translator through whom his work survives. Epiphanius does refer to Junias (male), but he also calls Prisca (Rom 16:3) a man and says (s)he became bishop of Colophon, some three hundred miles away from Prisca's husband, himself now bishop in Heraclea! On these references see Belleville, 'Ἰουνιᾶν... ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις,' pp. 235–6. On the other hand Fitzmyer's commentary lists Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, Rufinus, Jerome, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Pseudo-Primasius, John of Damascus and more, through to the 12th century, all of whom

Think what great praise it was to be considered of note among the apostles. These two were of note because of their works and achievements. Think how great the devotion of this woman Junia must have been, that she should be worthy to be called an apostle!<sup>14</sup>

The testimony of native Greek speakers such as Chrysostom is significant, but perhaps even more decisive is Cervin's research on Latin names.<sup>15</sup> He points out that IOYNIAN in Rom 16:7 is a Latin family name (Junia or Junius) that has been transcribed into Greek and this was always done according to the same rules. Feminine Latin names ending in *-ia* always retained that ending (e.g. Marcia → *Μαρκία*, Julia → *Ἰουλία*, Junia → *Ἰουνία*). Masculine names ending in *-ius* are transcribed into Greek as ending *-ios* (e.g. Antonius → *Αντόνιος*, Cassius → *Κάσσιος*, Domitius → *Δομίτιος*). Accordingly, the male name Junius would be *Ἰούνιος*. The grammatical form of this name required in Rom 16:7 would be IOYNION not IOYNIAN which is what we read there. On the other hand the appropriate form of *Ἰουνία* would be written IOYNIAN which corresponds with Rom 16:7. The only way a male name could be in view is if there were an independent Greek name *Ἰουνιάς*, but there is not a single reference to any such name from the period.

Junia was almost certainly a woman, therefore. So where did Junias come from? The first unambiguous reference to a masculine reading comes from Aegidius (or Giles) of Rome (c.1243–1316) who inherited the textual choice between Junia and Julia (in Latin: Juniam and Juliam), preferred Juliam and assumed this referred to a man, Julius. The next male reading comes some two hundred years later. In 1512 Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (otherwise known as Jacobus Faber Stapulensis) published a Romans commentary which understood both Junia (16:7) and Julia (16:15) to be men. In Martin Luther's *Lectures on Romans* and his German translation of the Bible, Julia is taken as feminine in 16:15 but Junia remains Junias.<sup>16</sup> Far more influential however was Erasmus' edition of the Greek New Testament, which carried the feminine form *Ἰουνίαν* and was followed by every English translation until 1837 and every Greek New Testament

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think Paul refers to a woman. Some read the textual variant 'Julia,' which is probably a scribal mistake, copying the name from Rom 16:15 where Julia appears in her own right. J. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 737–8.

<sup>14</sup> Homilies on Romans 31, quoted from Gerald Lewis Bray, *Romans* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture Vol. 6; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1998), p. 372.

<sup>15</sup> This paragraph draws heavily on Richard S. Cervin, 'A Note Regarding the Name 'Junia(s)' in Romans 16.7,' *NTS* 40 (1994): pp. 464–70. Colin Kruse cites this article as decisive in *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Nottingham: Apollos, 2012), pp. 563–4.

<sup>16</sup> *Lectures on Romans* (ed. Hilton C. Oswald; vol. 25; Luther's Works; Saint Louis, Miss: Concordia, 1972), p. 129.

until 1927 (with only one exception).<sup>17</sup> Brooten's claim therefore that the Junias reading 'really picked up momentum in the Reformation period' and that 'through Luther the *Junias* interpretation was assured of a broad exposure for centuries to come' cannot be justified.<sup>18</sup> We cannot say how well known Luther's view was, but we can detect no evidence of its influence in the English speaking world. In fact, the only time the Junias reading dominates is in the 19th and 20th centuries. It begins in earnest with the Revised Version of 1881 after which only four translations offer Junia until 1987. In modern critical editions of the Greek New Testament between 1927 and 1998 only one Greek New Testament read *Ἰουλίαν*.<sup>19</sup>

So was Junia the victim of a conspiracy? Certainly she was. But not at the hands of church tradition at work through the New Testament manuscripts, or scribal traditions as Epp's publishers suggested. To his credit, Epp himself does not even claim that. Although like Brooten he greatly exaggerates Luther's influence,<sup>20</sup> the bulk of his work lays the blame on a 'pervasive sociocultural bias' at work in the 20th century, during 'what we might have regarded as the period of our most modern, liberal, and detached scholarly enquiry.'<sup>21</sup> The traditional da Vinci Code-style villains: patriarchal church fathers, medieval scribes and European Reformers are largely innocent.<sup>22</sup> So too, at least in the case of Junia, is church history. Contrary to McKnight, the logic that said she is a woman and therefore not an apostle only really took hold in the modern period.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For detailed surveys see the tables in Epp, *Junia*, pp. 62 and 66.

