

**The Woman Buried Under the Words:  
The Story of the First Female Apostle and How  
She Was Erased From Scripture**

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When one thinks of biblical text criticism (if one ever does) it likely evokes images of ancient papyri and the wizened old scholars bent over them searching for evidence of a subjective genitive reading of διὰ πίστεως. Textual criticism most often connotes work in the past. It's easy to forget that the process of determining authoritative or heavily evidenced manuscript texts in the original biblical languages can, with the replacement of a single accent mark over a Greek letter, change what we read in scripture. This type of work is as present tense as html script writing. Even biblical language software, meant to offer up-to-date access to multiple Hebrew and Greek texts, can prove unreliable if the morphological tagging is based on a Greek edition that's fifteen years old instead of ten. The correct Greek word may be flashing right there on the screen in front of you, but the software tool's translation is inaccurate, even compared to the biblical translations that share the screen. Text criticism documents not only the ancient history of a text, but the history of its interpretation as well. When confronted with textual inconsistencies, it can be shocking to find that some of these translations are far younger than we realize.

Such is the case with Romans 16:7, where we find not only a clash between patristic and 20<sup>th</sup> century readings, circumflex verses acute accents on Greek case endings and interpretations of Paul's use of the word apostle, but the obscuring of an influential figure in the ministry of the early church. This is because the two kinsmen and fellow prisoners that Paul extols in his final greetings to the church in Rome are not two men, but a man and a woman. The replacement of the name Junias for Junia reveals a story not only of cultural and ecclesial biases but a tapestry of possible portraits of who the real

Junia was and how she came to be called “outstanding among the apostles.”<sup>1</sup> As we enter the words of Romans 16:7 we follow a trail of textual interpretations, ancient and contemporary as well as enter the world of first century Roman rule where those who had seen and been called by the risen Christ, lived their lives according to a call that did not discriminate between Jews, Greeks, slaves, freed people, men or women.<sup>2</sup> To study Junia’s place in scripture is to be humbled by how the passing of centuries can constrain our understanding of God’s word, and also emboldened by the legacy of those, who like Junia, defined their life by the Kingdom of God instead of societal expectations.

*“Greet Andronicus and Junia,  
My relatives who were in prison with me;  
They are prominent among the apostles,  
and they were in Christ before I was.”  
Romans 16:7 NRSV*

The past thirty years have marked the greatest period of uncertainty around the Junias/Junia debate of Romans 16:7. In fact, with small exceptions, the past thirty years have been the *only* period of great uncertainty about the translation. The name Junia existed virtually unquestioned for a thousand years, with marked shifts happening only at the close of the nineteenth century. The results of these changes, however, persisted nearly unquestioned for the next seventy years. Thus, it’s in only in recent years that the identity of Andronicus’ ministry partner in Romans 16 been the center of intense inquiry, research and doctrinal interpretation. It’s both baffling and embarrassing to see how one or two misreadings of a Greek word (embedded in cultural presumptions) managed to infect an entire centuries’ worth of Bible publications with hardly a footnote to mark the

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 16:7 TNIV

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 3:28

change. Despite contemporary scholarly consensus on most of the Romans 16:7 issues, the corrections have had little time to reach publications. This issue will be addressed later, however. For now, let us turn our attention to the source of the debate: the Greek text.

The 27<sup>th</sup> edition of Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*<sup>3</sup> reads ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνιᾶν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ. The word Ἰουνιᾶν is a singular accusative noun. Already we have a problem, however. The circumflex accent over the penultimate letter, which denotes a masculine form,<sup>4</sup> is an editorial choice and not original to the text. Accents weren't added to Greek until around the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century. We know from the writings and commentaries of early Christianity that the unaccented name Ἰουνιᾶν was universally read as a feminine name.<sup>5</sup> Once accents were added, all Greek New Testaments from 1516 to 1927<sup>6</sup> wrote the name as Ἰουνίαν with an acute accent over the iota, indicating the first declension, which is largely feminine.<sup>7</sup> The circumflex-accented masculine accusative form, as read at the beginning of this paragraph, did not appear in

