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

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# **SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL**

This Honors Thesis entitled

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

written by

**Lacey Pettigrew**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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04/20/2022

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## ROMANS 16 INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

### Function of a Greeting

The inclusion of commendations and greetings were commonly found at the end of ancient letters. Having written many of the ancient letters found in the New Testament, the apostle Paul would have written many such commendations and greetings. Within the first sixteen verses of this chapter, that is just the greeting section of the letter's final chapter, Paul accomplishes three things – he commends Phoebe, urges the church in Rome to greet various individuals as well as one another, and sends greetings to the church in Rome from others. These topics are also found in at least one other letter of Paul's, contributing to the evidence that Paul did in fact have authorship over the last chapter of the book of Romans, a point that some scholars would contest.

In “no other letter does Paul even come close to the number of personal greetings he asks to be conveyed” in Romans 1:1-16.<sup>1</sup> Typically ending his letters in this fashion, the lengthy greeting in Romans was necessitated by Paul's lack of a prior visit to the church in Rome. Its length was necessary to “establish a more personal relationship,” to the church before making a formal visit.<sup>2</sup> Paul's greetings had many functions. The greetings would have enlisted the help of those mentioned upon his anticipated arrival in Rome while showing the apostle's “extensive knowledge of the Roman church.”<sup>3</sup> Schreiner also mentioned that Paul's greeting to so many people functioned to reveal the relationships that characterized the Christian community and to “indicate the legitimacy of his gospel” by his naming of prominent and respected believers in

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2 ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 928.

<sup>2</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 402.

<sup>3</sup> Osborne, 404.

Rome.<sup>4</sup> With the intentions of indicating the legitimacy of the gospel that he was on mission to share by being sure to mention not just men, but women, it is clear that Paul saw women as foundationally important to the success of the New Testament church and its shared gospel alongside Paul.

### **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." An examination of the Greek text alongside the English translation can help bring attention to the gender of individuals mentioned in Paul's greetings (see Table 1). Indicated by pink highlighting are names that are rendered feminine in the Greek text and likewise represent females in the English translation of their respective names. Indicated by blue highlighting are names that are rendered masculine in the Greek text and likewise represent males in the English translation of their respective names. Excluding counts of groups mentioned,<sup>5</sup> Paul refers to 10 females and 17 males by name – the first two of which are women.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018), 762.

<sup>5</sup> The church in Prisca and Aquila's house (v. 5), Aristobulus's household members (v. 10), Narcissus's household members (v. 11), the brothers of Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, and Hermas (v. 14), and the saints alongside Philologus, Julia, Nereus, Nereus's sister, and Olympas (v. 15).