<sup>18</sup> "Junia... Outstanding Among the Apostles' (Romans 16:7)," p. 142 emphasis original.

<sup>19</sup> See the tables in Epp, *Junia*, pp. 62–63 and 66.

<sup>20</sup> He cites Brooten and then Luise Schotroff with approval: 'Only since the middle ages, and primarily because of Luther's translation, has the view prevailed that Junia was not a woman but a man by the name of Junias' quoted in Epp, *Junia*, p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Epp, *Junia*, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> John Hunwicke takes some delight in pointing out this fact, and notes that Epp has a complicated relationship with the modern critical thinking. On the one hand, he entrusts himself to its 'assured' conclusions that the passages in Paul less amenable to a liberal view of women are in fact non-Pauline. But on the other hand, twentieth century scepticism about the relationship of Rom 16 to the rest of the letter is quietly passed over, because that would be less convenient to his argument concerning Junia and her apostleship. Hunwicke, 'Junia Among the Apostles.'

<sup>23</sup> Lenski writes: 'Chrysostom may exclaim in admiration because of a woman apostle; such an apostle would be as strange as his exclamation' *Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1936), p. 906. Cf. A.C. Headlam who argues that since the name is borne by an apostle 'it is hardly likely that the name is feminine' quoted in Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), p. 167. Cf. also the standard lexicon BAGD (1957) which doubts the feminine reading of Junia because it is 'probably ruled out by the context,' though this is reversed in the third edition, known as BDAG (2000).

For the most part, a female apostle was apparently uncontroversial. It remains to ask, however, whether Rom 16:7 is best understood as giving the woman Junia the title apostle, and what the significance of that would be. To that we now turn.

## Was She an Apostle?

Are Andronicus and Junia ‘well-known to the apostles’ (ESV, known as the exclusive view) or ‘outstanding among the apostles’ (NIV, the inclusive view)?<sup>24</sup> Given the consensus of the early church that she was an apostle, the evidence seems to point in that direction.<sup>25</sup> Two main arguments to the contrary are advanced: first, the phrase *ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις* can and should be translated ‘well-known to the apostles’; second, it is argued that by ‘apostle’ Paul always means such a select few that Andronicus and Junia cannot be included within them, still less considered outstanding among them.

The first is argued at length by Burer and Wallace. Quite rightly, they believe the strongest argument would be evidence of the whole phrase, *ἐπίσημος + ἐν + a plural personal dative*, where the context clearly indicates that the person described as *ἐπίσημος* (well-known/prominent) is *not* part of the larger group.<sup>26</sup> They have not, however, been able to supply sufficient evidence to demonstrate their argument conclusively.<sup>27</sup> The nearest parallels are as follows.

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<sup>24</sup> The NIV gives the alternate reading in the footnotes, the ESV does not. Of the other English translations only the NET, CEV and the Amplified version unambiguously side with the ESV.

<sup>25</sup> Arguing for ‘well-known to the apostles’ Wallace and Burer acknowledge this consensus—the earliest support for their view cited is Charles Hodge’s 1953 commentary—but try to dismiss the patristic evidence, saying they were preoccupied with Junia’s sex and simply assumed she was an apostle, Michael H. Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, ‘Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re examination of Rom 16:7,’ *NTS* 47 (2001): p. 78n12. Both claims are questionable however. There is no evidence of patristic preoccupation over the Junia/Junias question, only readings one way or the other, the vast majority in favour of Junia. Nor can the consensus be dismissed as a mere assumption. The fact that native Greek speakers such as Origen and John Chrysostom understood the phrase to number Junia among the apostles is a significant one, and, it should be noted, Burer and Wallace accept the significance of the patristic evidence on the Junia/Junias question in ‘Was Junia Really an Apostle?’, pp. 77–78.