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<sup>3</sup> Important to note that this is the 1993 edition, not the 1998 Jubilee edition. Barbara and Kurt Aland (Editors), *Nestle-Aland, 27th Edition Novum Testamentum Graece (New Testament in Greek)* (prepared by Institut für neutestamentliche Testforschung Münster/Westfalen: Copyright © 1898 and 1993 by Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, Morphological tagging by William D. Mounce and Rex A. Koivisto, Copyright © 2003 William D. Mounce. Copyright © 2008 OakTree Software, Inc. Version 3.6

<sup>4</sup> Ray R. Schulz, "Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?" *Expository Times* 98, no. 4 (Jan.1987): 109. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 24, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> See Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 33-35 for a discussion of the "proposed (but unlikely) exceptions" to the Junia reading of antiquity.

<sup>6</sup> Epp, 23, notes one exception during this period, but the circumflex-accented masculine form is never offered.

<sup>7</sup> Ray R. Schulz, "Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?" *Expository Times* 98, no. 4 (Jan.1987): 109. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008).

Greek New Testaments until 1927.<sup>8</sup> From its appearance in the Nestle text at that time, the masculine Greek form became the unanimous<sup>9</sup> choice in Greek texts for the next 71 years. Even more significant is the fact that the replacement of the masculine form, in general, was done without denoting the previous or alternative *Ιουνία* reading in the notes or apparatuses. Nearly 2000 years of historical interpretation was virtually wiped out of the records. How did this happen?

It may be helpful to first hear the testimony of patristic writings to the feminine character of Junia. Origen of Alexandria, Jerome, Peter Abelard and essentially all Romans commentators until Aegidius ca. 1300<sup>10</sup> understood the name *Ιουνία* to be feminine. Even Aegidius mentions the possible feminine reading, despite his interpretation of the name as masculine.<sup>11</sup> The most often quoted patristic voice on Junia is John Chrysostom (344/45-407) who writes:

“To be an apostle is something great. But to be outstanding among the apostles— just think what a wonderful song of praise that is! They were outstanding on the basis of their works and virtuous actions. Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title apostle.”<sup>12</sup>

These early writers are of critical importance when it comes to weighing the debate on how to read *Ιουνία*, for most spoke Greek, and at the least, had a far greater understanding of the unaccented Greek text than any scholars since. The witness of early

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<sup>8</sup> Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) 63.

<sup>9</sup> The Hodges-Farstad text of 1982 (see Epp, 63) is the one exception, but due to the fact that the previous 400 years were essentially unanimous in the feminine reading, only to be followed by a complete shift to the masculine come the twentieth century, the Hodges-Farstad aberration hardly stands up to the weight of the total erasure of the traditional feminine reading.

<sup>10</sup> Bernadette Brooten, “Junia...Outstanding among the Apostles: Romans 16:7,” *Woman Priests* no. 4, vol. 98 (Jan. 1977): 141. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

patristic commentators reveals not only their educated opinions but also the legacy of Christian interpretation until their own time, and as such, should not be easily overlooked.

A large influence in the shift from feminine and masculine occurred with the translation of the text into the vernacular. Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German (1522-1534) takes the acute-accented *Ιουνίαν* to be a masculine name regardless of its accentuation. He writes: "Greet Andronicus, the manly one, and Junias, of the Junian family, who are men of note among the apostles."<sup>13</sup> Luther was working largely from LeFevre d'Etaples' heavily flawed 1512 commentary on Romans, which takes the name for Julias.<sup>14</sup> Thus, one of the most influential translations of all times, propagated a faulty misreading of a Greek word, translated into the Latin then translated into German. In this context Luise Schottroff remarks: "Only since the Middle Ages, and primarily because of Luther's translation, has the view prevailed that Junia was not a woman, but a man by the name of Junias."<sup>15</sup>

It's at the end of the nineteenth century however that we see the pendulum begin to swing entirely in favor of a masculine reading. A theory began to emerge between the mid to late nineteenth century that the name *Ιουνίαν* was a contracted form of the name Iunianus, and thus, a man's name. By 1881 when the Revised Standard edition of the English Bible was published, the name Junias had officially made it's way into English translations. In his 1871 volume written in preparation for the RV, J.B. Lightfoot wrote:

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<sup>13</sup> Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) 38.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid 36.

