

Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7¹

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The identification of Junia in Rom 16.7 has been a familiar problem in biblical interpretation. Most studies, however, are preoccupied with the gender of the name, assuming that Junia's apostolic status is not in doubt. This article addresses the latter issue. The collocation of ἐπίσημος with its adjuncts shows that, as a rule, ἐπίσημος with a genitive personal adjunct indicates an inclusive comparison ('outstanding among'), while ἐπίσημος with (ἐν plus) the personal dative indicates an elative notion without the implication of inclusion ('well known to'). This study concludes that Junia was well known to the apostles rather than outstanding among them.

In Rom 16.7, there are two issues relevant to biblical 'gynaecology'. The first is whether Ἰουνιᾶν is a man's name or a woman's. The second is whether this individual is part of the apostolic band. The first issue has garnered a great deal of attention, with quite a bit of evidence enlisted on both sides. But the second has been the object of almost no substantive discussion; indeed, most commentators simply assume a particular viewpoint that has surprisingly never been demonstrated. We will address the first issue briefly, as it is somewhat tangential to our overall thesis.

The name Ἰουνιᾶν can be accented in one of two ways: Ἰουνίᾶν with an acute accent on the penult, which is feminine, or Ἰουνιᾶν with a circumflex accent on the ultima, which is masculine. The majority of patristic commentators regard this as a feminine name.² Origen seems to cite the name once as masculine and once as feminine, though the masculine is most likely a later corruption of his text.³

1 We wish to express our gratitude to Professor C. F. D. Moule and Dr D. H. Wallace for their valuable input on this essay after looking at a preliminary draft.

2 J. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1993) 737–8, mentions Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, Rufinus, Jerome, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Ps.-Primasius, Oecumenius, John Damascene, Haymo, Rabanus Maurus, Hatto, Lanfranc of Bec, Bruno the Carthusian, Theophylact, Peter Abelard, and Peter Lombard.

76 3 *Junia* occurs in *In epistola ad Romanos* 10.21 (PG 14.1280), but *Junias* occurs in 10.39 (PG

Although most commentators believe that the patristic evidence through the first 1,200 years or so universally supports the feminine name,⁴ one patristic writer is inexplicably overlooked. Epiphanius (c.315–403 CE), bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, mentions Junias in his *Index discipulorum* 125: Ἰουνιᾶς, οὗ καὶ αὐτοῦ ὁ Παῦλος μέμνηται, ἐπίσκοπος Ἀπαμείας τῆς Συρίας ἐγένετο (‘Junias, whom Paul also mentions, became bishop of Apameia of Syria’). That Junias is masculine here is evident from the masculine relative pronoun (οὗ) following the name.⁵ Epiphanius’s reference is unusual in that he only indirectly alludes to Rom 16.7, but adds additional information about Junias, perhaps preserving an independent tradition.⁶ However, Epiphanius’s testimony here ought not to be weighed too heavily, for he calls Prisca in the previous sentence a man, too!⁷ A search of TLG⁸

14.1289). Rabanus Maurus in *In epistola ad Romanos* (PL 111.1607–8) cites Origen, *In epistola ad Romanos* 10.39, but uses the feminine form. Because of this some have asserted that Origen’s text here is corrupt. Moo notes that Rufinus’s translation of Origen’s commentary in PG 14.1281B and 1289A reads a masculine name. ‘But Migne’s text (notoriously corrupt) is probably in error; Origen apparently read a feminine name here . . .’ (D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996] 922).

4 Aegidius of Rome (1245–1316 CE) called both Andronicus and *Julian* men in his *Opera Exegetica*, Opuscula I.

5 TLG (see n. 8) inexplicably accents the name Ἰουνιᾶς.

6 J. Piper and W. Grudem, ‘An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers’, in J. Piper and W. Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991) 80, argue: ‘The Church Fathers were evidently divided . . ., Epiphanius assuming [Ἰουνιᾶ] is masculine, Chrysostom assuming it is feminine. Perhaps somewhat more weight may be given to the statement by Epiphanius, since he appears to know more specific information about Junias (that he became bishop of Apameia), while Chrysostom gives no more information than what he could deduce from Romans 16:7.’

As recently as April 2000, this evidence continues to be overlooked. S. Schreiber, ‘Arbeit mit der Gemeinde (Röm 16.6, 12). Zur versunkenen Möglichkeit der Gemeindeleitung durch Frauen’, *NTS* 46 (2000) 212, asserts: ‘Entscheidend jedoch ist, daß in der Antike lediglich der weibliche Name Junia bezeugt ist und die kirchliche Tradition von den Vätern bis zu den Kommentaren des Mittelalters von Junia als einer Frau ausgeht; der lateinische Name “Junia” ist zeitgenössisch geläufig. Das ist in der gegenwärtigen Forschung längst aufgewiesen und nahezu Allgemeingut.’ The author cites much of the standard literature but does not mention Grudem and Piper’s evidence to the contrary. In all fairness, even though Epiphanius’s identification of Junia as a man is almost surely incorrect (see below), his voice must be accounted for in the tabulation of patristic evidence.

7 *Index discipulorum* 125: Πρίσκα, οὗ καὶ αὐτοῦ Παῦλος μέμνηται, ἐπίσκοπος Κολοφῶνος ἐγένετο. Again, TLG accents the name Πρίσκα. It should be noted that the masculine pronouns alone presuppose the masculine name since ἐπίσκοπος is a double terminal adjective, used substantivally for both men and women.