<sup>26</sup> The word *ἐπίσημος* is inconclusive in itself. It is an adjective translated by BDAG as ‘of exceptional quality’ and ‘splendid, prominent, outstanding’ are the suggested glosses; it can also be used in a bad sense to mean ‘notorious’ as it is in the only other biblical occurrence, Matt 27:16, speaking of Barabbas.

<sup>27</sup> Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, pp. 172–80., and Belleville “*Ἰουνιᾶν... ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις.*” contest the evidence and conclusions of their work. Kruse, *Romans*,



In Euripides' *Hippolytus* (line 103), Aphrodite is said to be ἐπίσημος ἐν βροτοῖς (renowned among mortals).<sup>28</sup> Since the goddess is clearly not a mortal this supports the exclusive view. So too, perhaps, does Lucian's description of the pipe player in *Harmonides* 1.17 who desires ἢ δόξα ἢ παρὰ τῶν πολλῶν καὶ τὸ ἐπίσημον εἶναι ἐν πλήθει (glory before the crowds and to be the renowned one among the masses).<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, in *Jewish War* 2.418, Josephus describes a Jewish delegation ἐν οἷς ἦσαν ἐπίσημοι Σαυλός τε καὶ Ἀντίπας καὶ Κοστόβαρος (prominent among whom were Saul, and Antipas and Costabarus). Similarly, Lucian (*On Salaried Posts* 28.4) advises slaves hopeful of advancement to ἐπίσημος ἔσῃ ἐν τοῖς ἐπαινοῦσι (be prominent among those who praise).<sup>30</sup> In both cases 'prominent among' and not 'well known to' is the obvious meaning. Burer and Wallace concede that these last two count against their argument for excluding Junia from among the apostles but argue, rather unfairly, that they are rare and are not 'clean' parallels. In truth the sample of texts is so small that none can be considered rare among the results, and one of Burer and Wallace's own central texts, *Psalms of Solomon* 2:6, is not the clean parallel to Rom 16:7 that they claim.<sup>31</sup> The text reads:

οἱ υἱοὶ καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες ἐν αἰχμαλωσίᾳ πονηρᾷ,  
 ἐν σφραγίδι ὁ τράχηλος αὐτῶν, ἐν ἐπισήμῳ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν  
 The sons and daughters were in harsh captivity  
 their neck with a seal, with a mark among the nations.

This is not easy to translate but what is significant for our purposes is to note that the section quoted by Burer and Wallace (underlined) is not the whole story. The sense is not that the sons and daughters are a spectacle among the nations, but rather that their necks bear a seal (ἐν σφραγίδι) and a mark (ἐν ἐπισήμῳ). Thus, as Bauckham points out, ἐπισήμῳ functions here as a noun and not an adjective describing people at all.<sup>32</sup>

This is not to say Rom 16:7 cannot mean 'well-known to.' Burer and Wallace helpfully put what evidence there is on the table but it does not support their conclusion that the phrase 'almost certainly' means 'well

p. 562, awards the contest to Bauckham and Belleville on points.

<sup>28</sup> The actual form in Euripedes is κάπσημος = καὶ + ἐπίσημος = renowned indeed.

<sup>29</sup> Belleville argues this could be inclusive—he wants to be the conspicuous one in a crowd 'Ἰουναῖν... ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις,' p. 247.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead*, p. 438, for another close parallel supporting the inclusive reading.

<sup>31</sup> Burer and Wallace, 'Was Junia Really an Apostle?,' p. 87.

<sup>32</sup> *Gospel Women*, p. 176. The same objection applies to the reference from Lucian's *Harmonides* above, reducing the number of close parallels in support of the exclusive reading.

known to the apostles.”<sup>33</sup> What they have demonstrated is that both options are possible.

The second argument in favour of the exclusive reading begins with the claim that Paul uses the word apostle to denote a select few commissioned by the risen Jesus to proclaim the gospel, among whom Paul considers himself the last.<sup>34</sup> In light of that, it is thought highly improbable that Paul is saying these two are not only among the apostles but outstanding among them, when they include the likes of Paul, Peter, and James, while we know nothing else of Andronicus and Junia.

