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An Investigation of Prominent Christian Women in the Early Church

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An Investigation of Junia as a Prominent Christian Woman According to Romans 16

Lacey Pettigrew

I. Explanation of Title and Method of Production

This thesis only begins the exploration of women in the New Testament by investigating Junia's role and importance to the Christian faith and church

This thesis seeks to understand exegetical, and briefly, historical, matters regarding Junia.

- Exegetically through examining the context and interpretation of Junia's mention in Romans 16:7
- Historically through evaluating the understanding of Junia throughout the translation process from the New Testament church to present

II. Thesis Outline

Introduction of Romans 16

- The function and purpose of a greeting passage, such as Romans 16:1-16
- Synopsis and identification of the names mentioned in Romans 16:1-16 in accordance with their specific roles drawn out by Paul
- Concluding thoughts on mentioned names and roles - statistics and observations

Junia

- Justification of researching Junia over other mentioned women in Romans 16:1-16
- Overview of the Junia/Junias debate
- Analysis of how Bible translations have dealt with *Ἰουνία/Ἰουνιά*
- Exegetical matters regarding Junia's mention by Paul in Romans 16:7
- Junia's importance and contribution to the New Testament church

Conclusion

III. Introduction of Romans 16

Function of a greeting

- The inclusion of greetings were commonly found at the end of ancient letters - Paul (who wrote many of the letters we have in the New Testament) wrote many such greetings
- In his greeting section that spans over sixteen verses, Paul commends Phoebe, urges the church in Rome to greet various individuals, and sends greetings to the church in Rome from others
- In "no other letter does Paul even come close to the number of personal greetings he asked to be conveyed" than in Romans 16:1-16
- Paul did not establish the church in Rome, nor had he ever visited prior to his authorship of this letter
 - Greeting were meant to establish a personal relationship before a formal visit was to be made
 - Greetings would have also enlisted the help of those mentioned to prepare for the apostle's soon anticipated arrival as well as throughout his stay
 - His greeting to many revealed relationships and indicated the legitimacy of his gospel through his mention of many prominent and respected believers that lived in Rome

Recognition of masculine and feminine names alongside their respective roles

- Paul's greetings include both men and women, both slave and free, both Jew and Gentile. Perhaps these greetings were reminiscent of Galatians 3:28 in which Paul writes that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female."
- Excluding groups, Paul refers to 10 individual females and 17 individual males by name
 - The first two named are women

- Of the 10 women that Paul named, half of them are described as "working" or "workers" in either Christ Jesus who is the Lord (Prisca, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis) or for the church of Rome (Mary)
 - “κοπιῶ” - a verb meaning to do wearisome labor, or labor to extreme fatigue
 - Paul uses this word to describe his own ministry in Colossians 1:29
 - “for this I [Paul] κοπιῶ,” and in 1 Timothy 4:10 he says, “for to this end we κοπιῶμεν.”
- Of the 17 men that are named, only two are described as “fellow workers” of the apostles (Aquila and Urbanus)
 - “συνεργός” - an adjective designating a person who participates in the same activity of oneself

Table 1
Romans 16:1-16 by Verse from Greek (NA28) to English (ESV)