8 TLG, or *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* CD ROM D, is a digitized database of Greek texts from Homer to 1453 CE, currently comprising some 57 million Greek words (Los Altos, CA: Packard Humanities Institute, 1993). Produced under the auspices of the Packard Humanities Institute, it is now marketed by the University of California at Irvine. Although we have not

for the text string ἰουνία at the beginning of a word yielded only one viable hit outside of biblical or patristic citations, and this name is obviously feminine: Ἰουνία γὰρ ἀδελφῆ Βρούτου συνώκει Κόσσιος, mentioned by Plutarch.⁹ BAGD cites this name (as used in Rom 16.7) as masculine,¹⁰ but the forthcoming edition (to be known as BDAG) argues that the form Ἰουνία is to be preferred.¹¹ This is in keeping with the current trends of scholarship as well, for in the past two decades the tide has swung decidedly over to the side of the feminine form. To remove paraphrasis and reduce cumbersome expressions – and because we lean towards this understanding as well – we will treat this name as feminine.

A brief history of Junia's apostleship

Whether Ἰουνιαν is male or female is not the only contribution of this verse to biblical gynaecology. The relation of Junia to the apostles is also in view. On this issue, there is a growing consensus: Junia *is* an apostle. That is, the text is read as follows: 'Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me, who are *outstanding among the apostles*.' The expression in question is ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις. The vast bulk of translations and commentators today regard this line as indicating that Andronicus and Junia *were* apostles, though not in the most technical sense of that word. What is interesting is that battle lines are almost always drawn along the gender of Ἰουνιαν, as though it were already a settled issue that this individual finds a place among the apostolic band. It is the assumption of Junia's apostolic status, however, that we wish to challenge.

Before we get into the evidence, it might be helpful to note the history of the discussion. Frankly, this will not take very long.¹² To be sure, there is an abundance

yet received our copy, CD ROM E has recently been released (4 Feb 2000); it contains 6,625 works from 1,823 authors, and a total count of 76 million words of text. The cover letter to TLG subscribers notes that 'This is a significant expansion compared to the 57 million words (from 831 authors and 4,305 works) included in CD ROM D'. We do not know on what information Piper and Grudem based their statement that the *previous* version to the one we are using, CD ROM C, 'contains 2,889 authors and 8,203 works' (Piper and Grudem, 'Overview', 79).

9 Plutarch *Brut.* 7.1.4.

10 See 'Ἰουνιάς', 380: 'The possibility, fr. a purely lexical point of view, that this is a woman's name . . . is prob. ruled out by the context . . .'

11 See 'Ἰουνία' and 'Ἰουνιάς' in BDAG.

12 We have already noted that the patristic authors are preoccupied with whether Ἰουνιαν is male or female, giving little substantive attention to what Paul has to say about this individual's relation to the apostolic band. That they seem to assume a particular view, without interacting over the force of the Greek, is hardly a sufficient reason to adopt their view, as Lightfoot, Fitzmyer, *et al.* have done. This situation is akin to modern English preachers

of secondary material which discusses the various questions arising from Rom 16.7. But by and large, the identification of Ἰουλιαν – whether this name refers to a man or a woman – is the question most often discussed in the literature, with Paul's intended sense of ἀπόστολος a close second. Only rarely is the syntax of ἐπίσημος with its adjuncts discussed at all.

For convenience' sake, we will label the two views regarding Junia's apostolic status. The approach that regards Andronicus and Junia as in some sense apostles we will call the *inclusive* view; the interpretation that regards them as non-apostles we will call the *exclusive* view.¹³ The inclusive view is thus represented in the translation 'outstanding *among* the apostles' while the exclusive view is seen in the translation 'well known *to* the apostles'.

The vast bulk of commentators follow the inclusive view; most of those who do see ἀπόστολος used in a broad sense.¹⁴ And almost always, the inclusive interpretation is simply assumed, with little or no support. For example, Dunn states that 'the full phrase almost certainly means "prominent among the apostles"', and he cites *other* authorities as his defence.¹⁵ Cranfield, after admitting that the exclusive view is 'grammatically possible', goes on to say: 'it is much more probable – we might well say, virtually certain – that the words mean "outstanding among the apostles ..."',¹⁶ enlisting patristic *assumptions* on his behalf. Rengstorf lays the

assuming that Rev 3.20 speaks of the risen Christ penetrating a person's heart – in spite of the fact that such a view is not even based on a careful reading of the English text, let alone the Greek! (On this text, cf. D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996] 380–2.)

13 We are taking our cue from R. S. Cervin, 'A Note Regarding the Name "Junia(s)" in Romans 16.7', *NTS* 40 (1994) 470.

14 So J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (1540; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 546; J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1865) 96 n. 1; A. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1965) 399–400; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (HNTC; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1957) 283–4; J. Huby, *Saint Paul: Épitre aux Romains* (Paris: S. Lyonnet, 1957) 499–500; C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Fontana; London: Collins, 1959) 240; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 475–6; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975–9) 2.789; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 414; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKKNT; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener und Zürich: Benziger, 1978–81) 3.135; L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 534.

J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (WBC 38AB; Dallas: Word, 1988) 2.895, takes a narrower view of ἀπόστολος while maintaining the inclusive view. He argues from the phrase οὐ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ and from 1 Cor 15.7 that Andronicus and Junia 'belonged to the closed group of apostles appointed directly by the risen Christ in a limited period following his resurrection'.

