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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUBSTANTIAL DESCRIPTORS
OF WOMEN IN ROMANS 16:1-16:
WHAT THIS REVEALS ABOUT THE
SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

BY
LORNA A. WENZEL

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF COVENANT SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

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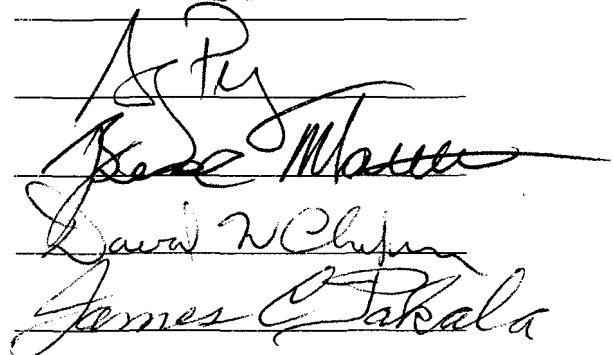
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ABSTRACT OF
AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUBSTANTIAL DESCRIPTORS
OF WOMEN IN ROMANS 16:1-16:
WHAT IT REVEALS ABOUT THE
SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

by Lorna Wenzel

The subject of women's roles within the early church often focuses on theological passages which explicate what women can't do in certain settings. Too often, these discursive texts set the interpretive framework for examining the example of women, rather than allowing the New Testament women to contour the understanding of the theological passages. The purpose of this study is to add a clearer picture of some of the ways real women participated in the ministry of the early church. At the end of Paul's letter to the Romans, he describes many women and commends them for their actions within the framework of the church. The language connected to the females of Romans 16 is typical of Paul's self-described mission and the ministry of other men. The primary focus of this study is on the meaning and implications of the substantives Paul employs when greeting these women.

In the introduction, the need and significance of the study is highlighted and the methodology expounded upon. Attention then turns in Chapter 2 to the first women Paul introduces, Phoebe of Cenchrea, a visitor to the church in Rome. Her descriptors, ἀδελφή

(sister), προστάτις (patroness), and διάκονος (deacon), demonstrate not only that women could serve the church in an official capacity as a deacon but also stress the unity of the mission within the family of Christ. Chapter three begins a quick study of Prisca's role as half of a husband wife ministry team. Special attention is given to Paul's labeling her a συνεργούς 'co-worker,' a term which expresses a mutuality in mission. Laborer, κοπιάω, as a term closely related to 'co-worker' is examined in chapter four as it is descriptive of the first four women addressed. A brief survey of briefly mentioned women including Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Mary, Rufus' mother, Julia and Nereus' sister, again reveals an emphasis on the interdependency between the sexes within the ministry of the early church. Paul's attitude toward women is conveyed through the affectionate terms he used to describe these often neglected females. The gender of Junia, the final woman, is tackled in chapter five, followed by her significance as an ἀπόστολος (apostle), συγγενεῖς (kinsmen) and συναιχμάλωτος (fellow prisoner). These substantives depict a woman heavily involved in ministry in a leadership capacity yet do not directly oppose the discursive theological texts. Finally, the conclusion of chapter 6 ties together the many descriptors while also examining the over-all effect of greeting so many women.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. PHOEBE	4
ἀδελφή	4
προστάτις	7
διάκονος	15
3. PRISCA	26
Πρίσκαν	27
συνεργούς	29
4. OTHER WOMEN	35
Tryphaena & Tryphosa	35
Persis	37
Mary	38
Rufus' mother	39
Julia & Nereus' sister	41
5. JUNIA	43
Ἰουνιαν	43
ἀπόστολος	46
συγγενεῖς	58
συναιχμάλωτος	58
6. CONCLUSION	63
APPENDICES	
A: NT use of συνεργός	66
B: NT use of κοπιᾶω	67
C: NT qualifiers of ἀπόστολος (used with identifiable people)	68
D: Pauline qualifiers of ἀπόστολος (used without identifiable people)	69
E: Pauline use of leadership substantives not found in Romans 16	70
SELECTED WORKS CITED	71

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The scripture passages quoted in this thesis are my own translation. All Greek text is from the UBS.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The study of how Paul portrays women in the early church is extremely relevant to the body of believers today and the stakes are high: if we ban women from ‘roles’ that scripture allows, then we have maimed a large portion of the body of Christ and the entire body suffers. If we allow women to minister in a way that is not in line with God’s expressed will then we have corrupted that which is holy and undermined our very mission. Finally, if we don’t make up our mind then we continue to breed insecurity into believers by our failure to acknowledge a proper function for women within the body of Christ. The issue is larger than just establishing appropriate responsibilities for women, it pervades into the general attitude of believers toward women, effecting women’s view of the church and God.

The New Testament provides a few examples of how women functioned within the early church, a couple of Pauline passages that directly address women in relation to church authority and a plethora of scriptures concerning the ethos of church leadership. The typical approach in finding resolution has been to allow the “clear theological texts” to speak into the issue and to interpret other examples of women in the church accordingly. For example, several Bible translations translate Phoebe as “servant” (διάκονος) of the church in Romans 16:1 while every other occurrence of διάκονος (even when completely unrelated to the church) is translated “minister.”¹ This

¹ The KJV, ASV, ERV and AKJV bible translations render the word universally as ‘minister’ when it describes the nineteen men but change it to ‘servant’ in Romans 16:1.

hermeneutical strategy actually undercuts Scripture's ability to interpret Scripture. By imposing an interpretation of what women could or could not do onto the text where it is not exegetically necessary, it maims the ability for these examples to shape our understanding of women in the church. Paul authored the texts that relegated women's authority at Corinth and Ephesus but he also worked alongside women, commended them, and described them with terms common to men. With so much hinging on the interpretation of a few verses, it is crucial that Paul's posture toward women and the model of how he treated and acknowledged them within the church help guide the exegesis and discussion as a whole. Regarding this, I will examine Paul's orientation toward females in Romans 16:1-16, analyzing the substantival descriptors of ten women.

I aim to show that in the closing section of the epistle to the Romans, Paul stresses the inter-dependence of God's household, including the vital contributions of women.² He is unafraid to portray women's activity in the early church using the same terminology he

² The closing chapter of the letter contains Phoebe's commendation, greetings, and a doxology. Some scholars postulate that Romans 16 is a complete and separate letter sent not to Rome but to Ephesus. It is odd that Paul would know so many individuals in the Roman church (which he had yet to visit) and Prisca and Aquila, in particular, reside in Ephesus (where Paul spent a large amount of time). In addition, the placement of the doxology (Rom 16:25-27) in ancient manuscripts varies with some later manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate omit 15:1-16:23 entirely. For all these reasons, the final chapter of Romans is thought to have an alternate destination. See D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 398-401. However, there are no ancient manuscripts that do not include chapter 16, nor is there textual evidence of chapter 16 existing by itself or as part of another letter. Further, the content of it is consistent with the remaining chapter. Further, the unusual number of people greeted makes sense given the unusual circumstance of the letter. Wright notes that should Paul have visited a church and known everyone (or nearly everyone) than he would not list so many names so as not to offend those not mentioned. "We could almost formulate it as a rule: if Paul knows the church, he does not name individuals." See N.T. Wright *Letter to the Romans* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002), 761. When writing to the Romans, Paul greets his friends and acquaintances to form a bridge and bond between himself and the church. Jewish believers were expelled from Rome under Claudius edict and after his death, it would not be strange for many of these believers, like Prisca and Aquila, to return. Indeed, there was a large migration to the important imperial city of Rome during this time. See Karl Paul Donfried, "A Short Note on Romans 16," in *The Romans Debate* ed. by Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 49. Thus, Paul, in his travels, would have encountered many believers who may have moved to (or back to) the imperial city. The external, textual evidence, as well as the internal ideological evidence, is consistent with Paul's greetings closing his letter to the Romans.

uses for men. He chooses language that stresses mutuality but also can convey affection, leadership, and gratitude when commending women. Moreover, the substantives employed are characteristically self-descriptive of Paul and his mission. He acknowledges these women because they model the ethos of the epistle by exercising hospitality, displaying genuine familial affection, enduring suffering for the mission, laboring for church and otherwise sharing gifts, abilities, and assets with the body of Christ. Paul honors these women by publicly recognizing their work and holding them up as models to encourage others. Within the passage, he brings attention to twenty-seven individuals, ten of whom are women. Some of the people Paul greets are mentioned only by name, some have added background information and others receive accolades for their ministry. Although Paul mentions more men than women overall, his praise is directed mostly at females. In Romans 16, Paul applauds ten people explicitly for their activity in the church, seven of these ten are women.

Chapter 2: Phoebe

Romans 16:1-2 Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν [καὶ] διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς, ² ἵνα αὐτὴν προσδέξησθε ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἀγίων καὶ παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρήζῃ πράγματι· καὶ γὰρ αὕτη προστάτις πολλῶν ἐγενήθη καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ.

Ἀδελφή

Paul describes Phoebe to the Roman church as “our sister.” Phoebe is said to be their sister in the spiritual sense, meaning she is a fellow believer. She is a follower of Christ and belongs to their family, the family of God. The “household of God” metaphor is popular in Paul’s writings and rooted in Jesus’ teaching. God is continually called “Father,” a loving term that signifies obedience to him. In a radical move, Jesus declares that loyalty to God’s family supersedes that of the biological family.³ Jesus’ true brothers, sisters, and mothers encompass all who do the will of God.⁴ As God’s children, believers are his heirs and will inherit God’s glory (Rom 8:27).⁵ Believers are therefore encouraged to treat one another like mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters.⁶ Paul regards his relationship to various churches as that of father/son and brother/brother, sometimes

³ Lk 14:26.

⁴ Mt 12:49-50; Mk 3:31-35.

⁵ Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 119.

⁶ 1 Tm 5:1-2.

referencing both relationships within the same letter.⁷ Overall, kinship language is used to stress unity of mind concerning the character of Christ and the ensuing love and dependence on one another inherent in following him. However, there are nuances to the particular family language employed.

Different aspects and roles within the family can be employed with varying connotations. For instance, Paul can speak of believers as ‘adopted sons’ in situations that stress soteriology or Gentile Jewish relations but speak of himself as ‘father’ and believers as his ‘children’ in situations where he expects obedience in love.⁸ Here Paul refers to Phoebe in sibling terms. This is the most common relationship highlighted within the family metaphor. While ἀδελφὴ itself is somewhat rare, the masculine counterpart can be found over one hundred and eighty times in the New Testament epistles. The plural form ἀδελφῆοί, which often includes women, is used in more than half of the instances. Before explicating on the particular nuance of ‘sister,’ it is important to understand the sibling relationship from which the analogy is drawn.

The family of one’s birth largely defined one’s rank, status and role in the ancient world. The collectivist culture valued community and groups, especially the family. This was true not only in Greco-Roman society but also Jewish culture.⁹ With the stress on

⁷ 1 Cor 4:15; 1 Thes 2:7, 2 Cor 6:13; Gal 4:19 11 See Andrew D. Clarke, “Equality or Mutuality? Paul’s Use of ‘Brother’ Language,” in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting*, ed. P.J. Williams, Andrew D. Clarke, Peter M. Head, and David Instone-Brewer (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 153.

⁸ See Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted Into God’s Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 37-45 and Trevor J. Burke, “Paul’s Role as ‘Father’ to his Corinthian ‘Children’ in Socio-Historical Context (1 Corinthians 1-4),” in *Paul and the Corinthians: Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and J. Keith Elliott (Boston: Brill, 2003), 113.

⁹ David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 158.

family, the bond between siblings in the ancient world involved a host of ideals. It has been described as “the closest, strongest and most intimate relationship in the ancient world.”¹⁰ Siblings were united through the mutual responsibility of increasing the reputation and honor of the family. They were to work together to help each individual reach his/her highest potential for the sake of shared honor.¹¹ Families were to share all things in common. This did not necessarily mean communal property but rather that one’s personal wealth and influence were to be used for the advantage of the family. In this way gifts between siblings did not entail reciprocity but were acts of love for the benefit of everyone. Competition was reserved for the “outside” world, and cooperation the model for families. Within this, if a sibling were to achieve rank that outweighed his/her other siblings, he/she would downplay this for the sake of unity. In turn, the siblings of lower status gave appropriate respect to the higher achieving sibling. A shared progenitor did not necessitate or always mean equality of rank yet this inequality was not seen as a threat to the harmony. The stress was not equality in all forms but mutuality.¹²

Maintenance of a loving bond was of the utmost importance; sibling rivalry was viewed as dishonorable and evil. On the other hand, breeches of harmony were to be handled with forgiveness and reconciliation. The emphasis is that families, especially siblings, loved and supported one another.

While not all sibling relationships embodied the above description, it was the cultural ideal reflecting the values and beliefs of what the relationship should (and

¹⁰ Ibid., 166.

¹¹ Ibid., 170.

¹² Clarke, “Equality or Mutuality?” 164.

sometimes did) look like. This sets the backdrop from which to view the use of sibling metaphors. Paul highlights aspects of the relationship like love and kindness, underscoring the affection that should characterize the union. The stress is not that each sibling is equal in rank but that the siblings work together for the benefit of one another and the family. They all share the primary goal of honoring their father and advancing his household. Moreover, they are expected to collaborate, to share resources in a manner that behooves the family. Individuals need not give up their rank but it should be downplayed, not lorded over their brothers and sisters. Phoebe, as a sister, is in unity with the church; she is an insider. Her work and accomplishments are amalgamated with those of the Roman believers' for the benefit of the entire household. Likewise, if she has a real need, it is a burden shared by the communal family. Paul is saying more to the church(es) in Rome than simply, 'she is a fellow believer'. He is outlining the way she treats others in the family and the way the church(es) in Rome should receive her.