<sup>15</sup> Luise Schottroff, *Let the Oppressed Go Free: Feminine Perspective on the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 36 as cited in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) 38.

“It seems probable that we should render the name *Ιουνίαν*...Junias (i.e. Junianus), not Junia.”<sup>16</sup> However, Lightfoot gives no reason for the *probability* of the name meaning Junias and takes it as a given. But before going much farther into the issue of scholars making unsupported assumptions about the masculine form, a few words must be said about the names Junias and Junianus that the claims are based on.

While it's true that *Ιουνίαν* could mean either Junia or Junias, a search for the name Junias as either an individual name or contracted form of Junianus reveals not one single example in any ancient Greek document.<sup>17</sup> As Bernadette Brooten puts it, “we do not have a single shred of evidence that the name Junias ever existed.”<sup>18</sup> While the name Junianus does exist, a contraction in the form of *Ιουνίαν* never appears, thus, its beyond speculative to think that Paul's use of *Ιουνίαν* in Romans 16:7 is the only contraction occurrence in all extant Greek texts. Since there is no support for even the existence of the name Junias, much less its use in Romans 16:7, *Ιουνίαν* must mean Junia. On that note, it's helpful to know that the female name Junia “occurs more than 250 times in Greek and Latin inscriptions found in Rome alone,”<sup>19</sup> and is largely attested elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> The name Junia will be further discussed later, but in essence, the argument that *Ιουνίαν* means Junias is akin to saying “Amy” is actually a male nickname, which a quick glance

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<sup>16</sup> Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *On a Fresh Revision of the English New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1871), 179 as cited in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) 26.

<sup>17</sup> Richard S. Cervin, “A Note Regarding the name “Junia(s)” in Romans 16:7,” *New Testament Studies* no. 3, vol. 40 (July 1994): 466 *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008); Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “Forward” in Eldon Jay Epp's *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005): xi; Bernadette Brooten, “Junia...Outstanding among the Apostles: Romans 16:7,” *Woman Priests* no. 4, vol. 98 (Jan. 1977): 142. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Bernadette Brooten, “Junia...Outstanding among the Apostles: Romans 16:7,” *Woman Priests* no. 4, vol. 98 (Jan. 1977): 142. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and the United Bible Societies, 1994), 475 as cited in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) 54.

<sup>20</sup> Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) 23, 31.

at class attendance sheets or popular periodicals will reveal to be beyond unlikely. Thus it is with “Junias.”

While a case can be made for the limited textual resources available to the translators and commentators of the nineteenth century, thus making the switch from “Junia” to the invented “Junias” mildly more plausible, the impetus for the change itself is highly circumspect. While *Ιουνίαν* had begun to be translated as Junias as of the 1800’s, it was the 1927 Nestle-Aland Greek text that went a step farther by actually changing the Greek word to a masculine form. The circumflex-accented *Ιουνιῶν* replaced the acute accent form that had existed since its own 1898 version.<sup>21</sup> While the text’s critical apparatus made note of the possible *Ιουνίαν* reading, by 1966 when the UBS published the circumflex form also, not only was there no mention of the acute accent reading of the previous 400 years, but the masculine form was marked as an {A} rating,<sup>22</sup> which means the definitive option out of all available manuscripts. The acute form was completely deleted both from those printed texts and their records of textual criticism. Only in 1994 does a disclaimer appear in the UBS Textual Commentary that “The {A} decision of the Committee must be understood as applicable only as to the spelling of the name *Ιουνιῶν*, not the masculine accentuation.”<sup>23</sup> But the spelling of *Ιουνίαν* had never been in question, just the accentuation, i.e. the gender.