15 Dunn, *Romans*, 2.894.

16 Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.789.

blame at Paul's feet: 'If Paul had meant the second [the exclusive view] he could and should have expressed himself more clearly'!¹⁷ Schreiner notes merely that the inclusive interpretation is 'the consensus view', and that it 'is almost surely right, for this is a more natural way of understanding the prepositional phrase'.¹⁸

Some commentators do appeal, however, to other lines of evidence to bolster this approach. Fitzmyer accepts that Andronicus and Junia were apostles largely on the basis of patristic testimony, but only discusses the meaning of the prepositional phrase ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις.¹⁹ Godet accepts the majority view (viz., that Andronicus and Junia were apostles), but adds a negative line of reasoning: Paul does not mean 'well known by the apostles' because ἐν most likely does not carry the meaning 'in the eyes of'.²⁰ Sanday and Headlam add a positive line of reasoning to accept this interpretation: ἐπίσημος has a literal meaning of 'stamped' or 'marked' and this would most naturally refer to 'those who were selected from the Apostolic body as "distinguished"'.²¹ The most detailed argumentation for the view that Andronicus and Junia were regarded as apostles comes from Moo. If this phrase were to mean 'esteemed by the apostles', ἐν would have to have an instrumental force or be equivalent to the Hebrew 'in the eyes of'. However, 'with a plural object, ἐν often means "among"; and if Paul had wanted to say that Andronicus and Junia were esteemed "by" the apostles, we would have expected him to use a simple dative or ὑπό with the genitive'.²²

The kind of certainty embraced by the inclusive camp may well be traced back to Lightfoot. He states: 'Except to escape the difficulty involved in such an extension of the apostolate, I do not think the words οἵτινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις would have been generally rendered, "who are highly esteemed by the Apostles"'.²³ Although Lightfoot offers *no support* other than that the inclusive view was adopted by the Greek fathers, his reputation as a careful grammatical exegete was legendary, prompting Schmithals to claim that Lightfoot has shut the door on the exclusive view: 'J. B. Lightfoot has already *established* that ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις does not mean "regarded by the apostles" but rather "regarded as apostles"'. He adds that this translation 'is the only natural one'.²⁴ The same sen-

17 K. H. Rengstorf, 'ἐπίσημος', *TDNT* 7.268 n. 1.

18 T. R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 796.

19 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 739–40.

20 F. L. Godet, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Funk & Wagnall's, 1883) 492. *Contra* R. Cornely, *Epistola ad Romanos* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1896) 776–7.

21 W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902) 423.

22 Moo, *Romans*, 923 n. 38.

23 Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 96.

24 W. Schmithals, *The Office of the Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969) 62 (italics added), citing only Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 96.

timent, though not necessarily mentioning Lightfoot by name, is found in numerous commentaries that espouse the inclusive view.²⁵

Commentators who adopt the exclusive view – that is, that Andronicus and Junia were well known or esteemed by the apostles but were not apostles themselves – tend to supply a little more evidence as a whole since they are in the minority, although they still generally do not address the full grammatical evidence. Hodge argues that Paul uses ἀπόστολος only ‘in its strict, official sense’.²⁶ The article τοῖς before the term ‘seems to point out the definite, well-known class of persons almost exclusively so called’.²⁷ Murray also argues that this is the preferred interpretation because of Paul’s limited use of the term.²⁸ Lenski argues along these lines but adds to the evidence:

In the first place, Paul never uses ‘apostle’ in the wider sense; in the second place, when it is so used (Barnabas, Acts 14:4, 14), the word still keeps its meaning: ‘one commissioned and sent,’ even as Barnabas was commissioned together with Paul (Acts 13:2–4), and is never used concerning men (or women) who go out of their own accord ... Thirdly, ἐν states *where* these two were considered illustrious: ‘in the circle of’ the Twelve at Jerusalem (‘by’ is incorrect).²⁹

Zahn accepts this minority interpretation based upon one major line of negative evidence: if Andronicus and Junia were well-known apostles, it is remarkable that scripture is otherwise completely silent about them: ‘Der Ausdruck und der Umstand, daß wir sonst nichts von einer solchen Bedeutung dieser Leute hören, machen es doch wahrscheinlicher, daß damit gesagt sein soll, daß sie im Kreise der älteren Apostel, welche Pl auch Gl 1, 19; 1 Kr 15, 7 die Apostel schlechthin nennt, in gutem Ansehen stehen.’³⁰ And again, ‘Warum schrieb Pl dann nicht ἀπόστολοι

25 Besides the commentaries mentioned, older works such as those by Luther, Bengel, and Tholuck held the inclusive view as well. Note also Cervin, ‘“Junia(s)”’, 470: ‘he wrote οἱ τινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις which can only mean “noteworthy among the apostles”’. Our impression is that within two or three decades of the publication of Lightfoot’s commentary on Galatians, and largely because of it, the inclusive view became the majority opinion. But the situation was decidedly different shortly after it was published. C. Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, rev. edn 1883) 449, notes that ‘the majority of commentators’ held to the exclusive view in his day.

26 Hodge, *Romans*, 449.

27 Ibid.

28 J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959–65) 2.229–30. So also H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, rev. edn 1889) 568, with special reference to 1 Cor 15.7; F. A. Philippi, *Commentar über den Brief Pauli an die Römer* (Frankfurt: Heyder & Zimmer, 21856) 622, with special reference to Acts 14.4, 14.

29 R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961) 906–7.

30 T. Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 6; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1910) 608.

ἐπίσημοι? Das Praes. εὐσὶν [*sic*] würde bei jener Deutung voraussetzen, daß sie zur Zeit des Rm noch immer in hervorragender Weise als Missionare tätig waren. Um so wunderlicher wäre das Schweigen der AG und der anderen Briefe.³¹

On the whole, 'exclusive' commentators do not adequately discuss the syntax of ἐπίσημος with its adjuncts. When the construction is discussed, focus is on the prepositional phrase ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις and the meaning of ἐν, not on the collocation of ἐπίσημος with prepositional phrases.³²

The situation with specialized studies concerning the role of women in the church is much the same. The vast majority of authors favour the inclusive view, but most studies do not deal with the grammatical evidence of ἐπίσημος with its adjuncts. Like the commentaries cited above, many studies simply argue that the name refers to a woman and that ἀπόστολος is used here in a general sense, i.e. as one sent by the church for an appointed task.³³ Yet some claim, without support-

³¹ Ibid., n. 61.