Προστάτις

That Phoebe is a 'sister' is cause enough for the church to embrace her and give her aid, but Paul highlights an additional reason. She is worthy of their assistance, "for she has been a *προστάτις* to many, including myself [Paul]" (Rom 16:2). The biblical hapax legomena *προστάτις*, receives multiple English translation including 'leader' (YNG), 'great help' (NIV), 'patron' (ESV), 'succorer' (KJV), and 'good friend' (GNT).

While this is the only use of *προστάτις* in the New Testament, the LXX employs the masculine form of the noun, *προστάτης*, on 6 separate occasions to mean steward or

leader.¹³ The verbal form, *προίστημι*, is also used eight times biblically with the dominant denotation “to preside over, to govern.”¹⁴ Regarding this, the lexical argument is made that every scriptural cognate of the word asserts leadership, ergo *προστάτις* must mean leader (in a formal sense like ‘president’) and not patroness.¹⁵ This however, is much too simplistic. First, the semantic field of ‘president’ and ‘patroness’ are not mutually exclusive, the idea of leadership is present in both, making the strict rendering of ‘leader’ unnecessary.¹⁶ Second, while most Greek words follow closely with their cognates in meaning, there are exceptions. To assume a word is used in a certain manner based on its root is exegetically unsound.¹⁷ While *προστάτις* makes a single appearance in the New Testament, extra-biblical material demonstrates examples where it denotes patroness.

Furthermore, “leader” does not fit the immediate context. What is Phoebe president, or leader of? The phrase “of many” does not naturally apply to the church or even a particular community within the church, though it is often taken for granted that this is where she leads.¹⁸ Paul would also be stating that she has presided over him personally. In what ways would Phoebe have been president or leader of Paul? Additionally, there is a stark contrast between *προστάτις* and Paul’s normal terminology

¹⁴ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 62. The denotation can also mean “to give aid” and it is often difficult to decide which fits the context best. See Gene L. Green, *The Letter to the Thessalonians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 249.

¹⁵ Payne, 62.

¹⁶ As Green notes, “In antiquity, ‘leadership’ and ‘rendering aid’ were not neatly separated ideas.” Green, 249.

¹⁷ D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 29-31.

¹⁸ See Carolyn D. Baker, “Phoebe: Radiant One,” *Paraclete* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 11-12 and Payne, 62.

for describing leadership. Paul seems to avoid terms that come “pre-loaded” with authority, opting for language that draws on the metaphors of family and service.¹⁹ The diction of church leadership springs from the ethos of the Christian community. Paul carefully chooses words like apostle, elder, deacon, slave, toiler, and worker, which all describe a function or quality expected of the leader. The absence of terms like ‘rule’ (ἄρχή), ‘honor’ (τιμή) or ‘power’ (τέλος), which were associated with entitlement in Greco-Roman society, is significant.²⁰ Of all the expressions used to describe formal and informal leadership within the church, *προστάτις* would be unique in its self-evident claim to authority. Though ‘leader’ is a possible translation, the immediate and wider context make it an unlikely choice.

The most common biblical translation is helper. Some scholars cite the cognate verb *προΐστημι* “to show care for” or *παραστάτις* “helper,” as the basis for this translation.²¹ It is further argued contextually by the assumed word play in Paul’s titling her a ‘helper’ and requesting that the Roman congregations ‘help’ her (*ποφίστημι*). Yet, its frequency is not due to the strength of lexical or contextual evidence but because it is “safe.” The terminology is familiar and people reading the verse don’t have to stretch beyond their own cultural backdrop to understand it. It is also viewed as unassuming. Scholars have questioned the possibility that women could act as female patrons, i.e. patronesses. Others argue that Paul would never join in the patronage system. “Helper” is

¹⁹ R. Banks, “Church Order and Government,” in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 133-134.

²⁰ Andrew Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church*, First Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 233.

²¹ Ng, 4; and R. A. Kearsley, “Women in Public Life in the Roman East: Iunia Theodora, Claudia Metrodora and Phoebe, Benefactress of Paul,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 50, no. 2 (1999): 190.

offered as a way of expressing what Phoebe did without attaching a controversial title to it. In other words, it gives Phoebe the least amount of honor and influence while vaguely describing a minimal role she performed. Rather than being unassuming, it assumes a meaning without any of the social and cultural weight connected to Paul's word choice. The "safe" translation is the one that best meets the authorial intent, not one that says too much by way of saying too little. Regarding this, and due to the weak lexical argument, the translation 'helper' should be rejected.

Phoebe is called a προστάτις which most naturally means "patron" or "patroness." The lexical argument for patroness finds roots in four extra-biblical sources and is affirmed by BDAG.²² Further, the masculine noun προστάτης, although employed to mean 'steward' in the LXX, had the nuance of patron (or the latin *patronus*) in the first century.²³ Patron was a common designation for elite men who operated in the social-political institution of patronage/benefaction. Patroness, as the female counterpart of patron, fits the contexts in the extra-biblical attestations of προστάτις.

The patronage system of the Greek and Roman era was a social construct dependent on social ethics. Honor and shame drove the ethos of society and reciprocity was central to the understanding of justice.²⁴ A patron was a person of means who used his/her wealth, status, and influence on behalf of a city, group, or individual with the

²² See BDAG 718. It is significant that none of these attestations allow for the substitute of helper. See Caroline F. Whelan, "Amica Pauli: The Role of Phoebe in the Early Church," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 49 (March 1993): 68.

²³ Again, these two rendering are not entirely separate, patrons sometimes governed in some way the clubs they funded, assuming leadership by way of reciprocity.

²⁴ Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 286.

expectation of reciprocity. On the individual level, a patron would engage in “friendships” with a client that were mutually beneficial. The client, often of lower social status and economic means, would gain connections and finances but owed the patron an ‘obligation’ and undivided loyalty.²⁵ The patron would gain honor (and thus increased influence) and political support. The ways in which a benefactor gave to an individual varied, benefactors financed marriages, sponsored artists, ransomed captives, provided legal representation, hosted visitors, funded educational pursuits, freed slaves, furthered careers and secured protection for travelers.²⁶ Patrons also donated to clubs and associations (some of which they were not members), increasing their influence and sometimes gaining a title. On a broader scale, benefactors would finance buildings, sponsor sporting events, hold public offices and in turn would receive honor in the form of inscriptions, crowns, and statues. Beneficence on this scale did not always entail the formality the of patron-client obligation but official recognition, loyalty and titles were still expected.²⁷

The system was also multi-tiered, a wealthy patron might have a friend/client, who also has clients of his own (making him both patron and client). In this manner, levels of influence among patrons varied, though all belonged to an elite class. Further, the gifts by in large did not benefit the lowest class of poor, needy people. The destitute

²⁵ Efrain Agosto, “Patronage and Commendation, Imperial and Anti-Imperial,” in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, ed. Richard A Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2004), 105.

²⁶ D. D. Walker, “Benefactor,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 158.

²⁷ D.A. deSilva, “Patronage,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 767.

could rarely find a patron who found their loyalty of benefit and the city wide gifts were mostly for those with enough status to attend events or join assemblies.²⁸

The patronage system involved all sphere's of life, weaving together honor, finances, politics, and legal matters with the common thread of social connections. It was all about who you know. Although women were largely confined to private spheres, through the patronage system they were able to exercise influence in public matters like politics from the private sphere of "friendships" (some even held public office).²⁹ There is evidence that both married and single women engaged in various levels of benefaction.³⁰

Although women could not hold a political office, Claudia Metrodora (a contemporary of Phoebe) held the public office of gymnasiarch and the title of *basileia* of the federation of the thirteen Ionian cities. The gymnasiarch was in charge of supplying the basic needs to run the cities gymnasium, which was the educational hub of the city and a highly sought after members only club connected with citizenship.³¹ Claudia Metrodora was elected to this prestigious office four times. Her title of *basileia*, though a religious title, came complete with a crown and was a public recognition of her honor. Claudia also oversaw the direction of the imperial games, hosted a city wide banquet, donated a bath house, and gifted the entire city of Chios with oil for the festival of the

²⁸ Erik M. Heen, "Radical patronage in Luke-Acts," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 33, no. 6 (December 2006): 441.

²⁹ Cohick, 297.

³⁰ Wendy J. Cotter, "Women's Authority Role in Paul's Churches: Countercultural or Conventional?" *Novum Testamentum* 36, no. 4 (October 1994): 364.

³¹ B.W.R. Pearson, "Gymnasia and Bath" in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 435.

Heraklea games. It appears she achieved all this as a single woman, though she is later found married in Ephesus.³²

A second example of a patroness exposes another dimension of the system. Junia Theodora was a Lycian woman (with Roman citizenship) who lived in Corinth in the middle of the first century. We know about her from an inscription which lists her honors, giving her the title *προστασιαν*. The manner in which she is honored for her “help” is typical of Greek benefaction inscriptions.³³ She is officially recognized and praised not only by the Lycian federal assembly of cities but also by three individual cities in Lycia. Her flavor of benefaction was different from the previous examples in that Junia Theodora did not donate any buildings. Instead, she acted on behalf of a wide variety of individual Lycian visitors to Corinth, from official ambassadors to exiles.³⁴ She hosted these visitors in her own home and provided for all of their needs. She also used her influence to lobby authorities, (meaning Roman governors, the Roman Senate, or the Emperor) on their behalf. She is viewed as the patroness and “friend” of entire cities for her actions toward individual residents. While some details of her aid remain a topic of debate, it is evident that Junia was a wealthy woman with significant political influence who used these assets for the advantage of Lycian individuals over an extended period of time. She is officially named a benefactress and is thanked by receiving gold crowns, portraits, and public declarations of her honor.³⁵

³² Kearsley, 189-200.

³³ Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 184.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 183.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 186-187.

These women offer proof that females operated within the patronage system, demonstrating three different styles of benefaction. Their stories and titles indicate that a patroness functioned like a patron. It was a title belonging “to the class of people, vital for the health of ancient societies, who put their private means at public disposal.”³⁶

Paul’s employment of the title is atypical. The very word, written from a Roman citizen in a letter of commendation would be improper.³⁷ It also reverses the stratified norm where patrons recommend clients. Additionally, it follows a request associated with material assistance, a shameful adjuration for a patroness.³⁸ Finally, its status affiliation with “sister” rather than “friend” alerts the Romans that *προστάτις* is not to be understood in the typical fashion.³⁹

By defying the syntagmatic expectations, Paul links the idea of patronage with that of family and he is not the first to do so. As seen above, Jesus invited his followers to join a new family. Members of his family are characterized by self sacrificial love (Luke 9:23-25). They are to give freely, without any expectation of reciprocity.⁴⁰ Jesus exhorts his listeners to “lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High.”⁴¹ The ideas of patronage are taken out of the context of competition for status and placed into the context of cooperation within family. The early

³⁶ N.T. Wright, *Paul For Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 135.

³⁷ As a matter of honor, Roman citizens referred to themselves as friends rather than clients when composing letters of recommendation and also referenced their patrons in this manner. See Agosto, 120.

³⁸ Agosto, 121. See also Payne, 63.

³⁹ Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, 195-196, and Greg Perry, “Phoebe of Cenchreae and ‘Women’ of Ephesus: ‘Deacons’ in the Earliest Churches,” *Presbyterion* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2010):15.

⁴⁰ Lk 12:33; 14:12-14; 16:9; 18:22.

⁴¹ Lk 6:35a.

church grasped this, sharing everything so that no one went without (Acts 2:42-47). Paul stresses the unity and benevolence expected of believers (Phil 2:3-5), referencing Christ's rejection of personal wealth for the benefit of his church as the model (2 Cor 8:9). Gifts and resources are to be used for the church (Rom 12:6-8). deSilva sums up this counter-cultural view of giving, "Christians are called to share on the basis of their kinship responsibilities toward one another in the church rather than use gifts of money and hospitality to build up their client base (the source of local prestige and power)."⁴²

Paul uses the highly familiar language of patronage in a redeemed way, invoking the family metaphor to contour Phoebe's role. She was a member of the elite who used her resources in some manner for the benefit of many including Paul. Rather than lording over people and using her status to promote herself, Phoebe promotes the interests of the church and makes sacrifices for the family of God. It is likely she hosted people in her house but her actions were probably not limited to this. Time has erased the means and mode of her generosity, yet we can be sure that the manner was loving and non-presuming.

Διάκονος

In addition to being a sister and a patroness to many, Phoebe is called a διάκονος of the church in Cenchrea. A glance at common Bible translations reveal the common understanding of διάκονος is servant, minister (by way of serving), or deacon (thought to be a ministry of serving others). The narrow biblical understanding of the διακον- word

⁴² deSilva, "Patronage," 771.

group has been challenged by modern scholarship, headed by John N. Collins' study.⁴³

Collins effectively demonstrates that the semantic field of διακον- terms expands to three main categories: attendance, messenger, and agency.