Συνίστημι ὁδὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὗσαν ὁ ¹ [καί] διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς*,	1	I commend to you our sister Phoebe , a servant of the church at Cenchreae,
ἵνα ἑαυτὴν προσδέξησθε ἢ ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἁγίων καὶ παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρῆσις πράγματι·* καὶ γὰρ ἑαυτὴ ἑπροστάτις πολλῶν ἐγενήθη καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ ² .	2	that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.
Ἀσπάσασθε Ἡρίσκαν καὶ Ἀκύλαν τοὺς συνεργοὺς μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ³ *	3	Greet Prisca and Aquila , my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
οἵτινες ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς μου τὸν ἑαυτῶν τράχηλον ὑπέθηκαν, οἷς οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος εὐχαριστῶ ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἐθνῶν,	4	who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.
⁴ καὶ τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίαν ⁵ *. ἀσπάσασθε Ἐπαίνετον τὸν ἀγαπητὸν μου, ὃς ἐστὶν ἡ ἀπαρχὴ τῆς Ἀσίας ἑεῖς Χριστόν ⁶ *.	5	Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus , who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.
ἀσπάσασθε Ἡμαριαν, ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἑεῖς ὑμᾶς ⁷ .	6	Greet Mary , who has worked hard for you.
ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνίαν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ ἑσυναίχμαλῶτους μου, οἵτινες εἰσὶν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις ⁸ , οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἢ ἐν Χριστῷ ⁹ *.	7	Greet Andronicus and Junia , my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.
ἀσπάσασθε Ἀμπλιᾶτον τὸν ἀγαπητὸν ὁμου ἐν κυρίῳ.	8	Greet Ampliatius , my beloved in the Lord.
ἀσπάσασθε Οὐρβανὸν τὸν συνεργὸν ἡμῶν ἐν ἑΧριστῷ καὶ Στάχυν τὸν ἀγαπητὸν μου.	9	Greet Urbanus , our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys .
ἀσπάσασθε Ἀπελλῆν τὸν δόκιμον ἐν Χριστῷ. ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοβούλου*	10	Greet Apelles , who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.
ἀσπάσασθε Ἡρωδίωνα τὸν συγγενῆ μου. ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ναρκίσσου τοὺς ὄντας ἐν κυρίῳ*.	11	Greet my kinsman Herodion . Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.
ἀσπάσασθε Τρύφαιναν καὶ Τρυφῶσαν τὰς κοπιώσας ἐν κυρίῳ. ἀσπάσασθε Περσίδα τὴν ἀγαπητὴν, ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἐν κυρίῳ*.	12	Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa . Greet the beloved Persis , who has worked hard in the Lord.
ἀσπάσασθε Ρουφον τὸν ἐκλεκτὸν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐμοῦ.	13	Greet Rufus , chosen in the Lord; also his mother who has been a mother to me as well.
ἀσπάσασθε Ἀσύγκριτον, Φλέγοντα, Ἑρμῆν, Πατροβᾶν, Ἑρμᾶν καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀδελφοὺς.	14	Greet Asyncritus , Phlegon , Hermes , Patrobas , Hermas , and the brothers who are with them.
ἀσπάσασθε Φιλόλογον καὶ ἑΙουλίαν, Νηρέον καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἑΟλυμπᾶν καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς πάντας ἁγίους.	15	Greet Philologus , Julia , Nereus and his sister , and Olympas , and all the saints who are with them.
ἀσπάσασθε ἀλλήλους ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ*. Ἄσπάζονται ὑμᾶς αἱ ἐκκλησίαι πᾶσαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ. ¹⁶	16	Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

IV. Junia

“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.”

Justification of researching Junia

- Junia is one of the women eight women to be expounded upon further than a simple greeting by Paul
 - Noted alongside her husband, but possessing the same roles and responsibilities
 - Paul speaks of Junia’s help to his missionary journeys as well as her contribution to the spread of the gospel
 - She was a fellow prisoner - meaning she had been arrested on at least one occasion, for participating in the same work as Paul
 - Known to the apostles
 - In Christ before Paul, perhaps a closer eyewitness to Christ than the apostle himself
- It seemed fitting to highlight the role, function, and importance of Junia much in the same way that Paul did in this letter