³² Cf. also S. T. Bloomfield, *The Greek Testament, with English Notes, Critical, Philological, and Exegetical*, 5th American edn (Philadelphia: Perkins & Purves, 1844) 2.91 n. 7; W. M. L. de Wette, *Kurze Erklärung des Briefes an die Römer*, 4th rev. and augmented edn (Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Neuen Testament; Leipzig: Weidmann, 1847) 2.197; W. G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (New York: Scribner's, 1879) 426–7. Cornely, *Romanos*, 776–7, states: 'Similiter dissentiunt interpretes, quo sensu ratio illa intelligenda sit, ob quam Paulus illos suo nomine salutari velit: οἵτινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις (*quia sunt illustres in apostolis*). Cum Orig. et Chrys. enim antiquiores et iuniores plerique . . . eos inter apostolos latiore sensu, i.e. inter evangelicos operarios praeclaris suis laboribus eminuisse et in Ecclesia illustres fuisse arbitrantur. Praeentibus autem Haym. et Tolet. moderni haud pauci . . . eos apud Apostolos (stricto sensu) illustres fuisse, i.e. ab eis magni aestimatos esse tenent. Quam alteram sententiam praeferimus, non tantum quia definita locutio οἱ ἀπόστολοι non nisi de Duodecim aut saltem de Apostolis stricto sensu in Scripturis semper adhibetur, sed etiam quia iuxta hanc interpretationem ultimum membrum (*qui et ante me fuerunt in Christo* i.e. Christiani) aptius adiungitur.' Among the older commentators not already cited who embraced the exclusive view are Beza, Grotius, and Fritsche. Schreiner's assessment is on the mark when he states: 'Murray (1965:230) is virtually alone among *modern* commentators in understanding it [ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις] as "outstanding in the eyes of the apostles" [italics added].'

³³ M. Adinolfi, 'Le Collaboratrici Ministeriali di Paolo nelle Lettere ai Romani e ai Filippesi', *BeO* 17 (1975) 31; B. Brooten, "'Junia . . . Outstanding Among the Apostles" (Romans 16:7)', in L. Swidler and A. Swidler, eds., *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist, 1977) 141–4; P. K. Jewett, *The Ordination of Women: An Essay on the Office of Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 70–1; D. M. Scholer, 'Paul's Women Co-Workers in the Ministry of the Church', *Daughters of Sarah* 6.4 (1980) 5–6; E. M. Howe, *Women & Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 34–6; M. J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984) 124; B. J. Brooten, 'Women and the Churches in Early Christianity', *Ecumenical Trends* 14.4 (1985) 52; K. Giles, 'Apostles Before and After Paul', *Chm* 99 (1985) 249–50; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History', *WW* 6 (1986) 430–1; P. Richardson,

ing evidence, that ‘the natural meaning in Greek is that they were outstanding as apostles’.³⁴ Some are more nuanced in their argumentation concerning the meaning of ἀπόστολος. Grenz and Kjesbo, for example, argue that there are four different possible meanings for ἀπόστολος: the Twelve; witnesses to the resurrection whom Jesus commissioned into special ministry; those commissioned by a congregation to spread the gospel; and those commissioned by a church for specific tasks. They classify Junia as an apostle of the third type, accepting the interpretation that she was considered an apostle.³⁵ Other studies assess the meaning of ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις but do not specifically address the relationship of ἐπίσημος to its adjuncts.³⁶ Cervin is more detailed in that he does address some of the grammatical evidence, but only concerning the prepositional phrase: ‘the [translation] “by the apostles” expresses the agent of a passive verb (or in this case, adjective)’ and would only be valid if the Greek were ὑπό plus the genitive case. The Greek text is ἐν + the dative case, which is used to denote impersonal instrument or means’.³⁷ Only a few studies accept the exclusive view, but the reasoning is incomplete and does not deal with the lexical or syntactical evidence.³⁸

Modern translations, as would be expected in light of the exegetical literature, usually view Paul’s friends here as part of the apostolic band. The NIV and NASB say that Andronicus and Junia(s) are ‘outstanding among the apostles’; TEV has ‘well known among the apostles’; the NRSV and NAB say they are ‘prominent among the apostles’; Reina Valera has ‘muy estimados entre los apóstoles’; Phillips

‘From Apostles to Virgins: Romans 16 and the Roles of Women in the Early Church’, *TJT* 2 (1986) 238–9; C. S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992) 241–42; J. Thorley, ‘Junia, a Woman Apostle,’ *NovT* 38 (1996) 18–29; R. M. Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997) 194–6.

34 So Scholer, ‘Women Co-Workers’, 6. Cf. also Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 242, whom Groothuis simply quotes with approbation (*Good News*, 195); similarly, V. Fàbrega, ‘War Junia(s), der hervorragende Apostel (Rom 16,7), eine Frau?’, *JAC* 27–28 (1984–5) 48; R. R. Schulz, ‘Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?’, *ExpTim* 98.4 (1987) 110. Giles dogmatically states, after agreeing with Schmithals that the inclusive view is ‘the only natural one’, that ‘the only basis for objection to the inclusion of Junia among the apostles is one which rests on the premise: no woman by definition can be an apostle’ (‘Apostles’, 250).

35 S. J. Grenz and D. M. Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995) 92–6. So also E. Schüssler Fiorenza, ‘The Apostleship of Women in Early Christianity’, in Swidler and Swidler, eds., *Women Priests*, 135–40, although her wording and terminology are slightly different.