Over half of all διακον- words are used to reference attendance duties associated with food service. The meaning is not restricted to the serving of food but can include preparation, cooking, and cleaning up.⁴⁴ Concomitantly, διακονία can also signify other household chores or daily duties of a servant.⁴⁵ The frequency of use demonstrates that attendance is the most common association. Further, status seems to be of import when Jesus' employs attendant terminology. When the disciples argued over honor and esteem, Jesus reveals how status works within his family, contrary to the lordship of earthly rulers: "But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant (διάκονος), and whoever would be first among you must be a slave (δουλος) of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served (διακονηθῆναι) but to serve (διακονῆσαι), and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:43-45). Rather than imitate the contemporary elite, who compete for honor and their own self-interest, gaining it at the expense of those under their authority, the disciples are to follow Christ's example of humility and self-sacrifice. The one who wishes for honor and status is to become like a slave - this is a complete role reversal. There is no room for reciprocity or hubris in this new model. Jesus ties this in with his self-sacrifice on the cross, he will give

⁴³ John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁴⁴ Jimmy Agan, "Deacons, Deaconesses, and Denominational Discussions: Romans 16:1 as a Test Case," *Presbyterion* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 99.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

his life for the benefit of the guilty. Those who would follow Jesus and “drink from his cup”⁴⁶ must put aside their self-promoting interests for the good of the group.⁴⁷ This is less of a call to menial labor as it is a comment on group dynamics. The idea of attendance is linked to hospitality in Matthew. Jesus’ followers serve (διακονέω) him by way of feeding the hungry, slaking the thirst of the thirsty, clothing the naked, providing hospitality to strangers and helping sustain prisoners (Mt 25:31-46). In this way διάκονος is tied to humility and meeting the needs of others.

While the church often assumes a service orientation, an understanding of διακον- words as messenger enhances the translation of many biblical passages. In the messenger category, διάκονοι are “commissioned representatives” responsible for delivering a message or object.⁴⁸ The focus is on delivery or communication but can include appointed errands. The most common use is the delivery of an oral or written message. Paul chooses διακον- terms to speak of himself as a spokesman of the gospel (Eph 3:7; Col 1:23), an ambassador to the church (Col 1:25), and an envoy of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). His preaching, as with the other apostles (Acts 6:4), Epaphras (Col 1:7), and Old Testament prophets (1 Pt 1:12), is viewed as a commissioned message from God imparting divine truth. Paul also sends out personal messengers or errand runners (Eph 6:21; Acts 19:22), as do churches (2 Cor 8:19).

In the final semantic field, διάκονος, as agency, involves action by an agent who is authorized by another. An agent might carry out a command, or act on someone else’s

⁴⁶ Mk 10:38-39.

⁴⁷ Joan Cecelia Campbell, *Phoebe: Patron and Emissary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 69.

⁴⁸ Agan, “Deacons, Deaconesses, Denominational Discussions,” 100.

behalf, or simply be the means by which the will of another is accomplished.⁴⁹

Government officials are agents (διάκονος) of God because through their actions God's will is administered (Rom 13:4); they are instruments God uses to enact his purposes.⁵⁰

Christ imputes righteousness to believers, but should believers still sin that does not make Christ an agent (διάκονος) of sin (Gal 2:17). Gifts and abilities are to be carried out (διακονοῦντες) for the benefit of the church (1 Pt 4:10).⁵¹ Ministry (διακονέω) to the church is not only the work of all believers but a labor of love toward the name of God (Heb 6:10). This is not merely attendance, menial tasks performed to meet the daily needs of the church, but also includes the employment of one's spiritual gifts. Gifts, ministries (διακονία), and activities are given and enlivened by God for the good of his household (1 Cor 12:4-6).⁵² Greg Perry sums this up: "In a general sense for Paul, all believers are 'agents' (δίακονοι) of God's Spirit, gifted for the 'common good' of Christ's body and doing good for the wider body politic of their cities (Rom 12:3-21)."⁵³

While the use of the διακον- family can be divided into three basic categories, the semantic domains at times overlap or at the very least are partitioned with blurry lines. For example, Agan uses the task of finding a wife for another as an illustration of an errand in the category of messenger.⁵⁴ However, it is an act of agency to arrange an affair

⁴⁹ Jimmy Agan, "Like The One Who Serves: Jesus, Servant-Likeness, and Self-Humiliation in the Gospel of Luke" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1999), 85.

⁵⁰ Collins, 227-228.

⁵¹ See Agan, "Deacons, Deaconesses, Denominational Discussions," 102.

⁵² For fuller argument see Perry, 20-21.

⁵³ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴ Agan, "Like the One Who Serves," 83.

at another's behest or find someone else a mistress.⁵⁵ The distinction that places these match-making endeavors in separate categories is not apparent. Likewise, Collins and Agan classify the basic purpose of angels' διακονία as messengers. Yet, we see that angels' διακονία can also be by way of attendance (Mt 4:11). Angels elsewhere act as agents when sent to kill the Egyptian's first born (Ex 12:23). In this way, the general notion of angels' ministry need not be restricted to delivery of a message.

In much the same manner, the apostolic mission is systematized as message related rather than agency. Apostles are to go and tell, their mission is to be witnesses who tell what they saw. This understanding is backed up by contextual markers like "witness" and "proclaim."⁵⁶ It is further argued that agency is not in view because there is no clear task other than the going and telling.⁵⁷

The above characterization of apostles' self understood mission as one of testifying to what they observed about Jesus is correct - but incomplete. Matthew's account of the mission betrays a focus on discipleship. They are commanded to "make disciples" (in the imperative), going, baptizing, and teaching (all participles) are all tasks within the larger goal.⁵⁸ While this holistic approach is mimicked in John, Mark and Luke hone in on the speaking/evangelistic aspect of the mission. In this way διακον- words as related to the apostolic mission need not always be 'message' related but can also be

⁵⁵ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 123-124.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Mt. 28:19-20, Mark's commission account focuses on the preaching, but makes it clear that the ultimate goal is belief. The context at the very least implies that the disciples are to baptize in addition to their preaching. Luke's account again notes the importance of their eye-witness account (Lk 24:44-49). In John's account the call is to follow Jesus and feed his sheep (Jn 21:15-19). Like Matthew, John stresses a larger goal than just teaching.

wider expressions of agency. Moreover, this agency need not be abstract. Paul repeatedly described the goal of all his gospel work as “presenting everyone mature before the Lord.”⁵⁹ It is because he understood his mission as more than just preaching or passing on a message that he worked as a tentmaker. If the mission were merely to teach, then taking money would have given him more time to do so. But, he did not accept funds from certain churches because it hindered his over-all mission of discipleship.⁶⁰ Additionally, Paul performed baptisms, started churches, appointed elders, healed the lame, checked on the progress of churches and collected funds for the Jerusalem church.⁶¹ These are disciple and church building actions that Paul no doubt saw as part of his διακονία.

Even when we affirm that teaching is the main idea, message and agency are still sometimes hard to distinguish. For example, Paul refers to himself and Apollos as διάκονοι through whom the Corinthians believed (1 Cor 3:5). Some insist that this refers to them as messengers of word - “no more, and no less.”⁶² Yet, the label of διάκονος presents itself within an agricultural metaphor. Paul plants seeds and Apollos waters, menial tasks performed on the behest of the owner of the garden. God is the ultimate cause of growth (i.e. belief) but the seed and water are the means or instruments which he uses to enable the growth. In other words, by preaching and teaching the Corinthians Paul and Apollos are God’s agents which he used to build the church.

⁵⁹ Col 1:27; 1 Tm 4:10; Phil 2:16.

⁶⁰ 1 Cor 9:18 see esp v.9.

⁶¹ Rom 15:15 and 2 Cor 9:12.

⁶² Agan, “Deacons, Deaconesses, Denominational Discussions,” 100.

The New Testament introduces a new denotation for διάκονος - that of church officer. This is the basis for our English word, ‘deacon.’ Paul frequently appointed church leadership, or ‘elders,’ during his missionary journeys. However, as the church began to grow, Paul writes Timothy about additional stewardship within the household of God (1 Tm 3:15). Timothy’s authority to appoint these leaders is grounded in the prophecy (through the gift of the Spirit) made concerning his gift (χάρισμα) and confirmed by the ‘laying on of hands by the elders’ (1 Tm 1:18; 4:14).⁶³ The laying on of hands is associated with the recognition of one’s gift/call and official appointment to the subsequent ministry of that gift.⁶⁴ In this manner, Timothy will now appoint not just elders, who are to lead the congregation, but also deacons.

The construction of the letter to Timothy demonstrates a close connection between ‘deacons’ and ‘supervisors’ (ἐπισκοπή). The requisite conditions mimic one another with the added stipulation that supervisors, or elders, be ‘hospitable’ and ‘able to teach.’ This alteration likely betrays the different functionalities of the office, with deacons not being expected to teach or host church gatherings as part of their official duties. The proper management of personal families, which frames the list of qualifications (1 Tm 3:2,12), models the loving discipline necessary to help manage God’s family. In a manner similar to Timothy’s own “ordination,” Timothy was to choose men and women to ‘serve’ according to his/her gifts in an official capacity from among believers already ministering to the church (3:10).⁶⁵ Paul does not specify the exact

⁶³ Perry, 24-25.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 25.

functions, thus, trying to extrapolate a coherent job description is dubious. Deacons were men and women who embodied the ethos of the gospel message and whose activity in ministering his/her gifts within the household of God was officially recognized. They worked under and with supervisors on authorized tasks as agents of the church.

Deacon is not a status term but expresses ministry done to magnify the name of God (Heb 6:10). The New Testament authors, though employing the term in varying semantic fields, repeatedly contrast it with ruling authority.⁶⁶ Paul's title highlights the attitude and action that should characterize these leaders. Though all believers should minister, just as all believers should teach⁶⁷ and admonish,⁶⁸ certain members of the body of Christ are recognized and charged with these tasks on an official level. The honor due these leaders is not because of the title but given out of respect and gratitude for the faithful actions of the office holder.⁶⁹

Having explored the many senses of the biblical word *διάκονος*, the backdrop is set to decipher the description of Phoebe. Paul's recommends Phoebe, who resides in Cenchrea, to the church(es) in Rome. Naturally, the distance between these two cities suggests travel. The implication is that either Phoebe arrived with the letter or that she will be arriving soon after. Because *διάκονος* is used in conjunction with this implicit context of travel, Phoebe is sometimes catalogued as an envoy, delivering an object of

⁶⁶ For a full argument with multiple examples see Clark, *Serve the Community of the Church*, 233-243.

⁶⁷ 1 Pt 3:13-16; Heb 5:12.

⁶⁸ 1 Thes 5:14.

⁶⁹ 1 Thes 5:12-13

message from her church to the church in Rome.⁷⁰ A survey of biblical examples reveals a few commonalities for church to church messengers.⁷¹ First, the mission is specific and important to the churches. Second, the congregation appoints its representative, who is highly esteemed. Additionally, the traveler assumes a ‘leadership’ role in the church he or she visits, either by teaching, setting standards or collecting funds. The examples are few and these commonalities need not be strict rules for how all church to church communication was conducted. Yet, it does provide a glimpse of a pattern for first century church delegation operations from which to view Phoebe if this is her exclusive designation. The accuracy of this classification however, rests on (1) the context of travel indicating the category of messenger and (2) the grouping of messenger being distinct from that of agent.

Collins and Agan rightfully assert that travel language often coincides with *διακον-* of ‘messenger.’ However, the usual accompaniment of sending language (*πέμπω, συμπέμπω, ἀπόστολος*) is missing. Travel, while popular within ‘messenger’ language is not exclusive to this group. Agan’s own example of a ship captain as an ‘agent’ whose choice of destination is dependent on passengers is clearly and permanently placed within the context of travel.⁷² Within the New Testament twenty-four *διακον-* passages take place in the implied or explicit backdrop of travel.⁷³ Eleven (nearly half) of these

⁷⁰ Interestingly, the application of this often assumes that she is also an envoy for Paul. See Campbell, 74-75.

⁷¹ See Acts 11:19-22, 27-30; 15:1-4; 22-35; 18:27-28; 2 Cor 8:16-24.

⁷² Agan, “Deacons, Deaconesses, Denominational Discussions,” 102.

⁷³ This does not include the vague implications of travel found in Mt 20:28 (attendance); 25:44 (attendance); Jn 12:26 (attendance); Col 4:17 (messenger or agent); 2 Cor 9:1 (messenger); or Eph 4:12 (agency). Should these be included the argument for travel being a messenger context would be additionally weakened.

incontestably reference table service or attendance with a plausible twelfth reference.⁷⁴ It has already been demonstrated that the line between messenger and agent is blurry and that travel (as part of the mission) can be argued either way. Five of the twelve remaining passages feasibly reference agency,⁷⁵ leaving only seven of twenty-four examples to plead the case of messenger.⁷⁶ While Phoebe might be an envoy or representative of the church of Cenchrea, the context of travel adds little weight to her classification as messenger over and against agent.

The syntagmatic context, or the way *διάκονος* is arranged to introduce Phoebe, evinces a habitual role or title. Phoebe is introduced as (οὖσαν *διάκονον*) of the church in Cenchrea (τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς.). This appositional predicate is a typical format for introducing official positions or characteristics.⁷⁷ In other words, Phoebe is known, either officially or by her typical actions, as a *διάκονος* of the church in Cenchrea. It is significant that Paul, who “coined” *διάκονος* as a title for a church office, presents Phoebe as a *διάκονος* in a manner frequently used of titles.⁷⁸

While for us, it is rather significant whether Phoebe held an official office or was simply known for doing ministry in the church, it is unlikely that Phoebe herself cared. As a patroness, she had the means to garner multiple accolades and titles, yet she forgoes

⁷⁴ Mt 4:11; 15:41; 22:13; 27:55; Mk 1:29-31; 9:33-35; Lk 4:38-39; 8:1-3; 10:38-40; 12:37; Jn 12:1-2. Phlm 13 most likely speaks of attendance but could also be classified in either of the two remaining categories.