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

Συνίστημι ὁδὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὗσαν ὁ <sup>1</sup> [καὶ] διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς*,	<b>1</b>	I commend to you our sister <b>Phoebe</b> , a servant of the church at Cenchreae,
ἵνα αὐτὴν προσδέξησθε ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἁγίων καὶ παραστήτε αὐτὴ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρῆζη πράγματι·* καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴ ἑταίρις πολλῶν ἐγενήθη καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ <sup>1</sup> .	<b>2</b>	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.
Ἀσπάσαθε Ἰρίσκαν καὶ Ἀκύλαν τοὺς συνεργούς μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ <sup>1</sup> *	<b>3</b>	Greet <b>Prisca</b> and <b>Aquila</b> , 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,	<b>4</b>	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.
<sup>1</sup> καὶ τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίαν <sup>6</sup> · ἀσπάσαθε Ἐπαίνετον τὸν ἀγαπητόν μου, ὅς ἐστιν ἑταίρις τῆς Ἀσίας ἑὶς Χριστόν*.	<b>5</b>	Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved <b>Epaenetus</b> , who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.
ἀσπάσαθε Μαρίαν, ἣτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν εἰς ὑμᾶς <sup>1</sup> .	<b>6</b>	Greet <b>Mary</b> , who has worked hard for you.
ἀσπάσαθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνίαν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινες εἰσι ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις <sup>1</sup> , οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ*.	<b>7</b>	Greet <b>Andronicus</b> and <b>Junia</b> , my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.
ἀσπάσαθε Ἀμπλιᾶτον τὸν ἀγαπητόν μου ἐν κυρίῳ.	<b>8</b>	Greet <b>Ampliatius</b> , my beloved in the Lord.
ἀσπάσαθε Οὐρβανὸν τὸν συνεργὸν ἡμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ καὶ Στάχυν τὸν ἀγαπητόν μου.	<b>9</b>	Greet <b>Urbanus</b> , our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved <b>Stachys</b> .
ἀσπάσαθε Ἀπελλῆν τὸν δόκιμον ἐν Χριστῷ. ἀσπάσαθε τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοβούλου*	<b>10</b>	Greet <b>Apelles</b> , who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.
ἀσπάσαθε Ἡρωδίουνα τὸν συγγενῆ μου. ἀσπάσαθε τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ναρκίσσου τοὺς ὄντας ἐν κυρίῳ*.	<b>11</b>	Greet my kinsman <b>Herodion</b> . Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.
ἀσπάσαθε Τρύφαιναν καὶ Τρυφῶσαν τὰς κοπιώσας ἐν κυρίῳ. ἀσπάσαθε Περσίδα τὴν ἀγαπητὴν, ἣτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἐν κυρίῳ*.	<b>12</b>	Greet those workers in the Lord, <b>Tryphaena</b> and <b>Tryphosa</b> . Greet the beloved <b>Persis</b> , who has worked hard in the Lord.
ἀσπάσαθε Ροῦφον τὸν ἐκλεκτὸν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐμοῦ.	<b>13</b>	Greet <b>Rufus</b> , chosen in the Lord; also <b>his mother</b> who has been a mother to me as well.
ἀσπάσαθε Ἀσύγκριτον, Φλέγοντα, Ἐρμῆν, Πατροβᾶν, Ἐρμῆν καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀδελφοὺς.	<b>14</b>	Greet <b>Asyncritus</b> , <b>Phlegon</b> , <b>Hermes</b> , <b>Patrobas</b> , <b>Hermas</b> , and the brothers who are with them.
ἀσπάσαθε Φιλόλογον καὶ Ἰουλίαν, Νηρέα <sup>1</sup> καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ Ὀλυμπᾶν καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς πάντας ἁγίους.	<b>15</b>	Greet <b>Philologos</b> , <b>Julia</b> , <b>Nereus</b> and <b>his sister</b> , and <b>Olympas</b> , and all the saints who are with them.
ἀσπάσαθε ἀλλήλους ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ*. <sup>6</sup> Ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς αἱ ἐκκλησίαι πᾶσαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ. <sup>6</sup>	<b>16</b>	Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

<sup>6</sup> Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), Romans 16:1–16.

## **Feminine Names and Roles**

The first person mentioned, Phoebe, is commended by Paul whereas all others mentioned are greeted. Phoebe is also referred to as a “sister,” “servant,” and “patron,” while the apostle explicitly instructs the church in Rome to welcome and help her (Rom. 16:1-2). Next to be mentioned is Prisca and Aquila – a married couple who are both referred to as “fellow workers” of Paul as they have “risked their necks for [Paul’s] life” (Rom. 16:3-4). Paul not only gives thanks to this couple, but makes note that all the churches of the Gentiles likewise give thanks to Prisca and Aquila. Most likely, thanks is given for their work in Christ’s name through church that meets in their house (Rom. 16:5). The third woman to be mentioned is Mary who has “worked hard for you.” “You,” refers to the addressee of the letter, which is the church in Rome (Rom. 16:6). The next to be mentioned is Junia, but as the focal point of this thesis, Junia will be given a more extensive analysis in a later section.

Another female is not mentioned again until Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who were “workers in the Lord” (Rom. 16:12). They are mentioned alongside the “beloved” Persis who has also “worked hard in the Lord” (Rom. 16:12). The next female to be mentioned was Rufus’s mother. No explicit name was given, but she was mentioned as a “mother to [Paul] as well” (Rom. 16:13). The last two women to be mentioned are Julia and Nereus’s sister. In addition to these two women, Paul extends greetings to “all the saints who are with them” – a group which, due to lack of evidence, cannot be restricted to a female only group (Rom. 16:15).