With both the Nestle-Aland and UBS texts using the masculine *Ιουνιῶν*, there was little chance of any name other than “Junias” being translated into English. Thus the

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<sup>21</sup> Ray R. Schulz, “Junia reinstated: her sisters still waiting,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* no. 3, vol. 38 (Dec. 2004): 132. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*;

<sup>23</sup> Bruce M. Metzger (for the Editorial committee), *A Textual commentary on the Greek New Testament* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.; London: United Bible Societies, 1972), 539 as cited in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005): 46.

majority of English translations of the twentieth century have read “Andronicus and Junias,” often without footnotes to reference the feminine alternative.<sup>24</sup> Even Eugene Peterson’s “The Message,” known for its egalitarian emphasis, uses “Junias” because it was based on the circumflex form available at the time of translation. Likewise, as alluded to at the beginning of this paper, the Accordance<sup>25</sup> biblical languages software that includes updated “Junia” translations such as the ESV and NET, uses the 1993 Nestle-Aland edition Greek text, with all the morphological tagging in the translation tool being based on that text as well. Thus, even when viewing the older Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort or Textus Receptus versions that all use the original *Ἰουνία*, the translation tool still reads “NOUN masculine” regardless of the acute accent. The flagrant oversights of examples such as these and the inexplicable lack of apparatus documentation in the Nestle-Aland and UBS texts truly cause one to question, “What were they thinking?”

We turn now to what these scholars may indeed have been thinking. Referring to Bart Ehrman’s work, Ray Schulz says “the removal of Junia from the text coincides with the debate about the ordination of women.”<sup>26</sup> In 1859, the Salvation Army’s Catherine Booth wrote the pamphlet “*Women’s Ministry: Woman’s Right to Preach.*”<sup>27</sup> Commentators and translators of that and the following generations could not reconcile Paul’s exhortation of a female apostle and their beliefs that women could not and should not participate in ministry leadership. In 1899, A.C. Headlam, while presenting the

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<sup>24</sup> Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005): 66.

<sup>25</sup> Version 7.1. I’m unable to find if the updated version 8.0 has corrected the morphological tagging or included the updated Nestle-Aland 1998 Jubilee edition.

<sup>26</sup> Ray R. Schulz, “Junia reinstated: her sisters still waiting,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* no. 3, vol. 38 (Dec. 2004): 134. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

interpretive question as to whether the mystery name in Romans 16:7 is male or female, follows his description by saying:

There is little doubt as to whether the two [Andronicus and Junia(s)] are to be included among the apostles... In that case it is hardly likely that the name is feminine, although, curiously enough, Chrysostom does not consider the idea of a female apostle impossible.<sup>28</sup>

Chrysostom did not find female apostleship impossible but clearly Headlam did. Most commentators took the masculine form as a given and did not even address the possibility of a female reading.

There are further examples, however, of those such as F.W. Gingrich who reveal their prejudice in statements such as the following: “Grammatically [Ἰουνιᾶν] might be feminine (so KJV), though this seems inherently less probable, partly because the person is referred to as an apostle.”<sup>29</sup> Bernadette Brooten poses and answers the question regarding the 90 years worth of translations based on culturally biased assumptions thus:

What reasons have commentators given for this change [of Junias for Junia]? The answer is simple: a woman could not have been an apostle. Because a woman could not have been an apostle, the woman who is here called an apostle could not have been a woman.<sup>30</sup>

When faced with a scriptural reading that challenged perceptions of women in ministry, male translators and commentators not only put forward a convoluted masculine option,

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<sup>28</sup> A.C. Headlam, “Junias (or Junia),” in James Hastings, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols.’ Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1989), 2:825 as cited in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005): 58.

<sup>29</sup> F. W. Gingrich, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 1962 as cited in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005): 58.