⁷⁵ Acts 12:25; 21:29; 1 Cor 16:5; 2 Tm 4:11; Heb 1:14.

⁷⁶ Acts 11:29; 19:22; Rom 15:25, 31; 2 Cor 8:19; Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-8.

⁷⁷ This has been argued more fully in Perry, 16, and Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), 64.

⁷⁸ As Payne notes, the participle can be also used of habitual action but there are many ways to express continued actions that would not be confused with title. The participle with the qualifier “of the church” strongly suggests an office. Payne, 61-62.

these in her service to others. She is not interested in building up a name for herself, that was the goal of false prophets and false apostles. While it is best that we give her proper honor by granting the title that Paul bestows on her, it is her ministry that Paul praises and that is her legacy.⁷⁹

Phoebe is a woman who employs her gifts in ministry to the church in an official capacity. Though as a patroness she has both status and rank in the larger society, she humbles herself to minister to the needs of the church. She is well respected and qualified to represent the church of Cenchrea to the church in Rome. Paul uses the substantives ἀδελφή, προστάτις and διάκονος to convey how Phoebe models the imperatives of the letter.⁸⁰ She belongs to the family of God (Rom 8:14-15b), using her gifts to minister to the church (Rom 12:6-7). Showing her love (Rom 12:10) by forsaking her status (Rom 12:16) and giving generously (Rom 12:13) to many, Phoebe builds up others (Rom 14:19; 15:2). This is why Paul commends her and wishes the church in Rome to accept and care for her (Rom 15:5-7).

⁷⁹ See Baker, 11.

⁸⁰ For fuller argument see Perry, 17-18.

Chapter 3: Prisca

Romans 16:3-5 Ἀσπάσασθε Πρίσκαν καὶ Ἀκύλαν τοὺς συνεργούς μου ἐν Χριστῷ
Ἰησοῦ, ⁴οἵτινες ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς μου τὸν ἑαυτῶν τράχηλον ὑπέθηκαν, οἷς οὐκ ἐγὼ
μόνος εὐχαριστῶ ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἐθνῶν, ⁵καὶ τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν
ἐκκλησίαν.

Paul begins the list of greetings with familiar names, Prisca⁸¹ and Aquila.

When we first meet the couple, they are residing in Corinth, having left Rome due to Claudius' edict of 49AD which banned Jews (and likely Jewish Christians). In Corinth they work as tentmakers and when Paul comes there on his second recorded missionary journey, Prisca and Aquila house him and work alongside him for at least a year and a half (Acts 18:2-3). When Paul leaves to continue his journey, Prisca and Aquila join him and sail to Ephesus. Paul does not appear to stay long there but when he continues his journey, Prisca and Aquila stay presumably to foster the church (Acts 18:18-20). Ephesus was a leading center of the Roman empire, capital of the Roman province of Asia, and home of the famed temple to Diana. Idol pedaling and occult practice were standard fare. In this setting Prisca and Aquila host a church at their house.⁸² They also remain aware

⁸¹ Luke calls her Priscilla, which is a conversational, less formal form of Prisca. Paul always uses the "grown up" form Πρίσκα. See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Prisca and Aquila: Traveling Tentmakers and Church Builders," *Biblical Review* 8, no. 6 (December 1992): 40, and Gareth L. Reese, *New Testament Epistles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Moberly, MO: Scripture Exposition Books, 1987), 728.

⁸² 1 Cor 16:19. Interestingly, the New Testament names more women than men by name as hosts of house churches. See C.C. Kroeger, "Women of the Early Church," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1220.

of, if not active in, synagogue life. It is at the synagogue that Prisca and Aquila hear the teaching of Apollos and intervene.⁸³ They take him and “explain the ways of God more accurately.” Apollos is a teaching leader, who already “knew the scriptures” and “taught accurately the things concerning Jesus.” He was an “eloquent speaker,” (most likely indicating that he was trained in rhetoric), and had already been “instructed in the way of the Lord.” The only shortcoming listed amidst this praise is that he “knew only the baptism of John.” He is a man of authority, who Paul later calls an apostle, and he has been taught (in the midst of his ministry) by a woman. After Prisca and Aquila’s tutelage, Apollos moves to Corinth and “powerfully refutes the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.”⁸⁴ This description is fully positive, alluding to the success of Prisca and Aquila as teachers.

With Apollos in Corinth, Prisca and Aquila are joined again by Paul at Ephesus. Paul spends three years there, enjoying a fruitful ministry. Given that the couple has a previously established friendship with Paul, share a common trade and are involved with church ministry, it is not unreasonable to assume that they contributed to this ministry. We do not know if Prisca and her husband were living in Ephesus for the duration of Paul’s time there, as the next time we meet the couple they are living in Rome.

Πρίσκα

Aquila is the only male in the New Testament who doesn’t gain literary independence from his wife - and her by name each time. For the couple to be mentioned six times is a testament to their influence within the early church community or at the

⁸³ Acts 18:24-27

⁸⁴ Acts 18:28.

very least their close connection with the leaders who penned the scriptures. This impact should not be attributed primarily to Aquila, who just happens to be closely accompanied by his wife. Convention allowed and supported referencing women by their relationship to men (e.g. his wife) but Prisca is addressed exclusively by name. Moreover, she is mentioned before Aquila four out of six times, which is significant given the normative Greek and Hebrew practice of listing the man first. Extra-biblical material demonstrates a precedence for female first ordering when the female is considered more important, generally due to status. The implication is that Prisca is found to be in some way, either by rank or Christian standing, of greater import.

The notion that Prisca outranked Aquila socially is not without merit. Her name can be linked to the noble *gens* Acilia in Rome. Yet, noble birth is not the only option, female slaves were also given names associated with their household which they kept after being freed. Her current status as an artisan working as a tentmaker makes noble birth unlikely but certainly not impossible.⁸⁵ Noble birth is also doubted because of the inconsistency in the arrangement of her name; if Paul and Luke acknowledge her social status on four occasions then why ignore it for two?

The alternation of the ordering of their names suggests that the context in which their names are mentioned is pertinent to their order. Philip Payne proffers that the four occasions where Prisca is named first, the context is of the couple's active ministry, as opposed to the other two.⁸⁶ This inference supports the idea that Prisca may have played a dominate role in ministry. However, there are other explanations. She might have attained

⁸⁵ Acts 18:1-3.

⁸⁶ Payne, 64.

a higher ecclesial status by way of becoming a Christian before Aquila, having a more dominant personality, being more involved in missions, or she may have simply had a closer relationship to Paul and Luke.⁸⁷ Postulations concerning the nature of her prominence are speculative which cautions against placing weight on any narrow conclusions. But it not too much to say that the placement suggests at least her equal contribution to the couples ministry (by way of money/influence or action).

Συνεργός

They are “my [Paul’s] co-workers.” Prisca and Aquila share the substantival descriptor *συνεργός*, or fellow worker. This work is specified to be “in Christ” which makes tent-making an unlikely candidate for the referent. A popular rendering of co-worker is missionary.⁸⁸ *Συνεργός* is a compound word formed by the prefix *συν* (with) and the word *ἐργάτης* (worker). When Jesus sent his disciples out on missions he likened their work to farming, calling them laborers (*ἐργάτης*) deserving of pay.⁸⁹ Paul uses the same metaphor in his letter to Timothy, connecting *ἐργάτης* to the teachers and preachers at Ephesus.⁹⁰ In a second letter to Timothy, God’s worker is contrasted with false teachers. Deceitful workers are descriptive of those who preach a message other than the gospel.⁹¹ The frequency with which *ἐργάτης* is used for missionaries, alongside Paul’s

⁸⁷ See Murphy-O’Conner, 40-42, and Daniel C. Arichea, “Who was Phoebe? Translating *Diakonos* in Romans 16:1,” *Bible Translator* 39, no. 4 (October 1988): 402.

⁸⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 709, 795. See also Payne, 64.

⁸⁹ Mt 10:10.

⁹⁰ 1 Tm 5:16-18.

⁹¹ 2 Cor 11:13.

own “work” as a missionary/itinerant preacher leads many to conclude that Paul’s fellow workers (συνεργός) are also missionaries/itinerant preachers.⁹²

However, ἐργάτης has a wider semantic domain than missionary and is also used in scriptural metaphors where the worker is decidedly not a preacher. Even consenting that one of the main denotations is missionary, to define συνεργός by ἐργάτης is an exegetical root fallacy. John encourages Gaius to house and support traveling preachers; by facilitating their mission, Gaius shares in their work as a συνεργός.⁹³ This example does not mean that the use of συνεργός is always connected with hospitality or enabling missionaries. It doesn’t even show that Paul doesn’t use the term exclusively to mean fellow missionary. It does however, open the possibility that fellow worker (συνεργός) refers to other avenues of sharing in the gospel mission.

The data field of συνεργός numbers thirteen plus three substantival participles of its verbal form are found in the New Testament.⁹⁴ Descriptive of at least twenty people, a uniform definition is difficult to obtain. Paul speaks about known teachers and missionaries as co-workers. Occasionally, the context suggests that the work is in the area of teaching.⁹⁵ Found generically only twice, co-workers are leaders who should be recognized as such, but who work humbly for the congregation.⁹⁶ There is nothing to ‘prove’ that all co-workers are not missionaries (aside from its connection to women), but there is also little evidence to support it. It’s applied to people that are not known to be

⁹² Payne, 64. See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 790, 795.

⁹³ 3 Jn 8.

⁹⁴ See Appendix A.

⁹⁵ 1 Cor 3:9; 1 Thes 3:2.

⁹⁶ 2 Cor 1:24; 1 Cor 16:15-18, Phil 4:3.

teachers and the majority of the time the specific work is unclear. In general, συνεργός describes a fellow worker of Paul's, distinct from the congregation, whose work is in Christ and for the benefit of the congregation.⁹⁷

By identifying people as his co-workers, Paul places his stamp of approval on their work. These are not false prophets or leaders, they are working with him for the same goal. The emphasis is the mutuality of the mission. This is a theological statement about unity: they are all God's workers. This is not to say that they are all equal as the stress is not sociological.⁹⁸ While these workers are set apart from the congregation, συνεργός is not a title or a church office. One becomes a co-worker by engaging in the mission. When used in the general sense, the descriptor is identifiable. In other words, believers could distinguish who was and who wasn't a co-worker based on their actions. Co-workers are deserving of respect and submission from the congregation because of their work on the congregation's behalf. It is an informal leadership inviting cooperation.⁹⁹

Prisca and Aquila join Paul as συνεργός in the gospel mission. The specific nature of the couples work is not given but the context reveals some clues as Paul continues. The dependent relative clause introduces a courageous deed executed on Paul's behalf. The married couple "risked their necks" to save Paul's life. This great demonstration of Christian love is too often glossed over. Prisca and Aquila willingly (ὑποτίθημι) placed

⁹⁷ For further argumentation of this see Peter O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 331.

⁹⁸ Bertram, "συνεργός" in *TDOT*, 7:874.

⁹⁹ E.E. Ellis, "Coworkers, Paul and His," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 183.

Paul's life ahead of their own, not only demonstrating a love for him but also true devotion to Christ.¹⁰⁰ Scripture does not specifically record their valiant act but there is good reason to place it within the context of ministry.¹⁰¹ Silas and Judas, leading men among the brothers, are commended by the Jerusalem church for likewise risking their lives (Acts 15:26). Paul imparts gratitude as do all of the Gentile churches. It may be that the churches are thankful because Paul ministers to them and by way of saving Paul, Prisca and Aquila have also ministered to them. In this sense, the couple shares in Paul's ministry by enabling him to continue his work. Yet, this is probably too narrow a definition of Prisca and Aquila's work. It also assumes that the gratitude is a direct consequence of their neck risking act. It is possible that a more general gratitude is being expressed (one that includes but is not limited to the life-saving action). If this is so then the Gentile churches could be expressing a collective appreciation for the couple's activity in at least three congregations (Corinth, Ephesus, Rome). The work then would likely be associated but not limited to their provision of a meeting place for believers to congregate.

The Christian communities, being increasingly disallowed in synagogues, met in houses big enough to accommodate a group. We have already seen that Prisca and Aquila have opened up their house in Ephesus and Paul indicates that they have done the same in Rome.¹⁰² In this way, Prisca and Aquila engaged in hospitality by providing a vital

¹⁰⁰ Jn 15:12-13; 1 Jn 3:16; Acts 15:26.

¹⁰¹ Among the reasons are (1) every recorded time that Paul's life was in danger (aside from the shipwreck which had yet to occur) it was within this context (2) the churches are thankful for the action.

¹⁰² It is possible that they hosted a church in Corinth, but scripture reveals only that they opened their home to Paul there (Acts 18:1-4).

meeting place for the sustenance and furthering of the gospel. With this, some have drawn a fluid line of partnership with Paul that hones in on the specific nature of συνεργός.¹⁰³ Paul evangelizes and plants churches which Prisca and Aquila (and others) host and organize. They are co-workers with Paul by picking up where he leaves off. Still, Paul has never been to Rome so this church is probably not directly a product of his ministry.