## **Masculine Names and Roles**

Besides Aquila, Prisca’s husband, Epaphroditus was the first man mentioned in this passage. As the first man mentioned by himself, Epaphroditus was Paul’s “first convert to Christ in Asia”

and is “beloved” to the apostle (Rom. 16:5b). The second married couple greeted by Paul is Andronicus and Junia – who are both equally referred to as Paul’s “kinsmen,” and “fellow prisoners,” being “well known to the apostles,” and “in Christ before [Paul]” (Rom. 16:7). English translations vary in the translation of οἵτινες εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, but that discussion will be included under the section of this thesis regarding Junia.<sup>7</sup> Romans 16:8-11 greet five men – Ampliatus, who is Paul’s “beloved in the Lord,” Urbanus, who is a “fellow worker in Christ,” Stachys, who is also “beloved,” Apelles, who is “approved in Christ,” and Herodion, who is a “kinsman” to Paul (Rom. 16:7-11). Also mentioned to be greeted are the families of Aristobulus and Narcissus. The next male to be mentioned is Rufus who is mentioned as “chosen in the Lord,” alongside his mother – as discussed in the previous section (Rom. 16:13). V. 14 greets five individual men – Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, and Hermas, as well as “the brothers who are with them” (Rom. 16:14). The last three men to be greeted in Paul’s greetings are Philologs, Nereus, and Olympas as well as all the saints who are with them” (Rom. 16:15). This group cannot be assumed to be only men due to a lack of evidence of the identity of the included individuals.

### **Concluding Thoughts on the Mentioned Feminine and Masculine Names and Their Associated Roles**

After recognizing all individuals of whom Paul mentioned by name according to their respective genders, there are some conclusions that need to be made. Of the ten women that Paul names, half of them are described as working either in Christ Jesus who is the Lord (Prisca, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis) or for the church of Rome (Mary). Of the seventeen men that

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<sup>7</sup> Kurt Aland et al., Romans 16:7.



Paul names, only two are described as fellow workers of the apostles in Christ Jesus (Aquila and Urbanus). The Greek word used for the men being referred to as fellow workers is “συνεργός,” an adjective designating a “person who participates in the same activity as oneself.”<sup>8</sup> However, with the exception of Junia, all of the women mentioned as workers are designated with the Greek word “κοπιάω,” a verb meaning “to do wearisome labor, or labor to extreme fatigue,” a term that is much more extensive and contributive by definition than the mentioned men.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere in his letters, Paul used the same Greek word “κοπιάω,” to describe his own ministry. Colossians 1:29 reads, “for this I [Paul] κοπιῶ,” and in 1 Timothy 4:10 he says, “for to this end we κοπιῶμεν.” Those described as contributing most to the church were clearly women based on Paul’s choice of words.

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<sup>8</sup> Rick Brannan, “συνεργός,” in *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Brannan, “κοπιάω.”

## **JUNIA**

“<sup>7</sup>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 was selected as a New Testament person of interest within Paul’s letter to the church in Rome due to her extended mention in these greetings. Noted alongside her husband Andronicus, Junia is a kinsman and fellow prisoner of Paul. Paul speaks of Junia’s help and contribution to his missionary journeys and the spread of the gospel. Being a fellow prisoner implies that Junia was arrested, on at least one occasion, for participating in the same work as Paul in spreading the good news of Christ. Not only was Junia a kinsman and fellow prisoner of Paul’s, but she was also well known to the apostles – more on explaining what this phrase means in the exegesis of Junia’s mention in Romans 16:7. Junia is also noted as being in Christ before Paul and perhaps then a closer eyewitness to Christ than the apostle himself. Unlike the others whom Paul greeted by name, Junia is greeted as well as expounded on through her role in the New Testament church. 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**

Romans 16:7 has been a chief verse in the exploration of and debate over the appropriateness of women within Christian communities. It is “the one place where Paul used the word ‘apostle’ to describe a woman.”<sup>10</sup> The debate is rooted in whether the Greek form for this name is feminine or masculine. Used in the singular accusative form, *Ἰουλίαν* can be feminine

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<sup>10</sup> Epp, 21.

(*Ἰουνία*, -ας, translated “Junia”) or masculine (*Ἰουνιᾶν*, -ᾶ, or *Ἰουνιᾶς*, -α – both translated “Junias”). Differentiating between the masculine and feminine form of *Ἰουνίαν* should be as easy as identifying the accentuation or lack thereof over the “α.” However, the Greek manuscripts were not accented prior to the seventh century, leaving much uncertainty regarding the gender of *Ἰουνίαν*.

In the Junia/Junias debate, there are two main arguments from the masculine (Junias) side – the first is the contracted name theory and the second is based on a, rather incorrect, assumption that the surrounding context of Romans 16:7 necessitates a masculine name. The remaining paragraphs in this section follow a pattern of a presentation of the masculine argument, an evidence based disproof of such masculine argument, concluded by an evidence based presentation in favor of the feminine translation argument.