Junia/Junias debate

- Used in the singular accusative form, *Ἰουνίαν* can be feminine (*Ἰουνία*, -ας, translated “Junia”) or masculine (*Ἰουνιᾶν*, -ᾶ, or *Ἰουνιᾶς*, -α – both translated “Junias”)
 - Issue: Greek manuscripts were not accented until the seventh century
- Masculine arguments
 - Contracted name theory
 - The context of being noted among the apostles necessitates a masculine name
- Arguments against a masculine rendering
 - This shortened form of *Junias* never occurred in any extant in Greek or Latin documents of the NT milieu
- Feminine arguments
 - The female Latin name Junia occurs more than 250 times in the Greek and Latin inscriptions found in Rome alone
 - Junia is the most natural and easiest way to read *Ἰουνίαν*
 - It was a common Roman name for noble members of the clan of Junia and for freed slaves and their descendants
 - Feminine translation was understood from Bible translations dating back to 1516

Analyzing how Bible translations have dealt with *Ἰουβία/Ἰουβιάων*

-Tables 1 and 2 show that of the 38 translation editions, referenced from 1516 to 1913, 28 editions presumed the feminine reading of *Ἰουβία* with only 1 having an alternate reading mentioned in the apparatus

-Not 1 definite masculine reading without an alternate reading mentioned was present

-How, after 400 years of tradition, can the unambiguous masculine form appear in this way?

-No new manuscriptal evidence was found - there was no need to shift away from this feminine understanding of *Ἰουβία* in Romans 16:7

-English translations are just as inconsistent and unexplained (see table 3)

Table 1
***Ἰουβίαν* (Romans 16:7) in Greek New Testaments up to the Nestle Editions**

Edition	<i>Ἰουβίαν</i> (presumed feminine)	<i>Ἰουβιᾶν</i> (definitely masculine)	Alternate reading in apparatus?
Erasmus (1516)	X		(No apparatus)
Melanchthon (preface, 1545)	X		(No apparatus)
Stephanus (1551) 1576 [apud Hoole, 1674]	X		No
Plantin (1584) 1619	X		(No apparatus)
Elzevir, (1624) 1633 [first “Textus Receptus”]	X		(No apparatus)
Oxford Sheldonian (1675)	X		No
John Gregory (Oxford) (1703)	X		No
Mill (1707) + Mill/Küster, 1710	X		No
Van Maastricht (G.D.T.M.D.) (1711)	X		No
Cyprian (1715)	X		(No apparatus)
Bowyer (1715) 1760	X		(No apparatus)
Wettstein (1751-1752)	X		No
Griesbach (1777) 1796-1806 + 1809	X		No
Knapp (1797) 1829	X		No
Alexander/Isa. Thomas (first American) (1800)	X		(No apparatus)
Schott (1805) 1811	X		No
Pickering (smallest NT) (1828)	X		(No apparatus)
Lloyd (1828) 1873 [TR]	X		(No apparatus)
Lachmann (1831)	X		No
Scholz (1836)	X		No
Tischendorf (1841) 1869-1872	X		No
Alford (1844-1857) + 1888		X	Yes
Buttmann (1856) 1862 + 1898	X		No
Tregelles (1857-1879) 1870	X		No
Scrivener (1859) 1906	X		No
Emphatic Diaglott (Wilson) (1864) 1942	X**		No
Westcott-Hort (1881)	X		Not in notes
Gebhardt (1881) + 1886	X		No
Oxford Greek (behind RV) (1881)	X		No
Critical New Testament (1882)	X		No
Weymouth, Resultant NT (1886) 1905	X		Yes
Baljon (1898)	X		No

Table 2
Ἰουβιαν (Romans 16:7) in Greek New Testaments from the Nestle to the Present