Others note the relative affluence necessary to host a meeting of Christians, not only in owning a large house but also often providing a meal for everyone. This wealth is connected to status in society; by hosting within their home they protect the reputation of Christians. These hosts are viewed as patrons offering a great service to the family of believers and often hosting itinerant missionaries/preachers.¹⁰⁴ As owners of the house, patrons play a substantial role in safeguarding the purity of the gospel by choosing which ministers to house.¹⁰⁵ Some have connected the hosting role with the office of deacon.¹⁰⁶ This is sometimes taken further to suggest that patrons naturally assumed a father type role within their house, making them the main teachers and preachers.¹⁰⁷ All these conclusions are conjectural at best. The data on how many were involved in house churches varies (from six to a hundred and twenty) and with it the level of wealth/status

¹⁰³ For example see Jack Cottrell, *Romans*, 2 vols. (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1996-8), 2:471.

¹⁰⁴ Philemon 17; Romans 16:23. For argument see Michael L. White, "Social Authority in the House Church Setting and Ephesians 4:1-16," *Restoration Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1987): 218.

¹⁰⁵ Kroeger, "Women of the Early Church," 1220.

¹⁰⁶ Banks, "Church Order and Government," 134.

¹⁰⁷ White, 225.

necessary to host a congregation.¹⁰⁸ There are examples of ministers staying in residences and preaching elsewhere and further examples of the church making group decisions on matters related to leadership. While Prisca and Aquila may have functioned in the above roles, we can't say with any certainty the specifics of their work as it relates to hosting a church.

¹⁰⁸ The speculated number of participants in a house church ranges from 6-120. For the extremities see N.T. Wright, *Letter to the Romans* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002), 173 and Bradley Blue, "Acts and the House Church," in *The Book of Acts: Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 120.

Chapter 4: Other Women

Tryphaena/Tryphosa

Romans 16:12a Τρύφαιναν καὶ Τρυφῶσαν τὰς κοπιώσας ἐν κυρίῳ.

The two names Τρύφαινα and Τρυφῶσα are coupled together with one common descriptor, κοπιᾶω. This pairing, in addition to the names' similar sound, make it plausible that the two are sisters.¹⁰⁹ The names stem from the common root *Τρύφ*, meaning to live delicately or luxuriously, with the nuances of delicate with regard to Tryphaena and dainty with respect to Tryphosa.¹¹⁰ Although there is indeed irony in describing these woman as “those who toil,” this should not be taken too far as Paul describes Mary (v. 6) and Persis (v. 12) similarly.

Κοπιᾶω has two main glosses, to labor or to grow weary. Within scripture, the former can be further broken down as meaning physical labor exclusively (e.g. tent-making, farming, etc.) or kingdom labor (physical and spiritual labor for the Lord). The sisters' toil falls into this last category. Including this passage, eleven out of the twenty-three New Testament appearances have a distinctly ‘Christian’ sense. Removing the three that are descriptive of women in Romans 16, the field of study narrows to eight.

¹⁰⁹ Don Williams, *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church* (Van Nuys, CA: Bim Publishing Company, 1977), 45.

¹¹⁰ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 536.

Paul thrice describes his own ministry as toiling for the church as its leader.¹¹¹ On these occasions his toil for the church encompasses the full range of his work ministering to them - the goal of which is presenting them blameless before God. Paul expresses this thought to Timothy, reminding him why they both toil. Church authorities, especially those who labor in the area of teaching and preaching, are to be given honor (1 Tim 5:17). Laborers in a more generic fashion are used in conjunction with συνεργός as deserving respect and are listed among the attributes of a person worthy of others submission. Working hard is clearly associated with leadership, official and unofficial. However, we have thus far only established that church authorities are laborers, this does not necessarily imply that laborers are church authorities.¹¹²

In Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians, believers are exhorted to "respect those who labor among you (κοπιῶντας), and preside over you/ give aid to you (προϊστημι), and admonish you...because of their work (ἔργον)" (1 Thes 5:12-13). While this is often cited as proof that κοπιᾶω invokes authority, the composition of the sentence with a single article makes it more likely that these are three separate qualifications for leadership.¹¹³ Although this text does not allow us to assign a role of authority to everyone who toils, it is significant that laboring is viewed as one of the foremost qualities of a leader. It is also noteworthy that the reason for their respect is fundamentally because of their work. This

¹¹¹ See chart in Appendix B.

¹¹² For instance, every President of the United States of America is born in the United States, it is a requirement. However, not every person born in the United States is President, in fact very few are. See Perriman, 63.

¹¹³ Due to the plural nouns this is not a candidate for Granville Sharp's rule but the substantives act in a descriptive and therefore restrictive manner. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 181-183.

theme is implicit in Paul's request that the Corinthians, "be subject to such as these [Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus] - and to every fellow worker who toils (κοπιῶντι)" (1 Cor 16:16). Stephanas' leadership is unofficial but still deserving of recognition and submission because of the hard work it entails. Others who toil for the kingdom are likewise deserving of respect.¹¹⁴

Tryphaena and Tryphosa might not be official church leaders, but it is clear they characteristically exert themselves, working hard in the Lord.¹¹⁵ This is not a small thing and it is worthy of the congregation's respect. Paul singles these women out for their ministry, honoring them by publicly recognizing their ongoing contribution to the church.

Persis

Romans 16:12b Ἀσπάσασθε Περσίδα τὴν ἀγαπητήν, ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἐν κυρίῳ.

Persis (Περσίς) is most likely a slave or freedwoman by virtue of her name, meaning "Persian woman."¹¹⁶ She is dear to Paul which is discernible through the substantival adjective, ἀγαπητός, or beloved. Persis is the fourth person in the Roman church to receive this as a description. The three men, Epaenetus (v.5), Ampliatus (v.8) and Stachys (v. 9), who are also called beloved receive the adjunct qualifier "my." Persis' alternative labeling as '*the* beloved' is most likely a matter of propriety. Beloved, though a bit archaic, simply means loved one. The communicative sense is warm and

¹¹⁴Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: a Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 1339.

¹¹⁵ There is not enough information to assert or rule out an official (or at least recognized) leadership.

¹¹⁶ Schreiner, *Romans*, 790.

affectionate though used here it is clearly not romantic. Even without the personal qualifier, Paul's care for her is conveyed.

The letter goes on to note that she has worked hard (ἐκοπίασεν) in the Lord. This is the same word that just described the sisters, though now in verbal form. Due to Paul's use of the aorist tense, some have suggested that Persis is elderly. After all, Paul does not say she is "a hard worker" but instead that she "has worked hard." While it is possible that she is elderly, there are two strong reasons not to assume this. First, Paul uses the aorist tense to speak of the work he had done in particular churches with clear indications that the work will continue.¹¹⁷ Second, there is no real reason to assume that labor in the Lord can't be continued into old age.¹¹⁸ The aorist tense is punctiliar, meaning it refers to the action without placing it on a timeline.¹¹⁹ Persis, like Tryphaena and Tryphosa, devotes herself to the work of the gospel.

Mary

Romans 16:6 Ἀσπάσασθε Μαρίαν, ἣτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν εἰς ὑμᾶς.

Here arises our first text critical issue. The woman greeted is either Μαρίαμ (a semitic name from the Hebrew *Miryam*, Moses' sister) or Μαρίαν (Maria, the feminine form of Maruis from the *gens* Maria). Both have early attestations but Μαρίαν has a

¹¹⁷ 1 Cor 15:10; Phil 2:16.

¹¹⁸ In 1 Tm 5:9-16, we see elderly widows (over 60 years old) who are not idlers but devote themselves to the Lord.

¹¹⁹ Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 68.

wider early distribution.¹²⁰ Mary is a woman who worked hard (ἐκοπίασεν) for the church in Rome. Paul specifies that her work was for “all of you [the believers in Rome],” reminding the listeners of what she has done for them. Here again, she is set up as an example to others, as she already embraces what the epistle to the Romans encourages (Rom 12:6-8).

Rufus’ mother

Romans 16:13 Ἀσπάσασθε Ῥοῦφον τὸν ἐκλεκτὸν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐμοῦ.

In Romans 16:13 the recipients of the letter are to “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well” (ESV). The language is best understood as attributing “chosen in the Lord” as a descriptor of Rufus only and the imperative “to greet” as extending also to his mother. It reads literally, “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.” Paul makes no linguistic distinction between this woman’s motherhood of Rufus and that of himself. The vast majority understand the woman described to be the biological mother of Rufus and the metaphorical mother of Paul. This means that μήτηρ is being used in a biological and a metaphorical sense simultaneously.

We are not given any information on why Paul considers this woman his mother. There is however, a precedence for fictive parental kinship. The terms father and mother

were used in society as titles of great respect.¹²¹ In this manner, Paul tells Timothy to treat older men as he would a fathers and older women as he would a mother (1 Tm 5:2).

Clubs and associations granted men and (less often) women the honorary title of “father” or “mother.” In this situation, the laurel was often given in appreciation for financial gifts. Rabbi’s were also often called father by those they taught.¹²² Mother could also be used with a birthing metaphor to connote the origin of something. While the term is clearly one of respect, the implications of the metaphor vary by context. What we can say for certain is that Paul views his relationship with this woman as analogues to that of a son and mother. But what were the dynamics of the mother son bond in those days?

In the Roman era, people of all ages were expected to honor both of their parents. Although a mother had no legal authority over her children, the social systems demanded that she be treated with deference. The typical portrait of a mother was that of a “moral mentor,” a model of virtue, a firm disciplinarian and one who had earned and deserved respect.¹²³ When children were minors part of honoring their parents meant obeying them. Obedience was not demanded of adult children but was largely expected. Outright disobedience or rebuke was not tolerated. Keener writes, “An adult son who found it necessary to act contrary to his mother’s wishes nevertheless would need to do so very respectfully.”¹²⁴ In this manner, mothers had influence and informal authority in the lives

¹²¹ C. S. Keener, “Family and Household,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 357.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 247.

¹²⁴ Keener, “Family and Household,” 356.

of their adult sons. Indeed, the structure of the typical family was such that maternal relationships often grew stronger when children reached adulthood.¹²⁵ Unlike today's society, which focuses on forming one's own nuclear family and sets up provisions for the elderly uniformly, ancient civilizations stressed the adult child's responsibility in caring for his/her parents. Roman law demanded this care and abandoning an elderly parent was cause for imprisonment.¹²⁶ Paul makes clear that this responsibility is tantamount among Christians, equating abandonment of parents with abandoning the faith (1 Tm 5:8).

This exposition into first century motherhood does not explain exactly how Paul was mothered by Rufus' mother. This is beyond our ability to know. It does give insight into what it meant to be a mother and the respect and care expected from adult sons. Paul is paying homage to Rufus' mother in a submissive and affectionate manner for her influence on his life.

Julia and Nereus' sister

Romans 16:15 ἀσπάσασθε Φιλόλογον καὶ Ἰουλίαν, Νηρέα καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ Ὀλυμπᾶν καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς πάντας ἁγίους.

Ἰουλία, or Julia, was a name give every female born to (or slave of) the Julius family. Meaning “down-bearded youth,” it was the most common slave name in ancient Rome. It is quite likely that our Julia is either a slave or a freed slave. The phrasing of her

¹²⁵ Cohick, 156.

¹²⁶ Keener, “Family and Household,” 356.

name (amongst five listed off with the added inclusion of “all the saints who are with them”) most likely indicates her residence was the location of a house church. The implication is that she, Philologus, Nereus, Nereus’ sister and Olympas are all part of one household. It has been suggested that Julia is the wife of Philologus. If this is so then it is likely that Nereus and his sister are their children. A second possibility is that Julia and Philologus themselves are siblings. There is simply too little information to be sure because Paul greeted her by her name and not by her relationship to a man. However, by listing her in such a manner he esteems her.

After Julia, the greetings extend to Nereus and his sister. We know very little about this woman, as her address is the least personal of those singled out. She is described as the sister (ἀδελφή) of Nereus. While the fictive sibling bond was often used to describe fellow Christians (e.g. Phoebe) the singling out of Nereus makes this metaphorical sense improbable. The relationship is most likely biological siblings though the possibility of wife can’t be ruled out (1 Cor 9:5). Their connection is lost to history, along with her name but the greeting extended to her amplifies the distinctive presence of women in the Roman church.

Chapter 5: Junia

Romans 16:7 Ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνιαν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ.

Ἰουνιαν

Our final female is perhaps the most controversial as even her gender is hotly debated. Paul describes her by the proper noun Ἰουνιαν, in the accusative form as she is the recipient of the verb “to greet.” Unfortunately, there can be ambiguity about the gender/declension of certain nouns in the accusative case due to the overlap of the -αν endings. If the noun is feminine, the nominative form would be Ἰουνια, or “Junia,” which was a common female name. Should the noun be masculine, the nominative form would be Ἰουνιας, a “name” not found anywhere else.