The force of this argument is felt to varying degrees. Some believe it conclusively removes Junia and Andronicus from the circle of apostles.<sup>35</sup> Others draw the opposite conclusion and think Paul really does mean to exalt the pair to the highest status. Epp, for example, refers to Paul’s defence of his apostleship by appeal to his performance of signs, wonders and mighty works (2 Cor 12:12) and argues that ‘unless Paul recognized these traits in others, he would not deign to call them ‘apostles,’ but Andronicus and Junia obviously met and exceeded his criteria.’<sup>36</sup>

The vast majority, however, reject the premise and argue that Paul’s use of the term ‘apostle’ is more varied and could well apply to Andronicus and Junia. This is the conclusion of Belleville, in contrast to Epp:

If we understand apostle as someone who has been specially commissioned by Christ with an authority parallel to a Peter or a Paul, then the difficulty is justifiable...If we focus on the gift of apostleship and understand it as equivalent to a church planter, however, then we are placing the matter in its proper context.<sup>37</sup>

Does Paul even use ‘apostle’ in that sense, however? The evidence can be summarised as follows:

1. Paul knows himself to have been appointed by the risen Christ as apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 1:1, 1:13, Gal 2:8) and that apostleship is verified

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<sup>33</sup> ‘Was Junia Really an Apostle?’, p. 90.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. Charles Hodge: ‘The word apostle, unless connected with some other word, as in the phrase ‘messengers (apostles) of the churches,’ is very rarely, if ever applied in the New Testament to any other than the original messengers of Jesus Christ. It is never used in Paul’s writings, except in its strict official sense.’ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 449; cf. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, p. 907.

<sup>35</sup> Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 449; Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, p. 907; Hunwicke, ‘Junia Among the Apostles.’

<sup>36</sup> Epp, *Junia*, p. 70.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Ιουλιᾶν... ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις,’ pp. 55–56.

- by his having seen the Lord Jesus and by the fruit of his labours (1 Cor 9:1–2), and by signs and wonders, and mighty works (2 Cor 12:12).
2. Paul recognises Peter as an apostle to the Jews and as a pillar of the Jerusalem church along with James and John (Gal 2:8–9, cf. 1:19).
  3. Paul refers to Peter and the brothers of the Lord as other apostles who have the right to travel with their believing wives (1 Cor 9:5).

So far the number is restricted to the twelve plus Paul. But also:

4. 1 Cor 15:6–8 describes the risen Jesus appearing to Peter, the twelve, 500 brothers, James, then to ‘all the apostles’ and last of all to Paul. This clearly extends the number beyond the twelve but restricts it to those who saw the risen Jesus.<sup>38</sup>
5. Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and Apollos seem to be called apostles by inference in 1 Cor 9:5–6, 1 Thess 1:1 cf. 2:7, and 1 Cor 4:9 cf. 4:6. There is no indication that they are eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, but Barnabas was in Jerusalem from the earliest days of the church so he may have been (Acts 4:36).
6. Paul speaks of ‘apostles of the churches,’ ‘appointed by the churches’ (2 Cor 8:23, 19) and calls Epaphroditus the apostle of the Philippian church (‘your apostle,’ Phil 2:25). These are apostles not commissioned by Christ in the sense of 1–5 above, but appointed by churches for more specific ministries; helping Paul in the work of the collection (2 Cor 8:19) or bringing him comfort and support during his imprisonment (Phil 2:25).

Paul’s use of ‘apostle’ is therefore more varied than is sometimes acknowledged and could therefore accommodate Andronicus and Junia. To be clear, this does not make it certain that Junia is an apostle; all we have argued is that Paul’s understanding of apostleship does not preclude it. Given the consensus of church tradition it seems most likely to me that Andronicus and Junia were apostles.

In what sense though, are they apostles, given the options outlined above? Epp, as we have seen, places them with Paul in category 1. Dunn,<sup>39</sup> Stuhlmacher,<sup>40</sup> Wright,<sup>41</sup> Brooten,<sup>42</sup> Bauckham,<sup>43</sup> and Jewett<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> When Paul speaks of apostles and prophets as the church’s foundation (Eph 2:20, cf. Eph 4:11) it is almost certainly a reference either to the twelve + Paul or to the wider number of eyewitnesses of the risen Christ.

<sup>39</sup> *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38B; Dallas: Word, 1988), pp. 894–95.

<sup>40</sup> *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. Scott J. Hafemann; Louisville: John Knox, 1994), p. 249.

<sup>41</sup> N. T. Wright, ‘Romans,’ in *Acts, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, Romans, 1 Corinthians* (NIB 10; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), p. 762.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Junia... Outstanding Among the Apostles’ (Romans 16:7),’ p. 143.

<sup>43</sup> *Gospel Women*, p. 180.