36 J. B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 121–2; Piper and Grudem, ‘Overview’, 79–81. A. B. Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), discusses the adjective and preposition in the same paragraph – even arguing erroneously that ‘the preposition *en* always has the idea of “within”’, but does not produce any instances of the collocation (185).

37 Cervin, ‘“Junia(s)”’, 470.

38 H. W. House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990) 77; M. A. Kassian, *Women, Creation, and the Fall* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1990) 129–30.

speaks of them as ‘outstanding men among the messengers’; Nouvelle Version Segond Révisée (NVS) has ‘très estimés parmi les apôtres’; the REB has ‘eminent among the apostles’; Luther Revision (1985) has ‘berühmt sind unter den Aposteln’; NJB says ‘Greetings to those outstanding apostles’; New Century Version calls them ‘very important apostles’. Some translations seemed a bit more ambiguous, however: KJV reads ‘who are of note among the apostles’, as does the ASV, RSV, NKJV, and Douay-Rheims. Only a handful of translations took the construction to mean that Andronicus and Junia were not apostles: the CEV has ‘highly respected by the apostles’; Amplified reads ‘They are men held in high esteem by the apostles’; and the New English Translation (NET) calls them ‘well known to the apostles’.

In sum, over the past three decades the exclusive view has been only scarcely attested in translations or exegetical and theological literature. Yet the arguments against it are largely a kind of snowballing dogma that has little of substance at its core.

Evidence that Junia was not an apostle

The thesis of this article is that the expression ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις is more naturally taken with an exclusive force rather than an inclusive one. The lexical and syntactical evidence seem to support this hypothesis.

First, the lexical issue. ἐπίσημος can mean ‘well known, prominent, outstanding, famous, notable, notorious’.³⁹ The lexical domain can roughly be broken down into two streams: ἐπίσημος is used either in an *implied* comparative sense (‘prominent, outstanding [among]’) or in an *elative* sense (‘famous, well known [to/by]’).

Second, the key to determining the meaning of the term in any given passage is both the general context and the specific collocation of this word with its adjuncts. Hence, we turn to the ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις. As a working hypothesis, we would suggest the following. Since a noun in the genitive is typically used with comparative adjectives, we might expect such with an implied comparison too. Thus, if in Rom 16.7 Paul meant to say that Andronicus and Junia were outstanding *among* the apostles, we might have expected him to use the genitive⁴⁰ (τῶν) ἀποστόλων. On the other hand, if an *elative* force is suggested – i.e. where no comparison is even hinted at – we might expect ἐν + the dative. It should be noted that this is merely a working hypothesis, and one that is falsifiable.

As an aside, some commentators reject such an *elative* sense in this passage

39 BAGD 298 s.v. ἐπίσημος; LSJ 655–6; L&N 28.31.

40 Either the simple genitive, or one after the preposition ἐκ.

because of the collocation with the preposition ἐν;⁴¹ but such a view is based on a misperception of the force of the whole construction. On the one hand, there is a legitimate complaint about seeing ἐν with the dative as indicating an *agent*: such a usage is rare to non-existent in the NT. Thus, to the extent that ‘well known by the apostles’ implies an *action* on the apostles’ part, such an objection has merit.⁴² On the other hand, the idea of something being known by someone else does not necessarily imply agency. This is so for two reasons. First, the ‘action’ implied may actually be the passive *reception* of some event or person (e.g. in texts such as 1 Tim 3.16, in which ὠφθη ἀγγέλοις can be translated either as ‘was seen by angels’ or as ‘appeared to angels’; either way the ‘action’ performed by angels is by its very nature relatively passive).⁴³ Such an idea can be easily accommodated in Rom 16.7: ‘well known to/by the apostles’ simply says that the apostles were recipients of information, not that they actively performed ‘knowing’. Thus, although ἐν plus a personal dative does not indicate agency, in collocation with words of perception, the construction (ἐν plus) dative personal nouns is often used to show the recipients. In this instance, the idea would then be ‘well known to the apostles’. Second, even if ἐν with the dative plural is used in the sense of ‘among’ (so Moo here, *et alii*), this does not necessarily locate Andronicus and Junia *within* the band of apostles; rather, it is equally possible, *ex hypothesi*, that *knowledge of them* existed *among* the apostles.

Finally, to make sure we are ‘comparing apples with apples’, the substantival adjunct (i.e. either the noun in the genitive or the object of the preposition ἐν) should be *personal*. This gives us the closest parallels to Rom 16.7. However, because of the potential paucity of data, both personal and impersonal constructions will be examined.

We now turn to the actual data. A search of TLG, the published volumes of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Tebtunis papyri, and the digitized collections of papyri from

41 Moo, for example, writes: ‘if Paul had wanted to say that Andronicus and Junia were esteemed “by” the apostles, we would have expected him to use a simple dative or ὑπό with the genitive’ (Moo, *Romans*, 923). Cf. also Cervin, ‘“Junia(s)”’, 470.

42 Cf. Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 163–6, where it is indicated that the only clear texts in the NT in which a dative of agency occurs involve a perfect passive verb; in the discussion of ἐν with dative (373–4), it is suggested that there are ‘no unambiguous examples’ of this idiom. Cf. also BDR 154 (§191), who admit that Luke 23.15 contains the lone genuine example of dative of agency in the NT.