The female name Junia was a common name given to noble born members of the Junia clan as well as slaves and freed slaves. It is the Greek translation of the latin name *Iunia*, the female version of the popular male nomus *Iunius*. There are hundreds of inscriptions (both Greek and Latin) that verify the popularity of this name.¹²⁷ In addition to the extant archeological evidence, every ancient Christian writer interpreted Ἰουνιαν as

¹²⁷ Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 55.

feminine, an opinion that spanned a millennium.¹²⁸ This is significant given the relative closeness between the text and tradition. The singular textual variant is Julia, confirming an early feminine understanding.¹²⁹

The witness of history has since been challenged by those committed to the masculinity of apostles. As already observed, in order for the referent to be male, the name *Ἰουνίας*, with proposed accentuation *Ἰουνιᾶς* or *Ἰουνίᾱς*, would need to be possible. Due to the fact that these names have not been found anywhere, the contract name theory has been the evidential basis of the male Junias. The basic idea is that while Junias does not exist as a male name, if it is a shortened version of a known male name then it is possible that *Ἰουνιαν* is masculine. The theory gains force from evidence that a number of names ending in *-ας* are shortened versions of longer male names, including three in Romans 16. It was then put forth that, in an analogous manner, *Ἰουνίας* (with either accenting) is the shortened version of that Latin name *Iunianus*. However, after researching the patterns of contract name formation (with latin names in particular), Richard Cervin and John Thorley both conclusively demonstrated that *Ἰουνίας* could not be a contract Latin name.¹³⁰

Having accepted that *Ἰουνίας* is not a contracted Latin name, Al Wolters explores the possibility that it is the transliteration of the Hebrew name *yhwyny*. While the name never occurs in the Old Testament, recent discoveries have unearthed two examples

¹²⁸ There is one exception in late antiquity. Epiphanius designates Junia as a male and also names Prisca as a man (*Index disciplulorum*, 125.19-20). Given that Prisca is elsewhere in the New Testament explicitly said to be female (the wife, or woman, of Aquilla) the credibility of Epiphanius with regard to gender is lost. See Epp, 34.

¹²⁹ Epp, 46.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 41-44.

demonstrating that it was an actual name in ancient Israel during the first century. With the name attested, its transliteration must be verified. Determining how *yhwny* would be hellenized is complex due to its reliance on phonetics. Still, Wolters presents sound reasoning for pronouncing it *yēhunnī*, based on its meaning “may he be gracious.” If this pronunciation is correct then the expected transliteration is *Ἰουνίας*. Thus it is linguistically possible for *Ἰουνίας* to reference a man. This does not make it likely. Oddly, Wolters proposes that a strength of the theory is precisely its unlikelihood. He argues that because the Hebrew name is rare, the hellenized version would be even more infrequent, meaning that a lack of supporting evidence is to be expected. The entire purpose of the theory is to present something as possible and not necessarily plausible. It proposes that something could have occurred that is so infrequent that it need not be demonstrated elsewhere to be true. This isolated hypothetical event is placed over and against something that is demonstrably frequent and prominent. Wolters himself admits, “When we compare the evidence adduced in favor of *Ἰουνίας* as a masculine name with that brought forward in support of *Ἰουνία* as a feminine name, there is really no contest. The latter clearly wins the day.”¹³¹

Sadly, there is not enough evidence to convince everyone. Paige Patterson, president of Southwest Baptist Seminary, cautions that just because a name is “feminine” does not mean it belongs to a female. Citing his own name as an example, he warns that even if every example of a particular name belongs to a female, it does not mean that

¹³¹ Albert M. Wolters, “IOUNIAN (Romans 16:7) and the Hebrew name Yēhunnī,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 397.

there is not an exception.¹³² He claims that nothing gender related can be learned from this passage as her sex “can never be proved.”¹³³ His stated aim is to protect the text from the liberal, egalitarian agenda. Ironically, by diverging from the historical witness, his position is anything but conservative.

Many scholars have gone beyond their normal hermeneutical method and grasped at any inkling of an indication that the male name Junias is possible because the stakes are so high. These hermeneutical gymnastics betray an unwillingness to accept any perceived threat to male leadership. Rather than exegeting the text and allowing scripture to shape ideas, these scholars employ a method of eisogesis that forces their preconceived ideas on scripture.

Ἀπόστολος

It has already been noted that debate over the gender of Junia is charged by theological agendas. History has understood Andronicus and his partner as prominent apostles. But, just as Junia’s name has been attacked, so has her apostleship. In place of the traditional translation, “outstanding among the apostles,” some modern Bible translations like the ESV now read, “well known to the apostles.” The timing of the shift, coinciding with the change from Junias (masculine) to Junia (feminine), reveals the underlying motive. Still, the obvious agenda does not invalidate the translation, often an agenda is what drives someone to search out the truth.

¹³² If a feminists were to argue that Andronicus might be a woman because it is possible that some mother gave her daughter a masculine name, that would be perceived for the lunacy that it is and his/her credibility would immediately be questioned.

¹³³ Rena Pederson, *The Lost Apostle: Searching for the Truth About Junia* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing, 2008), 31.

The phrase Paul uses to describe the duo is “ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις.” The word ἐπίσημος means “marked upon, remarkable.” The normative use of the prepositional construct ἐν plus a dative is inclusive, i.e. “among.”¹³⁴ Hence the historical interpretation, “outstanding among the apostles”.¹³⁵ While this seems straightforward, it has been postulated that when ἐπίσημος is used with the ἐν plus a personal dative the sense is exclusive, (i.e. outstanding *to* the apostles). In support of this, Wallace and Burer published an article explaining the results of a comprehensive study of such uses.¹³⁶

Wallace and Burer purposed to show that with reference to people, ἐπίσημος is used with a genitive to express inclusiveness and used with an ἐν plus dative to show exclusiveness. The method was straightforward, they searched the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* and four standard collections of papyri for the word ἐπίσημος, narrowing the field to its use with genitives or the ἐν plus dative. They then chose twenty-five texts, which were sorted as either personal or impersonal, leaving only fourteen personal texts (and therefore directly relevant to the hypothesis).¹³⁷ Analyzing the context, the use of ἐπίσημος was then judged to be either inclusive or exclusive. Table 4.1 below displays their findings. The texts are listed: Author, *Title* Ref (category). The texts with an asterix (*) are examples of ἐπίσημος and a dative but without the ἐν. The texts in bold are

¹³⁴ Linda Belleville, “Iounian...episēmoi en tois apostolois: a Re-Examination of Romans 16.7 in Light of Primary Source Materials,” *New Testament Studies* 51, no. 2 (April 2005): 243-244.

¹³⁵

¹³⁶ Daniel B. Wallace and Michael H. Burer, “Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16:7,” *New Testament Studies* 47, no. 1 (2001): 76.

¹³⁷ It was unclear if only twenty-five texts remained or if these twenty-five were used as a sample data set.

proposed as close parallels to Romans 16:7. The regions where the data should fall to support the hypothesis are shaded. Texts in white are counter to the hypothesis.

Table 4.1

		Inclusive	Exclusive
dative	impersonal	Add Esth 16:22 (Biblical and Patristic) Mac 11:37 (Biblical and Patristic) Mac 14:48 (Biblical and Patristic) Lucianus, <i>De Meretri</i> 1.17 (Hellenist) Philo, <i>Fug.</i> 10 (Hellenist)	*Lycurgus, <i>Against Leocrates</i> , 129 (Classical)
dative	personal	Lucian, <i>Merc. Cond.</i> , 28 (Hellenist) Josephus, <i>Jewish War</i> , 2.418 (Hellenist) Lucian, <i>Dialogue of the Dead</i> , 438 (Hellenist)	Pss. Sol. 2:6 (Biblical and Patristic) TAM 2.905.1 west wall. coll. 2.5.18 (inscription) TAM 2.1-3.838 west wall. coll. 3.12 (inscription) TAM 2.1-3.905 west wall. coll. 3.12 (inscription) Fd Xanth 7.76.1.1.1.4 (inscription) *Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i> , 976 (Classical) Euripides, <i>Hippolytus</i> , 103 (Classical) Lucian, <i>Harmonides</i> , 1.17 (Hellenist)
genitive	impersonal	Pss. Sol. 17.30 (Biblical and Patristic) Mart. Pol. 14.1 (Biblical and Patristic) P.Oxy. 1408 (papyri) P.Oxy. 2705 (papyri) P.Oxy. 2108 (papyri) Galen, <i>Meth. Med.</i> 14.10.242 (Hellenist)	
genitive	personal	3 Macc 6:1 (Biblical and Patristic) Lucian, <i>Peregr.</i> , 6:1 (Hellenist) Herodian, 1.7 (Hellenist)	

Wallace and Burer found that, of the fourteen personal examples, eleven supported their hypothesis. Thereby they concluded that the exclusive sense is “almost certainly” what Paul intended. The overarching aim was to show that ἐπίσημος with the ἐν plus dative (with a personal adjunct) carries an exclusive sense, which was demonstrated three out of six times in literature.¹³⁸ The added inscriptions point to seven exclusive in the personal with only three inclusive. Statistics alone (especially with so

¹³⁸ This figure discounts inscriptions and examples of the dative without the use of ἐν.

few examples) do not always give a clear indication of the strengths or weaknesses of an argument. Thus we will also examine the weight of the thesis based on what they deem to be the best parallel to Romans 6:7, namely, Pss. Sol. 2:6.

The second psalm of the pseudepigraphal Psalms of Solomon recounts an invasion of Jerusalem. Wallace and Burer do not cite or translate the entire verse in their article but only the ‘relevant’ comparative, “[they, i.e. the Jewish captives] were a spectacle among the Gentiles” (ἐπίσῃμῳ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν).¹³⁹ From the context given, it is clear that the sense is exclusive because Jewish captives are certainly not Gentiles. Further, it is the Jew’s notoriety that is at stake, just as it is with Romans 16:7. The form is also deemed comparable by way of a personal plural dative.

At first glance the study appears convincing. The statistics, while small, demonstrate at least precedence for the exclusive view and the parallel text seems to match both in form and ideology. A closer look at the study, however, reveals cracks in the argument that ultimately lead to its collapse. In exposing these fractures, we will begin with the Psalm of Solomon example before commenting on the methodology and accuracy of the study in general.

Returning to our example, we concede that based on the portion of the verse presented, the logic seems undeniable. However, the example given by Wallace and Burer was either misquoted or purposely chopped off from its context to make an argument. Placed back into the sentence, a pesky ἐν muddles the interpretation. The entire verse reads: οἱ υἱοὶ καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες ἐν αἰχμαλωσίᾳ ποιηρᾷ ἐν σφπαγίδι ὁ τράχηλος αὐτῶν, ἐν

¹³⁹ Wallace and Burer, 86-87.

ἐπίσημῳ, ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. Read within the structure of the verse, ἐπίσημος does not modify ‘the sons and daughters,’ rather it conveys the idea of being marked or branded.¹⁴⁰ This understanding not only works grammatically, it also fits the context of captivity, and employs the ἐν plus dative in neither an inclusive nor an exclusive manner.¹⁴¹ After examining the contextual relationship of the misrepresented portion of Pss. Sol. 2:6, it is clear that the syntax does not parallel Romans 16:7.

On the methodological level, Belleville questions the grammatical reasoning for separating the personal and the impersonal forms. Should all the data be included, and there is no grammatical evidence for it not to, then Wallace and Burer’s study reveals a ‘pattern’ more in line with an inclusive reading.¹⁴² Even should the personal distinctive hold true, the fact is that only three literary examples are given, out of “over 6 million words” they searched, that suggest an exclusive reading is possible. Further, the categorization of many of the texts has been contested. In separate studies, Epp, Belleville, and Baukham each independently analyzed Wallace and Burer’s examples (and an additional relevant text that was miss-cited), finding that most of the “exclusive” texts were more plausibly “inclusive.”¹⁴³ Table 4.2 below displays a summary of their findings. The texts are listed: Author, *Title* Ref (category). The texts in with an asterix (*) are examples of ἐπίσημος and a dative but without the ἐν. The texts in bold are proposed

¹⁴⁰ Belleville, 246-247.

¹⁴¹ Kenneth Atkinson translates, “The sons and daughters were in harsh captivity, their neck in a seal, with a mark among the nations.” Kenneth Atkinson, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint 32 Psalms of Solomon*, ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/31-pssal-nets.pdf (accessed Feb 3, 2011).

¹⁴² The data are eight to seven, inclusive. See chart above.

¹⁴³ For in depth and individual argumentations see Belleville, 242-248. See also Epp, 69-78.

as close parallels to Romans 16:7. The texts that are deemed irrelevant are represented on the chart by a strike. The regions where the data should fall to support the inclusivist view are shaded.