<sup>30</sup> Bernadette Brooten, “Junia... Outstanding among the Apostles: Romans 16:7,” *Woman Priests* no. 4, vol. 98 (Jan. 1977): 142. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008).

but changed the Greek text itself rather than consider the option in front of them: Paul praising a female apostle.

For all the reasons mentioned thus far (and additional evidence too dense to introduce here) the past ten years have brought about a general scholarly consensus that the masculine name in Romans 16:7 is incorrect and that *Ιουνία* (acute accent included) must be read as Junia. The assertion of Junia's gender, however, spawned a whole new set of reactions to Roman 16:7, including bringing into doubt what Paul meant by the term *apostle*,<sup>31</sup> and whether Junia and Andronicus were "outstanding *among* the apostles" or just "well known *to* the apostles."<sup>32</sup> With Junia firmly placed in the scriptural text, conservative scholars have been scrambling to find ways to reinterpret Paul's letter in order to exclude Junia's apostleship. But these arguments scrape the proverbial text-critical barrel and have been continually countered by stronger evidence for an inclusive reading wherein Junia truly is an apostle.<sup>33</sup> The issue of apostleship, which was never in question while "Junias" was in the verse, only popped up in reaction to "Junia." Again, ecclesial and cultural biases swing (or in this case only attempt to swing) the pendulum away from the possibility of a female apostle. Thankfully, because of the work of scholars such as Bernadette Brooten, Richard S. Cervin and Jay Eldon

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<sup>31</sup> C. Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, rec. ed. 1883) 449; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959-65) 2.229-30; R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretations of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961) 906-7 all cited in Michael H. Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, "Was Junia really an apostle? A re-examination of Rom 16:7," *New Testament Studies* no. I, vol. 47 (Jan. 2001): 81. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Michael H. Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, "Was Junia really an apostle? A re-examination of Rom 16:7," *New Testament Studies* no. I, vol. 47 (Jan. 2001). *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008); Heath R. Curtis, "A female apostle? A note re-examining the work of Burer and Wallace concerning episemos with an en and the dative," *Concordia Journal* no. 4, vol. 28 (Oct. 2002). *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed July 24, 2008)

<sup>33</sup> The counter-arguments against non-apostle and exclusivist interpretations are well summarized in Epp's chapter "Andronicus and Junia as "Outstanding among the Apostles" in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005): 69-78.

Epp, it is unlikely that Junia will ever be kicked out of place again, either from her apostleship or scripture itself.

So who was Junia? So much commentary work has focused on defining or defending her status that her actual role in the scriptural story has been overshadowed. Most commentators agree that Paul's use of the term συγγενεῖς (relative, kin) identifies Junia and Andronicus as fellow Jews, not necessarily blood relatives to Paul. If Junia was a Jew, it is likely she had either moved to Rome since meeting Paul elsewhere, or that she met Paul while in exile from Rome due to the edict of Claudius.<sup>34</sup>

Paul writes that Andronicus and Junia were fellow prisoners with him. Whether Paul means that the three were imprisoned together or that Andronicus and Junia were fellow believers who had been imprisoned at some point, is not implicit, but it's clear that Junia had been at some point placed in the hands of the law. Ben Witherington writes: "it is hardly likely that a woman would be incarcerated in Paul's world without having made some significant public remark or action. Junia said or did something that led to judicial action."<sup>35</sup> This in itself, could have made her "outstanding among the apostles."

Along with being Jewish and fellow prisoners, Paul writes that Junia and Andronicus were "in Christ before me" (πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ). This is a helpful phrase in trying to discern what Paul meant by apostle: whether those who served alongside Christ and to whom Christ appeared after the resurrection, or simply a broader

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<sup>34</sup> There is speculation among scholars as to whether a Jewish diaspora from Rome was caused by Claudius or not, but Witherington and others are willing to consider it. Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004) 376.