Edition	<i>Ἰουβιαν</i> (presumed feminine)	<i>Ἰουβιᾶν</i> (definitely masculine)	Alternate reading in apparatus?
Nestle (Eberhard) (1898)	X		No
Nestle (Eberhard) (1899)	X		No
Nestle (Eberhard) (1901-1912) 1901 + 1906	X		No
British and Foreign Bible Society (1904)	X		?
Souter (1910) + 1947	X		No
von Soden (1913)	X		No
[Eberhard Nestle † 1913] Nestle (Erwin) (1914-1923) 1920	X		No
Nestle (Erwin) 1927		X	No
Nestle (Erwin) (1930-1952) 1936 + 1941 + 1952		X	Yes <i>-iav</i> [HTW]
Merk (1933) 1944 + 1957 + 1984 + 1992		X	No
Bover (1943) + 1968		X	No
Nestle-Aland (1956-1963) 1957 + 1960 + 1963		X	Yes <i>-iav</i> [HTW]
Kilpatrick (BFBS) (1958)		X	Yes
Tasker (1964)		X	Yes
UBS (1966) + 1968		X	No
Bover-O'Callaghan (1977)		X	No
[Erwin Nestle † 1972] Nestle-Aland (1979 [= text of UBS 1975])		X	No
UBS (1975)		X	Yes
Nolli (1981)		X	No
Hodges-Farstad (1982) [Majority text = TR]	X		No
Robinson-Pierpont (1991) [unaccented Majority text]	-	-	
Nestle-Aland (1993 [=text of UBS 1993])		X	Yes
UBS (1993)		X	Yes
[Kurt Aland † 1994] Nestle-Aland Jubilee Edition (1998 ^{5th rev. printing}) + 2001 ^{8th rev. printing} UBS (1998 ^{3rd printing}) + 2001 ^{5th printing} [= text of NA 1998, above]	X X		No No

Table 3
Junia/Junias (Romans 16:7) in English New Testaments from Tyndale to the Present

Edition	Feminine (Junia)	Masculine (Junias)	Alternate reading in notes?
Tyndale (1525/1534)	X		(No notes)
Cranmer (1539)	X		(No notes)
“Great Bible,” Cromwell (1539)	X		(No notes)
Geneva Bible (1560)	X		(No notes)
Bishops Bible (1568)	X		(No notes)
Rheims (1582) [see 1899 ed. below]	Julia		(No notes)
KJV: = Authorized Version (1611)	X		No

Two centuries intervene here, a period in which the KJV and also the Rheims version were dominant, with reissues and reversions of both. Numerous new translations appeared also.

Dickinson, <i>Productions</i> (1883) 1837		X	(No notes)
Emphasized Bible (Rotherham) (1872) 1878 1893		X	No
Variorum NT (1876) + 1888	X		Yes
RV: Revised Version (1881)		X	Yes
Rheims: American ed. (1899) [cf. 1582 above]		X	(No notes)
ASV: American Standard Version (1901) [American version of RV]		X	Yes
Goodspeed (1902), American Trans. (1923) + 1948		X	No
Complete Bible (Fenton) (1903)		X	No
Weymouth (1903) 1929	X		Yes
Modern Reader’s Bible (1907)		X	No
Moffatt (1913) + 1922		X	(No notes)
Lamsa (NT, 1940)	X		(No notes)
Ronald Knox (1945)		X	(No notes)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1946)		X	No
Phillips (1947-1958)		X	(No notes)
Amplified New Testament (1958)		X	(No notes)
NEB: New English Bible (1961)		X	Yes
Noli (1961)		X	(No notes)
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1963)		X	Yes
JB: Jerusalem Bible (1966)		X	No
GNB: Good News Bible = TEV (1966)		X	Yes (“June”!)
NAB: New American Bible (1970)	X		No
LB: Living Bible (1971)		X	No
NIV: New International Version (1973)		X	No
NKJV: New King James Version (1979)	X		No
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible (1985)		X	No
New Century Version (1987)	X		No
New American Bible, revised NT (1987)	X		No
REB: Revised English Bible (1989; rev. of NEB)	X		No
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)	X		Yes
The Message (1993)		X	No
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)		X	No
Oxford Inclusive Version (1995)	X		Yes
New Living Translation (1996)	X		Yes