The primary theory in support of a masculine translation of *Ἰουνίαν* is known as the contracted name theory. The masculine rendering of *Ἰουνιᾶν* would have been understood as a shortened form of the Greek name *Ἰουνιανός* (“Junianos”) or the Latin name *Iunianus*.<sup>11</sup> This theory suggests that *Ἰουνιᾶν* is a contraction of the male, Greco-Roman name, Junianus. Such a theory, if proven, would mean that Paul was not extending greetings to a woman in this instance, and thus there was no, nor was there anywhere else mentioned in the Bible, a female apostle.

This contracted Greek form of a name is known as a hypocorism and according to Epp, only Richard Cervin (1994) and John Thorley (1996) have contributed a thorough analysis to this theory. Cervin noted that the masculine, shortened form of *Iunias*, did “not occur in any extant Greek or Latin document of the NT milieu,” and therefore questioned “if Iunias is indeed a

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<sup>11</sup> Epp, 23.

shortened form of the common name Iunianus, why does the name Iunias never occur?”<sup>12</sup> The issue is that no evidence for the contraction of Iunianus has been found in the New Testament or any other literary text, inscription, or document. “No one has offered any evidence for the actual existence of this masculine name, either its occurrence in another literary text, an inscription, or a documentary source.”<sup>13</sup> This lack of evidence is why the contracted name theory remains as such – a theory. To date, no evidence stands that the specific name Iunianus was ever shortened. Cervin and Thorley not only argue that there is no evidence for this contracted masculine name, but they go further in negating the argument altogether by seeing how “these presumed Greek masculine forms would not be the result of a contraction from the Latin *Iunianus*” either way.<sup>14</sup> Both the lack of evidence for a contracted name as well as the difficulties in the accreditation of such a hypothetical name continually contribute to the contracted name theory being disproven.

Where the theoretical shortened masculine rendering of *Ἰουνίαν* falls short, the feminine rendering prevails. “The female Latin name Junia occurs more than 250 times in Greek and Latin inscriptions found in Rome alone.”<sup>15</sup> Not only is the feminine name more obviously prevalent in Greek and Latin literature, but the feminine rendering, *Junia*, is the most natural and easiest way to read *Ἰουνίαν*. Junia was a common Roman name for noble members of the clan of Junia (*gens Junia*) as well as freed slaves of their descendants. *Ἰουνίαν* was also understood as Junia by ancient Christian writers as well as Bible translations beginning with Erasmus in 1516 to the Erwin Nestle edition in 1927 almost entirely without exception – further discussion on translators and translations later.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Richard S. Cervin, “A Note Regarding the Name ‘Junia(s),’ in Romans 16:7,” *NTS* 40 (1994) 466.

<sup>13</sup> Epp, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Epp, 44.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and United Bible Societies, 1994), 475.

<sup>16</sup> Epp, 23.

Another stance in favor of the masculine reading comes from RV Lightfoot who claims that *Ἰουλίαν* is necessitated masculine due to the name being mentioned by Paul as “noted among the apostles,” in his commendation and greeting to the church in Rome. However, other commentators “simply assumed ‘Junias’ to be masculine, without further consideration” or rather simply “dismissed the feminine” reading from the start.<sup>17</sup> Lightfoot’s claim was likewise offered with no overt reasoning – the immediate context of Romans 16:7 in no way demands or suggests that *Ἰουλίαν* need be a male. The chapter began with the commendation of Phoebe, a woman, who carried Paul’s letter to Rome. Out of the twenty-eight others mentioned in Paul’s greeting section of the letter, eight were women. Furthermore, “those described as contributing most through service to the church (again omitting Junia), seven were women and five were men.”<sup>18</sup>

“The Nestle-Aland twenty-seventh edition of 1993 provided no evidence in the apparatus to support the clearly masculine reading (*Ἰουλιᾶν*) in the text – because there was (and is) none.”<sup>19</sup> Even with very few manuscripts available to them at the time, the translators of the King James Version understood the *Ἰουλίαν* of the *textus receptus* to be feminine as well as the Vulgate Erasmus of 1516. “When the Greek manuscripts began to be accented, scribes wrote the feminine *Ἰουλίαν* (‘Junia’).”<sup>20</sup>

### **Analyzing How Bible Translations Have Dealt With *Ἰουλίαν*/*Ἰουλιᾶν***

Tables 1 and 2 show the correlation of time and Greek New Testaments in regard to *Ἰουλίαν*’s translation as masculine or feminine from 1516 to 1998.<sup>21</sup> Table 3 shows how the

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<sup>17</sup> Epp, 58.