<sup>35</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004) 390.

term meaning anyone who was “sent.” Quite a few commentators favor the idea that Junia was one of the apostles “appointed by the risen Christ.”<sup>36</sup> Richard Bauckham extends this idea even further to the possibility that Junia may actually be Joanna from Luke 8:3 and 24:10.<sup>37</sup> Bauckham’s discussion has many compelling points, even adding weight to the question of why a Palestinian Jew would take a Latin name such as Junia, linking it to her marriage to Herod’s steward, a servant of Roman rule.<sup>38</sup> Also interesting is that if Joanna and Junia were one person, then Junia was one of the women who met Jesus resurrected at the tomb.

The Junia-as-Joanna argument thus makes a stronger case against those who doubt Junia’s “outstanding among the apostles” status for having only been mentioned in Romans 16:7. If, however, this is the same woman who traveled with Jesus early in the ministry, brought news of Christ’s resurrection, and was in fact accounted for by another scriptural author, her status as “outstanding among the apostles” needs little explanation. It’s also noted in the Joanna case that as the widow of Herod’s steward (or if Chuza was also Andronicus), Junia would have had financial resources to aid travel and ministry support. If such were the case, it would not be hard to imagine her name being well known to many.

Joanna or not, it’s highly possible that Andronicus and Junia were a husband and wife team, much like Prisca and Aquila who appear just a few lines earlier in Paul’s

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<sup>36</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1988) 894-895. Also Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Reconstructing “Real” Women from Gospel Literature: the Case of Mary Magdalene,” in *Women and Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D’Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 121; Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002): 180.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002): 165-186.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid* 185-186.

greeting.<sup>39</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher points out that “given the ancient societal roles and relationships, it would have been difficult to reach and address women from a missionary standpoint without the active collaboration of women.”<sup>40</sup> Brooten also cites the important role women such as Junia and Priscilla must have played in extending the mission of the gospel to reach women.<sup>41</sup> In light of this idea, it’s encouraging to note that Junia is one of seven other women mentioned in Paul’s greetings to the Romans.

We get little to no indication from Paul as to what Junia’s social status was. The name Junia could mean a descendant of the Iunius line (to which belonged such notables as Marcus Junias Brutus, one of the assassins of Julius Caesar) or one of the slaves (freed also) who took the nomen gentilicium of that family.<sup>42</sup> The name could also, as Bauckham implies in the case of Joanna, be a Latin name exchanged from Hebrew, taken in order to simplify pronunciation while living with non-Jews in Rome. Whatever her place in society, Junia is honorably summarized by Dunn who says “we may firmly conclude, however, that one of the foundation apostles of Christianity was a woman and a wife.”<sup>43</sup>

The story of Junia and her unwarranted removal from scripture is ironic in that a woman who survived imprisonment and possible other challenges in order to follow the call of Christ on her life to such an extent that she was named “outstanding among the apostles” should then, in transmission of her tale, face questions of legitimacy that did not

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<sup>39</sup> Romans 16:3

<sup>40</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994) 249.

<sup>41</sup> Bernadette Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues* (Providence, RI: Scholar’s Press, 1982): 38-39.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002): 168-168.; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994) 248-249.

<sup>43</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1988) 895.

happen in her own lifetime. She had, in first century Rome, a freedom that the United States in the twentieth century has denied her. If this in itself doesn't make us to pause and consider how our cultural contexts shape the very texts we hold in our hands much less how we interpret them, then we are just as likely to propagate the same types of assumptions made by the inventors of "Junias." Junia reminds us not only of what is possible for women as leaders in the church then and now, but how capable we are to being blinded to the call of the gospel by our biases and presumptions. The conflict around Junia's place in scripture is important because it reminds us how hard the battle for non-patriarchal readings of scripture still is, but also how frail and susceptible we are to mistaking our prejudices for God's will. May we not, in unearthing one woman from under the weight of male-dominated interpretation, bury others with the words that should bring life, not death. Junia has been recovered. Perhaps she provides hope that recovery can continue to be the theme in textual criticism.

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