Exegeting Junia's Mention in the New Testament

- Being a “kinsmen” means that Junia was Jewish alongside Paul
- Being a “fellow prisoner” means that Junia was once imprisoned for the same reason as Paul - that is for preaching and teaching the Gospel of Christ
- Relation to the apostles
 - ESV: *well known* to the apostles
 - NIV: *outstanding among* the apostles
 - CSB: *noteworthy in the eyes of* the apostles
 - Issue is understanding the adjective use of *episēmos* and whether the word is functioning as a comparative or relative adjective
 - Earliest commentators understood Paul as identifying Andronicus and Junia to be apostles
 - Although this designation does not place them as level with the twelve
- Greek term *apostolos*
 - Designates an “envoy of Jesus Christ commissioned directly by him or by other apostles; normally someone who has been taught directly by Jesus and who is invested with the authority to speak on his behalf” (Brannan, ἀπόστολος).
 - Used elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 15:7 in reference to the post-resurrection Christ appearing to “James, then to all the apostles” and in 2 Corinthians 8:23 when Paul speaks of Titus as a “partner and fellow worker” amongst the brothers of the church in Corinth being *ἀπόστολοι* of the churches
 - Apostolos* refers to both the traditional apostles and other individuals who were valuable in the early church - such is the case with Titus and Junia
 - Individuals outside of the traditional apostles did not hold the same authority (that is, Titus and Junia do not function as apostles in the way that Paul and James did)
 - Scholars do not debate that there were members of the early church outside of the Twelve that possessed apostolic authority
- As a female apostle, Junia would have directed her focus and energy toward other women
 - A married woman would have access to areas in which men and husbands were not allowed
- Being “in Christ before” Paul meant that Junia was a convert to Christianity before Paul's Damascus road experience
 - This meant that Junia was a leader/apostle for a while before Paul wrote this greeting

V. Conclusion (copied directly from this thesis paper)

This thesis has investigated Junia and her role as an important woman to the beginnings of the New Testament church through historical and exegetical matters. It began with addressing the purpose of a greeting in any given ancient letter – which was to establish a relationship with those addressed. As an apostle, sent directly by the Christ himself, it was Paul’s responsibility to establish these connections with churches across the Ancient Near East in order to bring the news of the resurrected Christ to them in a way that they would then accept it. Romans 16 is by far the longest greeting written that can be found in the New Testament. In his sixteen verse greeting, Paul names 27 individuals – 10 of those being women and 17 of them men. In a culture where women were not respected much beyond their status as a wife and/or mother, Paul’s mention of 10 women by name is extraordinarily telling. Paul meant his words in Galatians 3:28. There is neither male nor female, for all are workers in Christ.

There has been much ink spilled over the gender of Junia, but the historical evidence is overwhelming in concluding that Junia was indeed the first female apostle. The understanding of Junia as a female dominated the earliest understandings of the oldest Greek manuscripts available. It was not until the 1927 Nestle edition of the Greek New Testament appeared that the status of Junia as a woman had ever been completely negated – not to mention that the editors of this text offered no textual evidence for such a change to the Greek text. It was that 1927 Nestle edition of the Greek New Testament that began the, still present, debate on Junia’s gender nearly one-hundred years later after a feminine reading was held for well over a millennium. Junia was a woman when Paul wrote of her and Junia should still be recognized as a woman today – a woman apostle.

Junia was a Jewish Christian who quite possibly knew Jesus personally, as she was “in Christ before” Paul (Romans 16:7). Although not embodying the same apostleship as Paul or Barnabas, Junia was an apostle, nonetheless. Junia was known among and to the apostles. Her function as an apostle was directed towards the women. Junia would have ministered to the widows and orphans of Rome being able to access areas in which men were not allowed for the purposes of reaching these outcasts with the news of the resurrected Christ. She was responsible for teaching and bringing up disciples much in Rome much in the same way that Paul did through his missionary journeys. As apostles, both Junia and Paul were advocating for the same cause – spreading the Gospel to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth as Jesus commissioned his followers to do before his ascension. The work of Junia in Rome contributed to the successes of the New Testament church locally to her home and nationally through Paul’s ministry as well.

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