<sup>18</sup> Epp, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Epp, 49.

<sup>20</sup> Metzger, 475.

<sup>21</sup> Adapted from Epp, 62-63.

English translations of the Greek text, as seen in tables 1 and 2, have translated *Ἰουναίαν* from 1525 to 1996.<sup>22</sup> The charts are followed by a synopsis of their information as well as a brief explanation of what such information means.

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<sup>22</sup> Adapted from Epp, 66.

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

Edition	<i>Ἰουβιαν</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**  
***Ἰουναῖν* (Romans 16:7) in Greek New Testaments from the Nestle to the Present**

Edition	<i>Ἰουναῖν</i> (presumed feminine)	<i>Ἰουναῖν</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>-ιαῖν</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>-ιαῖν</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 <sup>5th rev. printing</sup> ) + 2001 <sup>8th rev. printing</sup> UBS (1998 <sup>3rd printing</sup> ) + 2001 <sup>5th printing</sup> [= text of NA 1998, above]	X		No
	X		No



Together, tables 1 and 2 show that of the 38 translation editions referenced from 1516 (beginning with the Erasmus of 1516) to 1913 (ending at the Eberhard Nestle of 1913), 28 editions presumed the feminine reading of *Ἰουβίαν* with only one having an alternate reading mentioned in the apparatus. It is noteworthy that these editions ranging from 1516 to 1913 had not one definite masculine reading of *Ἰουβίαν* without an alternate reading in the apparatus and the only masculine reading did mention the possibility of a feminine reading in its apparatus. The period of time from 1927, beginning with the Nestle (Erwin) translation, to 1998, with the UBS translation, shows a dramatic shift away from a feminine reading of *Ἰουβίαν* to a more masculine reading. From 1927 to 1998, 14 translations were rendered as definite masculine with only half of those including an alternate reading mentioned in the apparatus, with only 2 presumed feminine readings with no alternate given.

It does not follow, how shy of discovering the original letter to the Romans, that the Nestle (Erwin) of 1927 can force a tradition of over 400 years to change. How, “after three centuries of *Ἰουβίαν* in Greek editions,” can the “unambiguously masculine form” appear in 1927 to then occur in all Greek New Testaments until 1998?<sup>23</sup> Seeing as there was no new manuscriptal evidence found, there is no explanation for this shift away from centuries of a feminine understanding of *Ἰουβίαν* in Romans 16:7.

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<sup>23</sup> Epp, 61.

**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

The information found in Table 3 reflects how the English translators understood the Greek text before them in translating *Ἰουλίαν* as feminine or masculine and it “also may cast some light on what that name meant to the editors of Greek texts of the New Testament,” since translations generally reflect the understanding of critical editions of the translators’ time.<sup>24</sup> The feminine reading of *Ἰουλίαν* dominated English translations without exception from 1525 to 1611. Interrupted by a period of two centuries, the English translations from 1833 to 1996 were dominantly masculine readings of *Ἰουλίαν* with only 5 translations being feminine with no other reading mentioned in the notes – in contrast there were 11 masculine readings with no alternative listed as well as 7 with no notes and only 4 with an alternative reading mentioned. Perhaps Epp puts it best:

The data in Table 3 are not nearly as clean as in the preceding two tables, for the pattern that presents itself on the Junia/Junias matter in English versions moves from a consistent feminine understanding of “Junia” for the first three centuries (1526 to 1833, though the 1833 Dickinson version is an anomaly), then a second, fairly consistent masculine period of about a century (1870s to 1960s, with a few exceptions), followed by nearly three decades (1970 to 1996) of alteration between masculine and feminine, but with an increasing trend of returning to the feminine.<sup>25</sup>

The question remains, “with the feminine presumably in the Greek text of Romans 16:7 for 365 years (with only one exception), what would prompt a committee of eminent scholars to render it as masculine in English,” to which Epp answers with Lightfoot’s rational “the two persons in Rom 16:7 were ‘outstanding among the apostles,’ so it must be a man, Junias, and this person’s maleness could be predicated on the (specious) ground that ‘Junias’ was a shortened

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<sup>24</sup> Epp, 65.