43 Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 165 n. 72, states: ‘It is not insignificant that virtually every time ὠφθη is used in the NT with a simple dat., the subject of the verb consciously *initiates* the visible manifestation; in no instance can it be said that the person(s) in the dat. case initiate(s) the act. In other words, volition rests wholly with the subject, while the dat. noun is merely recipient. Cf. Luke 1:11; 22:43; 24:34; Acts 7:2, 26, 30; 13:31; 16:9; 1 Cor 15:5, 6, 7, 8. (The only problematic texts are Mark 9:4 and its parallel, Matt 17:3; but even here the appearance of Elijah and Moses was clearly not anticipated by the disciples.)’

Duke University and the University of Michigan – a grand total of more than 60 million words of Greek literature⁴⁴ from Homer to 1453 CE – produced several hundred pages of text. ἐπίσημος and cognates are not uncommon forms. We manually narrowed the search to include only two identifiable patterns: ἐπίσημος with ἐν plus the dative, and ἐπίσημος with a genitive modifier.⁴⁵ These were examined further for their relevance to the present passage. Obviously irrelevant texts were eliminated, such as passages in which ἐπίσημος refers to the stamp of a coin.⁴⁶ What remains are a few dozen passages, containing illuminating information and definite patterns.

Taking our starting point from biblical and patristic Greek, we notice the following. When a comparative notion is seen, that to which ἐπίσημος is compared is frequently, if not usually, put in the genitive case. For example, in 3 Macc 6.1 we read Ελεαζαρος δέ τις ἀνὴρ ἐπίσημος τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας ἱερέων ('Eleazar, a man *prominent among the priests* of the country'). Here Eleazar was one of the priests of the country, yet was comparatively outstanding in their midst. The genitive is used for the implied comparison (τῶν ἱερέων). In *Pss. Sol.* 17.30 the idea is very clear that the Messiah would 'glorify the Lord in a prominent [place] in relation to all the earth' (τὸν κύριον δοξάσει ἐν ἐπισήμῳ πάσης τῆς γῆς). The prominent place is a *part* of the earth, indicated by the genitive modifier. *Mart. Pol.* 14.1 speaks of an 'outstanding ram from a great flock' (κριὸς ἐπίσημος ἐκ μεγάλου). Here ἐκ plus the genitive is used instead of the simple genitive, perhaps to suggest the ablative notion over the partitive, since this ram was chosen for sacrifice (and thus would soon be separated *from* the flock). But again, the salient features are present: (a) an implied comparison (b) of an item *within* a larger group, (c) followed by (ἐκ plus) the genitive to specify the group to which it belongs.

But in *Add. Esth.* 16.22 we read that the people are to 'observe this as a *notable* day *among* the commemorative festivals' (ἐν ταῖς . . . ἑορταῖς ἐπίσημον ἡμέραν). In this text, that which is ἐπίσημος is itself *among* (ἐν) similar entities. It should simply be noted that impersonal nouns are used here, making the parallel to Rom 16.7 inexact.

When, however, an elative notion is found, ἐν plus a personal plural dative is not uncommon. In *Pss. Sol.* 2.6, where the Jewish captives are in view, the writer indicates that 'they were *a spectacle among* the gentiles' (ἐπισήμῳ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). This construction comes as close to Rom 16.7 as any we have yet seen.

44 Besides TLG, we also examined the first 65 volumes of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, the first two volumes of the Tebtunis papyri, and Packard Humanities Disk #7 containing the Duke University and University of Michigan papyri data.

45 A profound debt of gratitude is owed to Chris Bradley of Princeton University who spent much of the summer of 1999 gathering the data, isolating the relevant constructions, translating many of the texts, and offering his preliminary assessment of their value.

46 E.g. P. Tebt. 121, *recto* 1.9, 2.3, 2.10; P. Oxy. 722, 2843.

The parallels include (a) people as the referent of the adjective ἐπίσημος, (b) followed by ἐν plus the dative plural, (c) the dative plural referring to people as well. All the key elements are here. Semantically, what is significant is that (a) the first group is *not* a part of the second – that is, the Jewish captives were not gentiles; and (b) what was ‘among’ the gentiles was the Jews’ notoriety. This is precisely how we are suggesting that Rom 16.7 should be taken. That the parallels discovered conform to our working hypothesis at least gives warrant to seeing Andronicus’s and Junia’s *fame* as that which was among the apostles. Whether the alternative view has semantic plausibility remains to be seen.

To sum up the evidence of biblical and patristic Greek: although the inclusive view is aided in some *impersonal* constructions that involve ἐν plus the dative, every instance of *personal* inclusiveness used a genitive rather than ἐν. On the other hand, every instance of ἐν plus *personal* nouns supported the exclusive view, with *Pss. Sol.* 2.6 providing a very close parallel to Rom 16.7.

The papyri can be dispensed with relatively quickly, as there are only a few examples of ἐπίσημος in them. But four texts are noteworthy. P. Oxy. 1408⁴⁷ speaks of ‘the most important [places] of the nomes’ (τοῖς ἐπισημοτάτοις τῶν νομῶν). In this text that which is ἐπίσημος is a *part* of the nome; the genitive is used to indicate this.⁴⁸ On two other occasions this same idiom occurs, each time with a genitive modifier: τοῖς ἐπισημοτάτοις τόποις τ[ῶ]ν κωμ[ῶν] (‘the most conspicuous places in the villages’) in P. Oxy. 2108⁴⁹ and τ[οῖς ἐπι]σήμοις τοῦ νομοῦ τόποις (‘the well-known places of the nome’) in P. Oxy. 2705.⁵⁰ In each of these instances, that which is ἐπίσημος is compared to its environment with a partitive *genitive*; it is a part of the entity to which it is being compared. This was a sufficiently common idiom (though occurring only these three times in the *Oxyrhynchus* papyri) that the editors conjecture the reading in the lacuna at P. Oxy. 3364, line 22:⁵¹ [τ]ῆς ἐπιστολῆς τὸ ἀντίγραφον ἔν τε ταῖς πόλεσιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐπισημοῖς τῶν νομῶν τόποις] ([Place] ‘the copy of the letter in the c[ities] and in the public places of the nomes’). Now, to be sure, these parallels are not terribly strong. The constructions are impersonal, and they are only roughly contemporary with the NT. But at least they do provide evidence of the *idiomatic* nature of ἐπίσημος belonging to its group as specified with the genitive case. This same idea is also found in the LXX in a couple of places with ἐν plus the dative.⁵²

47 210–14 CE.