Table 4.2

		Inclusive	Exclusive
dative	impersonal	Esth 16:22 (Biblical and Patristic) Mac 11:37 (Biblical and Patristic) Mac 14:48 (Biblical and Patristic) Lucianus, <i>Harmonides</i> 1.17 (Hellenist) Philo, <i>Fug.</i> 10 (Hellenist)	*Lycurgus, <i>Against Leocrates</i> , 129 (Classical)
dative	personal	Lucian, <i>Merc. Cond.</i> , 2.8 (Hellenist) TAM 2.905.1 west wall. coll.2.5.18 (inscription) TAM 2.1-3.838 west wall. coll.3.12 (inscription) TAM 2.1-3.905 west wall. coll. 3.12 (inscription) Fd Xanth 7.76.1.1.1.1.4 (inscription) *Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i> , 976 (Classical) Lucian, <i>Dialogue of the Dead</i> , 438 (Hellenist) Josephus, <i>Jewish War</i> , 2.418 (Hellenist) Lucian, <i>Harmonides</i> , 1.17 (Hellenist)	Pss. Sol. 2:6 (Biblical and Patristic) Euripides, <i>Hippolytus</i> , 103 (Classical)
genitive	impersonal	Pss. Sol. 17.30 (Biblical and Patristic) Mart. Pol. 14.1 (Biblical and Patristic) P.Oxy. 1408 (papyri) P.Oxy. 2705 (papyri) P.Oxy. 2108 (papyri) Galen, <i>Meth. Med.</i> 14.10.242 (Hellenist)	
genitive	personal	3 Macc 6:1 (Biblical and Patristic) Lucian, <i>Peregr.</i> , 6:1 (Hellenist) Herodian, 17 (Hellenist)	

An analysis of the personal data reveals thirteen inclusive (ten of which are dative) and 1 exclusive. The literary examples with the ἐν and a personal dative are inclusive four out of five times. In fact, of all twenty-six examples only two are deemed

plausibly exclusive and just one is inarguably so.¹⁴⁴ Even the uncontested case of exclusivity is shown to be arguably of little relevance due to its historical era. Baukham claims it is quite plausible that when Euripides wrote, (over 500 years before Paul), ἐπίσημος had not yet developed a comparative sense and thus would not be placed in a different category than the terms of this study.¹⁴⁵ The passage itself, while exclusive, does not allow for the “well known to” formula proposed by Wallace and Burer. The result of these re-examinations undeniably argues for an inclusive reading and it is not alone.

The lexicons, grammarians and historical tradition corroborate the inclusive case. Patristic writers uniformly testify that Junia is outstanding among the apostles. Belleville sums it up nicely, “The simple fact is that if native, educated speakers in Greek understood the phrase to be inclusive and Ἰουνίαν to be feminine, the burden of proof lies with those who would claim otherwise.”

Having established that Andronicus and Junia were of note among the apostles, the natural question is, “What is an apostle?” The rudimentary definition of ἀπόστολος is one who is sent. It is scarcely used in extra-biblical material yet the New Testament uses it eighty times. The word itself does not specify the sender, the motive for sending, or the place being sent and yet in the New Testament it is often employed without any such qualifiers.¹⁴⁶ As we will see, within the Christian community ἀπόστολος takes on a

¹⁴⁴ It should be noted that the inclusive sense, by its nature can't be inarguably proven in a “self evident” way while the exclusive sense can. For example, “Barack Obama ἐπίσημοι the presidents of the United States of America.” The clearest sense is that Barack Obama is prominent among the presidents, but a case could be made he is known to them. However, if I were to say, “Barack Obama ἐπίσημοι women.” It is self-evident that this is the exclusive form.

¹⁴⁵ See Epp, 77.

¹⁴⁶ See Appendix C & D.

technical meaning as one sent by Christ to proclaim the gospel. However, its use is not limited to this as it is sometimes employed in the nontechnical sense of messenger, in which case the how, when, by whom and purpose, are supplied.

Most modern Christians associate the word apostle with twelve disciples of Jesus, and indeed, there is good reason for this affiliation. There were twelve men whom were chosen by Jesus to be his apostles.¹⁴⁷ They are to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to obey all the Jesus commanded them (Mt 28:19-20). This commission is authorized by Jesus, who has been give all authority in heaven and on earth.¹⁴⁸ This does not grant them divine authority in a general sense, rather it places the divine stamp of approval on their message concerning Christ (i.e. what they witnessed and heard). After Judas' betrayal and subsequent suicide, there was a need to fill the position. Matthias is chosen amongst a group of men who were with Jesus during his life and present with him post-resurrection. In other words, there existed a group of people who were qualified to attest to the gospel of Jesus Christ but were not considered to have the same exact ministry and apostleship as the twelve (which now includes Matthias). These twelve are frequently called apostles without any qualifying statement in Acts.¹⁴⁹

Closely associated with the twelve is the apostle Paul. Paul is called an apostle only twice outside of his letters and both are in conjuncture with Barnabus.¹⁵⁰ Paul's own explanation and defense of his apostleship reveal a working definition of what it means to

¹⁴⁷ See Mt 10:1-4; Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:13-16; 9:1-10.

¹⁴⁸ Mt 28:18.

¹⁴⁹ Acts 1:26.

¹⁵⁰ Acts 14:4,14.

be an ἀπόστολος. As with the requirements for replacing Judas, being an eye witness of Jesus' resurrection (and thusly receiving a commission from him) is fundamental.¹⁵¹ In this way Paul is the last apostle and one untimely born. Additionally, there are more than just the twelve and Paul who are true apostles of God (or false apostles would not masquerade as such).¹⁵² The designation of the co-referential terms ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολος “super apostles” and ψευδαπόστολοι “false apostles” reveal by contrast that true apostles are sent by Christ. Finally, one's apostleship is authenticated by the message preached and through the sufferings endured (2 Cor 11:16-32). Paul sometimes specifies that he is an apostle ‘of Christ’ but feels equally free to leave off the designation. He employs this same freedom when referencing fellow apostles.¹⁵³

Silas and Timothy are said to be apostles of Christ alongside Paul, able to make demands of the church because of their work in the gospel. Barnabus and Apollos are likewise linked with Paul as apostles without the specification of sender. Barnabus is the only one of these to be designated an apostle in scriptures not authored by Paul.

As introduced earlier, ἀπόστολος can also be used in a non-technical manner. In these situations, the nature of the term demands descriptors for clarity. To say someone is sent begs the questions: by whom? to whom or to where? and for what reason? When using apostle in this manner, Paul is faithful to answer these questions. For example, Paul calls two brothers (fellow Christians), apostles of the churches (2 Cor 8:23). We are aware of the sender (Paul and the churches) where they are sent (Corinth) and why (to collect

¹⁵¹ 1 Cor 9:1; 15:7,8.

¹⁵² D.A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 89-90.

¹⁵³ See Appendix C.

money for the church in Jerusalem). This is also the case with Epaphroditus. He is an ἀπόστολος “of the church” at Philippi, sent to Paul for the purpose of ministering to Paul’s need (Phil 2:25). As with extra-biblical sources, when ἀπόστολος is used to mean ‘one sent’ the context fills in the picture. These are not missionaries in our sense of the word, nor are they necessarily itinerant preachers.¹⁵⁴ These are men sent from a church for a specific reason.

Paul praises both Andronicus and Junia by calling them remarkable among the apostles. The context does not allow for a blanket ‘sent one’ but rather affirms the technical sense. They were in Christ before Paul (a necessary requirement) and have been imprisoned for their faith (evidence of their authenticity). So we can conclude that they have been commissioned by the risen Lord to proclaim the gospel, a task which they do well.

Having arrived at this conclusion, one scholar rejoices that she is simply a missionary, “and women are allowed to proclaim the gospel to unsaved men.”¹⁵⁵ Another reminds readers that an apostle has supreme authority in the church (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20, 4:11).¹⁵⁶ With such dramatically different interpretations, it is necessary to explore the jurisdiction of an apostle of Christ.

We have already noted that Matthias was not the only option for a replacement Judas. There appear to be a number of people with them who had been a disciple of Jesus

¹⁵⁴ Contra Ellis, 186.

¹⁵⁵ Cottrell, 477.

¹⁵⁶ P.W. Barnett, “Apostle,” in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 48.

before his death and after his resurrection.¹⁵⁷ Luke records the commissioning of “the eleven and those who were with them” (Lk 24:33). His subsequent record in Acts testifies that there were disciples other than the eleven through the entirety of Jesus’ ministry. Even still, there were reasons to complete the twelve. First, it was the fulfillment of prophecy.¹⁵⁸ The twelve are undeniably set apart but the dynamics of their authority in relation to the other believers Jesus appeared to is not clear. The twelve remained in Jerusalem for a period of time, where they worked closely with James, the brother of Jesus. Even though James was not one of the twelve, he appears to lead the church in Jerusalem. The twelve exercised authority as members of the council of Jerusalem but the council also consisted of elders. Further, at the council Barnabus and Paul were not afraid to disagree with the twelve on matters related to the interpretation of the gospel. This is not to say that the twelve did not exercise a greater degree of authority! The point is that the degree of authority is not always easy to delineate in scripture. If it is difficult to assess the differentiated leadership of the twelve then certainly the authority of the subsequent apostles is even murkier.

The apostles of Christ appear to have several things in common. First, they travel. Barnabus, Silas, and Timothy have accompanied Paul on his recorded journeys. Given the “go and tell” nature of the commission, it is not surprising that the second thing uniting them is preaching and teaching. This seems fundamental to the role and the teaching does not appear to be limited to unbelievers. It is the church of Corinth that was

¹⁵⁷ In 1 Cor 15:6, Paul records that Jesus appeared to a crowd of five hundred.

¹⁵⁸ Acts 1:15-23.

to judge an apostle based on what they preached.¹⁵⁹ The false/super-apostles were proclaiming a different Jesus not only to unbelievers but to the church that had already heard and believed Paul's version of the gospel. From Paul's own missions we see the continued connections he makes with churches through letters and subsequent visits. Further, an apostle has influence in the church. Within this, they can make demands or expect financial support.¹⁶⁰ When Paul's authority within the church is questioned, his defense is the veracity of his apostleship.¹⁶¹ This should be mitigated by the fact that Paul's ultimate aim with the defense was to protect the true gospel, but nevertheless apostleship and church authority are linked. In this vein, it is often asserted that an apostle has ultimate authority in a church. The argumentation for this stems from two highly debated texts that can reasonably be taken in other ways or referring to the twelve exclusively.¹⁶²

We can't fill out in great detail the leadership or authority levels of apostles. It seems to be a role that heavily involved teaching and that held a degree of sway in the church. Andronicus and Junia's apostleship likely followed the above pattern of evangelistic discipleship. It would not be hermeneutically sound to deprive Junia of any apostolic authority based on her gender. There are many places in scripture where God

¹⁵⁹ 2 Cor 11:4-6.

¹⁶⁰ 1 Cor 9:11-12; 1 Thes 2:6.

¹⁶¹ Although it could be argued that Paul, like the twelve, have a special role in the foundation of the church, Paul's defense is not that he is a special apostle but that he really is the kind of apostle the false apostles are claiming to be.

¹⁶² See Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 88-90.

makes exceptions to seemingly clear and explicit rules.¹⁶³ However, this does not set a precedent for women preachers! The patristic fathers, like John Chrysostom, esteemed Junia as an apostle but did not see her role as antithetical to an exclusively male pastorate. An apostle was a specific and temporary role related to witnessing the resurrection of the Son of God. Like Deborah, Junia had a unique leadership role in advancing the kingdom.

Συγγενής

The descriptor συγγενής means relative, but can mean family or compatriot. It can also describe alliances, or close bonds (between nations and friends). It is widely accepted that Paul is referencing them as fellow Jews, or kinsmen. Paul chooses language that unites and connects them. They share a lineage both physically and spiritually (Rom 9:3-5).

Συναιχμάλωτος

While commonly translated “fellow prisoners” (KJV, ESV) or “in prison with me” (NIV, NLT), συναιχμάλωτος has the technical sense of prisoner of war. While Louw and Nida explain it can be used in a non-technical manner to denote fellow captives or fellow prisoners, others insist that Paul is employing a warfare metaphor. Because σ συναιχμάλωτος has a different root than the term Paul uses to speak of his own imprisonment, a few scholars to doubt whether his “fellow prisoners of war” ever saw the inside of a cell. The cognate nouns and verb are found in the LXX version of Psalm

¹⁶³ Junia can add her name to a long list of exceptions. Moses spoke to God face to face (Ex 33:11) contra man can’t see God and live (Ex 33:20). Ezekiel walked around naked contra the Lam 1:8; Na 3:5 and Lv 18:6. David’s eating of the unlawful showbread is met with approval (Mt 12:1-4). Esther marriage to a pagan non-Israelite is a good thing contra rules not to intermarry (Dt 7:3; Jo 23:12). Elijah ascended into heaven (2 Kgs 2:11) contra no man but Jesus ascending (Jn 3:13).

68:18, which is loosely quoted in Eph 4:8. It is reasoned that Eph 4:8 refers to believers lives being held captive in/by Christ and so συναγχμάλωτος does also. In other words Paul is saying, “my fellow believers.”

Paul uses the term on two other occasions (Phil 23; Col 4:7). Both letters are written while Paul is in prison and attribute the term to people known to be physically with him during his prison stay. The context implies that these were indeed men who were physically imprisoned with him. If συναγχμάλωτος is used in a technical sense then it most likely is not a simply spiritual metaphor.¹⁶⁴ This is consistent with how Paul utilizes “war” terminology.

Paul employs the metaphor of warfare to show that the work of the ministry is a spiritual battlefield. As such, when facing spiritual battles, one must put on the spiritual armor of God (Eph 6:10-17). Paul and his coworkers are soldiers (Phil 2:25, Phlm 2), what happens to them is directly related to the military metaphors. Paul’s working as a tent maker to financially support his missions is related to the military custom of paying one’s own way during service (1 Cor 9:7). There is real money being made and used toward ministry, the term ὀψωνίοις exposes it for what it is, i.e. money for ministry is financial support for a war. Timothy faces real hardships in his ministry but must face them as a soldier (2 Tm 2:3-4). Enduring imprisonment for ministry is actually being a prisoner of a spiritual war.