<sup>44</sup> *Romans*, p. 963.

opt for category 4. Others, however, place them in 5 and/or 6, drawing on additional references in Acts and the early church which identify itinerant missionaries as apostles:<sup>45</sup> Calvin,<sup>46</sup> Sanday and Headlam,<sup>47</sup> Cranfield,<sup>48</sup> Mounce,<sup>49</sup> Moo,<sup>50</sup> Stott,<sup>51</sup> Schreiner,<sup>52</sup> Fitzmyer,<sup>53</sup> and Belleville.<sup>54</sup> Choosing between the two more popular options is difficult. Since Paul notes that they were in Christ before him (Rom 16:7), it is possible they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection but there remains the unlikelihood that Paul would say that they are outstanding among that group which, lest we forget, included him. On the other hand, it is hardly likely that the Roman church would be confused, given Paul's status not only as an eyewitness but also, uniquely, as the apostle to the Gentiles. In favour of seeing them as eyewitnesses, it seems that when Paul speaks of 'the apostles' without any other qualification he usually means those eyewitnesses, and less weight should be given to what 'apostle' means for other authors.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps calling them 'outstanding among the apostles' need not mean they excelled beyond all other eyewitnesses in all respects in a way that contradicts the clear sense in which Paul himself

<sup>45</sup> See Acts 14:4, 14 and the references to early church literature in Douglas J. Moo, *Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 924n42.

<sup>46</sup> *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. Ross MacKenzie; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1961), p. 322.

<sup>47</sup> *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (5th ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), p. 423.

<sup>48</sup> *Romans: Chapters 9-16* (vol. 2, 2 vols., 6th Rev ed.; International Critical Commentary; London: T&T Clark, 1979), p. 789.

<sup>49</sup> *Romans* (The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 276.

<sup>50</sup> *Romans*, p. 924.

<sup>51</sup> *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Leicester: IVP, 1994), p. 396.

<sup>52</sup> *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), p. 796.

<sup>53</sup> *Romans*, p. 739–40.

<sup>54</sup> *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 54. Witherington has changed his mind from itinerant evangelists to eye witnesses: *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 115; cf. *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 390, and Tidball and Gillman are undecided between the two: *The Message of Women: Creation, Grace and Gender* (Bible speaks today; Nottingham: IVP, 2012), p. 207.; *Women Who Knew Paul* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), pp. 68–69.

<sup>55</sup> Mounce for example explains this reference by citing parallels only in John and Acts, when the first question must be, how does Paul use the term, *Romans*, p. 276n53; importing the reference to Jesus as an apostle in Heb 3:1 only confuses things further, for which see Tom Holland, *Romans: The Divine Marriage: A Biblical Theological Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), p. 473.

was outstanding. In 2 Cor 8:18 we hear of the brother ‘famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel’ which need not mean Paul thought he was the number one ranked preacher in the kingdom. He simply meant to commend a brother and give a sense of the esteem in which he was held by the wider church. The same may well be true of Andronicus and Junia here.

To my mind then, Junia was almost certainly a woman, and almost certainly an apostle, who, along with Andronicus, is commended as notable among the eyewitnesses of Jesus’ resurrection for her ministry and willingness to suffer for the sake of the gospel, enduring imprisonment along with Paul.

The pressing question, then, is what does this mean for women’s ministry in the church. A number of comments can be made.

1. We have only dealt with Junia and already it is clear that Rom 16 does speak to the question. Junia is clearly not alone in her contribution to the establishment and growth of the church in its earliest days. Paul commends numerous women in Rom 16 and they, along with men, are named among his co-workers elsewhere. As Cranfield notes, their prominence in this chapter not only rebukes the neglect of their gifts in many churches but it also undermines any attempt to lay the blame for that neglect at the feet of St Paul, demonstrating as it does ‘the falsity of the widespread and stubbornly persistent notion that Paul had a low view of women.’<sup>56</sup>

2. It is too often assumed that Junia’s role as apostle automatically contradicts the traditional reading of 1 Cor 14:33–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–15 because it implies a public teaching role. A striking denial of this ‘contradiction’ is found in John Chrysostom. As we have noted above, he is almost universally quoted as an early, native Greek speaking champion of Junia as a female apostle. What is almost never mentioned, however, is his quotation of 1 Tim 2 while interpreting Rom 16:6 in which Mary is commended:

In what sense then does he say, ‘I suffer not a woman to teach?’ (1 Tim. ii. 12.) He means to hinder her from publicly coming forward (1 Cor. xiv. 35), and from the seat on the bema [i.e. the pulpit platform] not from the word of teaching. Since if this were the case, how would he have said to the woman that had an unbelieving husband, ‘How knowest thou, O woman, if thou shalt save thy husband?’ (ib. vii. 16.) Or how came he to suffer her to admonish children?...How came Priscilla to instruct even Apollos? It was not then to cut in sunder private conversing for advantage that he said this, but that before all, and which it was the teacher’s duty to give in the public assembly; or again, in case the husband be believing and thoroughly furnished, able also to instruct her. When she is the wiser, then

<sup>56</sup> *Romans 9–16*, p. 789.

he does not forbid her teaching and improving him. (*Homily on Romans* 31, NPNF 11:554)

So Chrysostom is able to exalt Junia and take a complementarian line on women's ministry on the basis of 1 Tim 2. Women, in his view, may not teach publically, but may do so privately in a variety of contexts: unbelieving husbands, children, and private instruction in evangelistic or domestic situations where she is wiser than her husband—regrettably not an uncommon scenario! Thus anyone who wants to argue that Rom 16 forces a re-evaluation of 1 Tim 2 needs to come to terms with Chrysostom.<sup>57</sup>

3. Paul never gives us an apostle's job description, nor does he describe the ministry of Andronicus and Junia, he simply praises it. This means we need to be tentative when reconstructing the role Andronicus and Junia played in the early church. A few things can be said with some confidence. That they were imprisoned with Paul suggests some missionary involvement. Probably they were a husband and wife team. Rom 16:3 mentions a couple we know were married: Prisca and Aquila, and in the social context of the day, it is most likely that a man and a woman associated with one another, imprisoned together and commended together were husband and wife. The same social context makes it possible that Junia exercised a ministry with a special focus on reaching women. Such was clearly the practice of the early church, for the reason that Clement of Alexandria (c.150–215AD) makes clear:

The apostles in conformity with their ministry concentrated on undistracted preaching, and took their wives around as Christian sisters rather than spouses, to be their fellow-ministers in relation to housewives, through whom the Lord's teaching penetrated into the women's quarters without scandal (*Stromata* 3.53.3.).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Similarly, anyone who wants to defend Junia's apostolicity on the strength of Chrysostom's knowledge of Greek also has to accept his clear view that Paul's restriction on the teaching of women in 1 Timothy is not limited to situations where there is a grasping after authority or false teaching, as many have recently argued in light of the Greek term used there.

<sup>58</sup> This should not be pressed too far by complementarians however, because it could be argued that, given our social context, no such scandal would result from a woman teaching men publically and so the pragmatic restriction can be lifted. Although they do not cite Clement, Käsemann, Stuhlmacher and Schreiner appeal to social conventions to suggest a wife's role was focused upon reaching other women. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 413 in relation to Prisca; Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, p. 249; Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 797.

But we should admit that this is guesswork. We have no record of what their ministry looked like, and so on this particular question, Chalmers' warning against conjecture applies. It would be better to allow Paul's teaching on women's ministry elsewhere to educate our guesses, rather than allow our guesses to stand in judgment on that teaching.

## Conclusion

Rom 16 gives a fascinating window onto the life of the church in Rome and the place of women within Paul's mission team. Chalmers was certainly wrong to say nothing in the face of its ambiguities, and the substance of this article has explored what can be said with some confidence. Women like Phoebe, Prisca and Junia were treasured co-workers of Paul, and his praise of their labours needs to be replicated today in the praise of their modern counterparts. The example of Chrysostom demonstrates that a complementarian position need not be threatened by or downplay that praise, and it is striking that complementarians such as he preserved the sex and status of Junia down the ages. That she became Junias in more recent times on the basis of sexual discrimination and not textual evidence is a salutary warning that even the most 'objective' and 'critical' scholarship requires self-suspicion. Whether Rom 16 is the place to start a discussion of women's ministry in the church is less clear. Certainly it is an important part of the evidence, although, as we have seen, to conclude that she was an apostle leaves open the question of exactly what such a role entailed.<sup>59</sup> To that question, the rest of Paul's writings must be allowed to speak.

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<sup>59</sup> The same in passing can be said for Phoebe's role as letter carrier. The significance of this role varies considerably both in the ancient world and in modern scholarship. She was clearly a woman of means and was therefore probably one of the few people with Paul in Corinth who was able and willing to travel to Rome while the rest of Paul's cohort made for Jerusalem in sufficient numbers to ensure the safety of the financial gift they bore.