48 The editors emended the text by adding τόποις after νομῶν, calling the lacuna ‘a mistaken omission in the original’.

49 259 CE.

50 c.225 CE.

51 The MS is dated by the editors 25 Feb, 209 CE.

52 2 Macc 15.36 is somewhat similar. At the same time, ἐν plus the dative is sometimes used this way, as in 1 Macc 11.37 (ἐν τῷ ὄρει τῷ ἀγίῳ ἐν τόπῳ ἐπισημῷ [‘in a conspicuous place on the

The inscriptions can likewise be examined quickly. An idiom noticed in several inscriptions is even more relevant. In *TAM* 2.905.1 *west wall. coll.* 2.5.18 we read the description of a man who is ‘not only foremost in his own country, but also *well known* to the outside population’ (οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ πατρίδι πρότου, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἔθνει ἐπισήμου).⁵³ Here the person who is ἐπίσημος is called such only in relation to outsiders (πρῶτος is used in relation to his own countrymen). It is not insignificant that ἐν plus the dative personal noun is used: the man is well known to a group of which he is not a member. Similar idioms are found in *Asia Minor TAM* 2.1–3.838; *TAM* 2.1–3. 905 *west wall. coll.* 3.12; and *Fd Xanth* 7.76.1.1.1.4. In each instance the group that the individual is well known *to* but is not a part *of* is mentioned with ἐν plus the dative.⁵⁴ Although these data are not plentiful, they are excellent parallels and point in but one direction: ἐπίσημος followed by ἐν plus personal datives does not connote membership *within* the group, but simply that one is known *by* the group. Thus, the inscriptions, like biblical and patristic Greek, supply a uniform picture of ἐπίσημος with personal nouns: when followed by ἐν, the well-known individual is *outside* the group.

In literary texts the evidence is not quite so uniform. Nevertheless, the pattern that has emerged from our study thus far is still generally maintained. Beginning with the classical period: Lycurgus speaks of the Spartans making the punishment of their king, Pausanias, ‘evident to all’ (πᾶσιν ἐπίσημον ἐποίησαν τὴν τιμωρίαν).⁵⁵ Although an impersonal use, the dative is clearly exclusive. Euripides speaks in a similar way, when he has Dionysus declaring Pentheus ‘manifest to all men’ (ἐπίσημον ὄντα πᾶσιν), to which Pentheus proudly proclaims ‘For this I come’ (ἐπὶ τόδ’ ἔρχομαι).⁵⁶ The king is clearly distinguishing himself from the masses, and the dative carries this exclusivity well. In a similar vein, Euripides speaks of the goddess Aphrodite as ‘glorious among mortals’ (κάπισμος ἐν βροτοῖς).⁵⁷ Aphrodite is not a mortal, but her fame is certainly found among mortals. Here is an excellent illustration that has all the constituent parts found in

holy mountain’)) and 1 Macc 14.48 (ἐν περιβόλῳ τῶν ἀγίων ἐν τόπῳ ἐπισήμῳ [‘in a conspicuous place in the precincts of the sanctuary’]).

53 ἔθνει here evidently refers to outsiders – that is, a group to which this man does *not* belong. This is evident from the strong contrast between the two phrases (οὐ μόνον . . . ἀλλὰ καί), with the man’s fame receiving the laudatory note with the ascensive καί hinting that such a commendation is coming.

54 There is one other inscription that is relevant to the discussion: *Peloponnesos* 1.G.5.2.8. It is similar to the other inscriptions mentioned here, except that παρά is used instead of ἐν. This individual was also highly respected ‘not only in his own country, but was also well known to the Greeks’.

55 Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 129.

56 Euripides, *Bacch.* 967.

57 Euripides, *Hipp.* 103.

Rom 16.7: a personal construction with ἐν plus the dative. And the meaning is obviously an exclusive idea.

Hellenistic texts are a bit more varied in their nuances. On the one hand, there are the impersonal constructions that go both ways. For example, there are a few texts similar to the passage in *Add. Esth.* we saw earlier – that is, inclusive notions with ἐν plus the dative. Thus, Lucianus can speak of the veins that stand out on the neck.⁵⁸ Philo can speak of form as having distinction in the universe.⁵⁹ But Galen can also speak of a conspicuous body part among others, using the genitive.⁶⁰