<sup>25</sup> Epp, 65.

name for ‘Junianus.’”<sup>26</sup> A question to which James Dunn answers, “the assumption that [*Ἰουλίαν*] must be male is a striking indictment of male presumption regarding the character and structure of earliest Christianity.”<sup>27</sup> As was discussed in the previous section, the idea of a woman being an apostle was not thought to be impossible by the ancient audience, and therefore, there is no basis for claiming today that being noted as an apostle necessitates *Ἰουλίαν* to be a masculine name. Patristic commentators are virtually unanimous in identifying the person as a woman – “*Ἰουλίαν* is to be understood as a feminine name.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Junia’s Descriptors in Romans 16:7**

After being greeted, Andronicus and Junia are both referred to as Paul’s “kinsmen” – this description is understood by scholars to mean that Andronicus and Junia were Jewish, as was Paul himself.<sup>29</sup> Paul’s next description of the couple is that Andronicus and Junia were “fellow prisoners.” Osborne notes that “it is difficult to know when they were in prison with Paul,” but nevertheless that the couple was imprisoned alongside Paul, performing the same task as the apostle throughout his travels of preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ.<sup>30</sup>

The first two descriptions given by Paul are not as debated among New Testament scholars as the much as the third. The ESV reads that Junia, along with Andronicus, was “well known to the apostles,” the NIV reads that they were “outstanding among the apostles,” and the CSB reads that the couple was “noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles.” The debate of the English translation comes from the understanding of the adjective *episēmos* and whether the

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<sup>26</sup> Epp, 67.

<sup>27</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC 38 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 894.

<sup>28</sup> Michael F. Bird, *Romans*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 522.

<sup>29</sup> Schreiner, 769; Osborne, 406.

<sup>30</sup> Osborne, 407.

word is functioning as a comparative or relative adjective. Thielman “rightly observes that the earliest commentators who spoke Greek understood that Paul identified Andronicus and Junia to be apostles,” although Paul’s designation within this role does not place either Andronicus or Junia with the Twelve.<sup>31</sup> The 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.”<sup>32</sup> This term was elsewhere used in 1 Corinthians 15:7 where Paul recounts Jesus’s post-resurrection appearances to “James, then to all the apostles,” and last of all, Paul himself. Occurring also in 2 Corinthians 8:23, Paul speaks of Titus as a “partner and fellow worker” amongst the brothers of the church in Corinth being *ἀπόστολοι* of the churches. Clearly the Greek term *apostolos* can refer to both those who are traditionally recognized as apostles as well as other individuals. Titus was not one of the main apostles, but was still described in the same way as the apostles Paul and James – the same is the case with Andronicus and Junia. Andronicus and Junia did not have the same authority as Paul, Barnabas, or Jesus’s brother James, however, scholars do note that there were members outside of the Twelve that possessed apostolic authority in the early church. Junia would have functioned much in the same way as Titus and Epaphraditus who were apostles of churches in the areas in which they inhabited. As a female apostle, Junia would have “directed her energies especially to women” due to the wife having access to areas in which men and husbands were not allowed – and this should not be an issue for modern readers since there is evidence elsewhere that women did function in these ways during early Christianity.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Schreiner, 770.

<sup>32</sup> Brannan, “ἀπόστολος.”

<sup>33</sup> Schreiner, 770.

In their fourth description given by Paul, Andronicus and Junia are both recognized by Paul for being “in Christ before” the apostle himself, simply meaning that they had both been converted to Christianity before Paul had the Damascus Road experience and had therefore “been leaders/apostles for some time” at this point.<sup>34</sup>

### **Junia’s Importance and Contribution to the New Testament Church**

Junia functioned importantly not only to Paul’s ministry, but also to their own ministry within the Roman community. Functioning as apostles, Andronicus and Junia would have been responsible for teaching the believers around them much in the same way that Paul did in his own missionary journeys. As seen through an exegesis of their mention, Andronicus and Junia were contributing to the very same cause as Paul was, that is, spreading the gospel of the resurrected Christ to first Judea, then Samaria, and eventually the ends of the earth. The church in Rome was a successful New Testament church, in part, due to the work of this couple, which is why Paul greets them as individuals as important as apostles in Romans 16:7.

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<sup>34</sup> Osborne, 408.

## CONCLUSION

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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