The prison system of the first century had various levels of discomfort. The severity of the crime as well as the wealth and status of both the perpetrator and the

¹⁶⁴ Notably, Barth and others do not even see the metaphor in Ephesians, much less with the cognate συναγχμάλωτος. Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1974), 431-432.

victim(s) established the severity of the imprisonment. The harshest conditions meant being bound in stocks and chains, designed not only to detain but also to torture, in poorly lit, deficiently ventilated prison cells without the ability to bath, change clothes, or shave. On the other extreme, some prisoners of status were placed under house arrest by someone of superior rank and though often still bound in chains, the freedoms and conditions of the prisoner were greatly increased. In the middle, prisoners were held in prisons or other buildings, often chained to walls or guards, sometimes being allowed to bathe or change clothes, but still receiving only enough food for minimal survival. Prisoners at all levels of incarceration largely depended on their personal wealth or social network for the provision of food and emotional encouragement.¹⁶⁵

The harsh physical conditions aside, being imprisoned affected one's status and reputation in society. In a communal culture, prisoners and former prisoners were seen as social deviants. As such, imprisonment was a source of deep shame, causing many friends and family members to abandon prisoners so as not to incur dishonor. It is in the midst of this honor shame culture that Paul asserts himself a prisoner and calls Andronicus and Junia “συναιχμάλωτος.”

Christians were exposed to the paradoxical nature of Christ's kingdom which often had the effect of changing the tone, implication or outright meaning of words. Prison, chain, bonds, and prisoner are all words associated with the humiliation of imprisonment, words which Paul uses to vindicate his authenticity in Christ. The idea of humiliation is still communicated but it is connected to the suffering, shame, and

¹⁶⁵ B.M. Rapske, “Prison, Prisoner,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 828-829.

humiliation of the cross, which revealed the power of God. Paul understands his own imprisonment as coherent with his ministry and uses it as authentication of his message/apostleship (2 Cor 6:4-5; 11:23).¹⁶⁶ Indeed, he claims superiority in his ministry by way of his superior suffering and more frequent imprisonments (2 Cor 11:23). His time in prison is a mark of his devotion to Christ and his commitment to his calling. It is suffering for the sake of Christ and for the benefit of the Gentiles, to whom his ministry is addressed (Eph 3:1).

While Paul uses a different term when speaking solely of his personal imprisonment than when he speaks of others (συναιχμάλωτος), the sentiment remains the same. Paul calls Andronicus and Junia fellow prisoners not to shame them but to honor them as fellow sufferers for the gospel. The three are united and bonded by a common experience, which is in every way connected to the larger mission of every believer. Andronicus and Junia have endured suffering and shame for the gospel and as such are esteemed (Rom 8:17). Reid remarks, “It could be said that συναιχμάλωτος was a rank of honor that Paul reserved for those who had borne with him the particular affliction of imprisonment for gospel ministry.”¹⁶⁷

Like Prisca and Aquila, Junia and Andronicus form a ministry team. The first century norm is married life and thus, despite Paul’s preference toward celibacy, we should not be surprised to see couples involved in ministry together.¹⁶⁸ This pairing does

¹⁶⁶ This is not to say that he believes that everyone imprisoned for the gospel is an apostle, but only that apostleship measures up in every way necessary including his sufferings for the gospel.

¹⁶⁷ D.G. Reid, “Prison, Prisoner,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. by Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 753.

¹⁶⁸ C. S. Keener, “Family and Household,” 353.

not require that the female's part of the ministry is exclusively toward women (Acts 18:26). Nor is there any implication that the wives' participated and contributed to a lesser degree. Rather, these couples project a unity and interdependency in ministry coherent with the Pauline model (1 Cor 11:11). The man and women are elevated together for their joint kingdom work. Indeed, their mission is not only shared by the pair but is in unity with Paul's mission and that larger work of the church.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Romans 16, the largest canonical list of individuals who participated within the church, demonstrates a powerful female presence. Although only one-third of the names listed belong to women, twice as many women receive praise for their service in the church than do men. Paul encourages female participation in a wide variety of roles. The study of his diction verifies the interdependency of the church and the unity of mission.

Paul uses strong substantives like ἀπόστολος, συνεργός and διάκονος to describe women. However, a discussion of the women in Romans 16 would be incomplete without attention given to the words not used. On the one hand, there is only one example of a ‘leadership’ term, namely εὐαγγελιστής, which Paul ascribes to a male (other than himself) that he does not ascribe to these women.¹⁶⁹ On the other, Paul expounds on the qualifications of ἐπικροπή/ ἐπισκοπος, or ‘overseer,’ ποιμήν, ‘shepherd’ and πρεσβύτερος, ‘elder,’ in ways that appear to limit the position to males.¹⁷⁰ Romans 16 sheds light on the diverse and effectual ministry of some women in the early church, but it does not portray women in the pastoral roles of overseers, shepherds or elders.¹⁷¹ While this must be kept

¹⁶⁹ Paul never uses ποιμήν, πρεσβύτερος, or ἐπικροπή/ ἐπισκοπος to describe a singular person or named persons. His self designations include διδάσκαλος (teacher), and κήρυξ (herald, or preacher). While neither of these words are directly applied to men or women in Paul’s writing, he does tie them in with the role of apostle and thus does not restrict the roles to men (1 Cor 15:11; 2 Cor 11:4).

¹⁷⁰ See Appendix E.

¹⁷¹ It is important when stressing the unique functions of elder to note that the restrictions do not just exclude female participation but also exclude all men in the laity from participating in these functions. Only certain men with certain gifts exercised in a certain manner were given the position of elders. This is not a male/female exclusion but rather an elder/laity exclusion.

in mind, the thrust of the passage is not to designate what women could not do but to positively commend the work that actual women were doing.

Paul honors women repeatedly in the closing section of Romans. He encourages their work in the church and for the gospel. He is unconcerned with establishing a separate vocabulary (lest anyone be confused about a woman's place) and instead specifically chooses terms of inclusion. He does not make a separate list for women and men so as to distinguish one from another but rather he intermixes them. The accolades he piles on women is impressive - sister, deacon, patroness, fellow worker, hard laborers, beloved, kinsmen, fellow prisoner, mother, and apostle. John Chrysostom had only made it to the third women in our list when he proclaims:

“How is this? A woman again is honored and proclaimed victorious! Again we are men put to shame. Or rather, we are not put to shame only, but have even an honor conferred upon us. For an honor we have, in that there are such women among us, but we are put to shame, that we men are left so far behind them. For the women of those days were more spirited than lions.”¹⁷²

Women were active in these churches. Paul is not threatened by this, rather he delights in it. Throughout the passage he never diminishes the work of women in any way. Rather, by describing them in terms of their service and the work they have done in and for the church, Paul grants them the utmost respect. Church leadership was never about controlling the church or gaining importance. Office holders were chosen and respected because of their gifting and ministry. This is because church was not about authority structures, (though these were present and necessary), rather, the church was about

¹⁷² Pederson, 18.

magnifying the name of the Lord. Paul honors these women for doing just that. While other passages must be taken into account when thinking about the authority of these women, it is clear that they 'led' the church by faithfully living out the mission.

Appendix A

New Testament use of συνεργός

Shaded regions are non-Pauline uses. Entries below the bold line represent the substantival use of the cognate verb.

Verse	Referent(s)	Relation to Church in Passage	Related Words	About the Referent
1 Cor 3:9	Paul & Apollos	co-workers leadership through teaching in congregation	servants planting/watering	teachers, missionaries
2 Cor 1:24		co-workers as leaders work for the benefit of the congregation		
Phlm 24	Aristarchus, Demas, Luke & Mark			teachers, missionaries
Col 4:10-11	Mark & Justis (Aristarchus?)	co-workers are a selective group		
Phil 4:2-3	Clement, (Euodia & Syntyche?)	names are in the book of life	labor	
Phlm 1	Philemon			beloved
Rom 16:3	Prisca & Aquilla			hosts house church
1 Thes 3:2	Silas	sent to establish and exhort the church in their faith	brother	teacher, missionary
Rom 16:21	Timothy			teacher, missionary
2 Cor 8:23	Titus	for the benefit of the congregation	partner	teacher, missionary
Rom 16:9	Urbanus			
Phil 2:25	Epaphroditus	(should be honored by congregation)	brother, fellow soldier, messenger, minister	nearly died for work of Christ, risked his life on their behalf
3 Jn 8	Gaius	by supporting workers congregation becomes fellow worker		hosts itinerant preachers (house church?)
2 Cor 6:1	Paul			
1 Cor 16:15-18	Achaicus, Fortunatus & Stephanas	congregation is to be subject to them and every other co-worker	laborer servants	
Mk 16:20	apostles			

Appendix B
New Testament Use of κοπιᾶω as work in/for the Lord

Verse	Referent	Relation to Church	Related Words	About the Referent
1 Cor 16:15-18	Achaicus, Fortunatus & Stephanas	congregation is to be subject to them and every other toiler	servant () co-worker	
Rom 16:6	Mary			
Rom 16:12	Persis			
Rom 16:12	Tryphosa & Tryphaena			
1 Cor 15:10	Paul	for the church as an apostle		apostle, church leader, teacher
Gal 4:11	Paul	for the church as a leader		apostle, church leader, teacher
Phil 2:16	Paul	for the church as a leader		apostle, church leader, teacher
Col 1:29	Paul	for the church as a leader		apostle, church leader, teacher
1 Tm 4:10	Paul and Timothy	in connection with being a good leader		church leader, teacher
1 Tm 5:17	church elders	church leaders	preaching and teaching	church leader, sometimes teacher
1 Thes 5:12		congregation is to respect them (1 of 3 attributes)	work (ἐργον)	

Appendix C
New Testament Use of ἀπόστολος and Its Qualifiers with Reference to Identifiable People

Shaded regions are non-Pauline

Person	Verse	Qualifiers
Apollos/Paul	1 Cor 4:9	none
Barnabus/Paul	Acts 14:4	none
Barnabus/Paul	Acts 14:14	none
Barnabus/Paul	1 Cor 9:5	none
James	Gal 1:19	none
Paul	Rom 1:1	none
Paul	1 Cor 9:1	none
Paul	1 Cor 15:9	none
Paul	1 Tm 2:7	none
Paul	2 Tm 1:11	none
Silas/Timothy	1 Thes 2:7	“of Christ”
Paul	1 Cor 1:1	“of Christ”
Paul	2 Cor 1:1	“of Christ”
Paul	Eph 1:1	“of Christ”
Paul	Col 1:1	“of Christ”
Paul	1 Tm 1:1	“of Christ”
Paul	2 Tm 1:1	“of Christ”
Paul	Ti 1:1	“of Christ”
Christ	Heb 3:1	<i>“of our confession”</i>
Paul	Gal 1:1	“through Jesus Christ”
Paul	Rom 11:13	“to the gentiles”
Paul	1 Cor 9:2	“to you” “to others”
Epaphritus	Phil 2:25	“your” [the church]

Appendix D
Pauline Use of ἀπόστολος and Its Qualifiers without Reference to Identifiable People

Verse	Qualifier	Referent
1 Cor 15:7	none	last group Jesus appeared to
Eph 2:20	none	
Eph 4:11	none	
2 Cor 11:5	ὑπερλίαν	people proclaiming a false gospel
2 Cor 12:11	ὑπερλίαν	people proclaiming a false gospel
2 Cor 11:13	“false”	people proclaiming a false gospel
Gal 1:17	“before me” [before Paul]	
Eph 3:5	“his” [Christ’s] “holy”	
1 Cor 12:29	implied “in the church”	
1 Cor 12:28	“in the church”	
2 Cor 11:13	“of Christ”	
2 Cor 8:23	“of the church”	Two unnamed “brothers”
2 Cor 12:12	“true”	

Appendix E
Pauline Use of Leadership Terms not Found in Romans 16

With Reference to Identifiable People

Word	Referent	Verse(s)
διδάσκαλος	Paul	1 Tm 2:7; 2 Tm 1:11
κῆρυξ	Paul	1 Tm 2:7; 2 Tm 1:11
εὐαγγελιστής	Timothy	2 Tm 4:5

Without Reference to Identifiable People

Word	Verse	Use of the Word	Gender?
διδάσκαλος	Rom 2:20	Jews are given the law and able to instruct other on the truths revealed concerning God	
διδάσκαλος	1 Cor 12:28,29; Eph 4:11	Teaching is among the giftings of the Holy Spirit given to particular believers for the benefit of the church. Christ gave teachers not gift of teaching in Eph 4:11.	
διδάσκαλος	2 Tm 4:3	There are false teachers who can/will lead believers astray.	
ἐπικροπή	1 Tm 3:1	It is a noble office to aspire to.	
ἐπίσκοπος	1 Tm 3:2	Overseers must meet moral qualifications and be above reproach. The contextual contrast b/w overseers and deacons suggests that overseers are involved in preaching and teaching.	Context implies male exclusivity
ἐπίσκοπος	Phil 1:1	Paul recognizes the unity of the church and also the order in his greeting. Elders and deacons have been appointed at Philippi.	
ἐπίσκοπος	Tit 1:7	Overseers are entrusted with God's word and is involved in giving instruction in sound doctrine. Overseers must be above reproach.	Context implies male exclusivity
πρεσβύτερος	1 Tm 5:17	The job entails directing the affairs of the church and at least some elders are involved in preaching and teaching.	
πρεσβύτερος	1 Tm 5:19	Elders are not above rebuke, they are models for the church and are to be held accountable	
πρεσβύτερος	Tit 1:5	Elders are to be appointed in every church as a matter of church order	Context implies male exclusivity
ποιμήν	Eph 4:11	Among the people given to the church by Christ and is paired with teaching	

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