There are several examples with personal nouns in Hellenistic literature. Lucianus speaks of Harmonides the pipe-player craving fame for his musical abilities to the extent that he wants ‘glory before the crowds, fame among the masses’ (ἡ δόξα ἢ παρὰ τῶν πολλῶν καὶ τὸ ἐπίσημον εἶναι ἐν πλήθει).⁶¹ He clearly sees himself as set apart from οἱ πολλοί!⁶² Elsewhere he uses the genitive to indicate an inclusive idea: ‘Show me the men of old, and particularly the famous ones among them’ (τοὺς ἐπισημοὺς αὐτῶν).⁶³ Lucianus thus shows the same patterns that we saw earlier, viz., an exclusive notion with ἐν plus the dative and an inclusive notion with a genitive modifier. But he is not consistent in this. On at least one occasion his words unmistakably have an inclusive force for ἐν plus the dative. In his work *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses*, he offers advice to servants: ‘... you must raise your thirsty voice like a stranded frog, taking pains to *be conspicuous among the claque* and to lead the chorus’ (ἐπίσημος ἔση ἐν τοῖς ἐπαινοῦσι . . .).⁶⁴ This is the first parallel to Rom 16.7 we have seen that could offer real comfort to inclusivists. It is unmistakable, it is personal, and it is rare. We have noticed, in fact, only one other text that clearly bears an inclusive meaning with ἐν plus dative personal substantives. In *Jos. Bell.* 2.418 we read of certain leading citizens who dispatched some representatives, ‘among whom were eminent persons, Saul, Antipas, and Costobar, all members of the royal family’ (ἐν οἷς ἦσαν ἐπίσημοι Σαῦλός τε καὶ Ἀντίπας καὶ Κοστόβαρος . . .). But even this text is not a clean parallel: the relative clause is expected to consist of ἐν plus the dative, and the adjective is almost

58 Lucianus, *De Meretri* 1.2. For a similar example, cf. Rufus Medicus, *Quaestiones Medicanales* 20.

59 Philo, *Fug.* 10 (ἐπίσημον δὲ πάλιν καὶ ποικίλον ἐν μὲν τοῖς ὅλοις τὸ εἶδος).

60 Galen, *De Methodo Medendi* 14.10.242.

61 Lucianus, *Harmonides* 1.17.

62 The text goes on to indicate his desire for distinction: Harmonides wants ‘to be pointed at, and on putting in an appearance anywhere having everyone turn towards me and say my name, “That is Harmonides the outstanding piper”’ (LCL translation).

63 Lucianus, *Peregr.* 6.1. Cf. also Herodian 1.7 for an inclusive personal ἐπίσημος with a genitive.

64 Lucianus, *Merc. Cond.* 2.8.

functioning as a technical term, without any notion of comparative force.⁶⁵ It is at least quite different from Rom 16.7 in several important respects.

Conclusion

In sum, our examination of ἐπίσημος with both genitive modifiers and ἐν plus dative adjuncts has revealed some surprising results – surprising, that is, from the perspective of the scholarly consensus. Repeatedly in biblical Greek, patristic Greek, papyri, inscriptions, classical and Hellenistic texts, our working hypothesis was borne out. The genitive personal modifier was consistently used for an inclusive idea, while the (ἐν plus) dative personal adjunct was almost never so used. Yet to read the literature, one would get a decidedly different picture. To say that ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις ‘can *only* mean “noteworthy among the apostles”’⁶⁶ is simply not true. It would be more accurate to say that ‘ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις *almost certainly* means “well known *to* the apostles”.’⁶⁷ Thus Junia, along with Andronicus, is recognized by Paul as well known to the apostles, not as an outstanding member of the apostolic band.⁶⁸

65 There is one other passage in Lucianus that, on first blush, suggests an inclusive notion for the ἐπίσημος ἐν construction, but it may have a different force (*Peregr.* 22.2). It shows some similarities to this text of Josephus’s in its use of the adjective.

66 Cervin, ‘“Junia(s)”’, 470 (italics added).

67 Professor Moule, in personal correspondence (letter dated 30 June 2000), noted the following: ‘It seems to me that you have *demonstrated* – by all available analogies – the fact that Grk idiom points to the exclusive view, though the idiom still surprises me.’ He further asked, ‘Why, on the ‘exclusive’ view, should the *apostles* be mentioned? Why not the community at large, or *all* the Christian communities (like διὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν in 2 Cor. 8¹⁸)?’

In response, when Paul speaks of all the churches or the community at large, he is especially referring to *his* churches (cf. Rom 16.4, 6; 1 Cor 7.17; 14.33; 2 Cor 8.18; 11.28). But when he speaks of the apostles in an absolute manner, as here, he is referring in particular to the leaders in the Jerusalem community (cf., e.g., 1 Cor 9.5; 15.7; Gal 1.17, 19). And the probable meaning of οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ in Rom 16.7, coupled with the link to the ἀπόστολοι, says nothing about Andronicus and Junia’s fame among Paul’s churches but rather that they were known even among the leaders of the Jerusalem church. Psychologically, this makes good sense too: ‘Even the apostles know Andronicus and Junia!’ is the implied ascensive notion.

68 Those who hold to the inclusive view for this passage have to ascribe a broader semantic range to ἀπόστολος, when used without adjuncts, than is normally accepted for the *corpus Paulinum*. However, if the exclusive view is correct, the semantic range of the absolute use of ἀπόστολος remains rather restricted within the Pauline epistles. As Hodge argued long ago (*Romans*, 449), ‘... the word *apostle*, unless connected with some other word, as in the phrase, “messengers (apostles) of the churches”, is very rarely, if ever, applied in the New Testament to any other than the original messengers of Jesus Christ. It is never used in Paul’s writings, except in its strict official sense. The word has a fixed meaning, from which we should not depart without special reason.’ Taking into account the slight exaggeration and pre-Saussurean linguistic description, our study is further evidence that this sentiment is on the right track, and, further, that treatments of ἀπόστολος in Paul need some revision.

There is a broader implication to this study than simply Junia's relation to the apostles: one has to wonder how there could be such a great chasm between the scholarly opinion about Rom 16.7 and what the data actually reveal. Our sense is that the unfounded opinions of a few great scholars of yesteryear have been, frankly, canonized. Bishop Lightfoot especially has influenced the present climate – from a brief note in his commentary on *Galatians*. This is not the first time such has happened in biblical scholarship, and it won't be the last.

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