

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WOMEN IN THE PAULINE MISSION*

Paul has been called everything from misogynist to misunderstood with regard to his stance on women in the ministry of the church, and a thorough re-examination of the role women played in the apostle's mission is needed to clear up some confusion. This is especially important since we are not dealing merely with the mission of one important individual, Paul. Ultimately, Paul's mission is *missio Dei*, the mission of God, and the mission of the Holy Spirit *through Paul*. Called and converted by the risen Christ, led by the Spirit, Paul's mission arguably transcends the man and his historical-cultural context. If this is true, it also and especially applies to the role women played in the Pauline mission, and it is here that we can ill afford not to listen and learn from the apostle; for today's churches are in dire need of an authoritative, definitive word on how women (and men) ought to function in the church.

Recent discussions of the role of women in relation to Paul have been plagued by at least three deficiencies.¹ First, primacy has frequently been given, not to Paul's own writings, but to contemporary concerns, and Pauline texts have been used to validate the interpreter's own preconceived notions on this issue. Proper hermeneutical procedure, however, demands that Paul's voice be heard first and foremost rather than being drowned out in the clamor of contemporary voices and concerns. Primacy must once again be given to Paul.

Second, studies on women in relation to Paul have frequently focused on Paul's *teaching* but not his *practice* (that is, how women actually functioned in churches under Paul's jurisdiction) or, less frequently, vice versa.² A comprehensive, balanced apprehension of Paul's stance toward

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¹On these and other hermeneutical issues, see my "Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical Fallacies Critiqued," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 259–83.

²At the risk of oversimplification it may be said that interpreters advocating limitations on the ministry of women in Scripture tend to focus on the Pauline teaching on women's roles while egalitarian scholars favor descriptive passages.

women's roles must take account of both: how women *should* function in the church according to Pauline teaching (didactic passages on women's roles) and how they actually *did* function in the Pauline churches and mission in keeping with the apostle's instructions (narrative passages and references to specific women in Paul's writings).³ The present essay will start with the latter question in order not to prejudge doctrinal issues and to safeguard a truly inductive approach toward the descriptive passages as much as possible. After this, the treatment of didactic passages in Paul will provide a framework from which to evaluate the first set of references.

The third problem besetting studies of women in relation to Paul is that women are regularly treated in isolation from men. The reason for this may be that the motivation underlying many such discussions is to magnify the contributions made by women to the life of the early church. However, if women are studied in isolation from men, imbalance and loss of perspective are the inevitable result. Women in the Pauline mission should therefore be studied in relation to men.⁴

In investigating descriptive passages in Paul's writings that show how women functioned in the Pauline churches and mission, this discussion will proceed in chronological order of writing. After this, Paul's explicit teaching on women's roles will be surveyed. Because I have previously written on the Pauline teaching on the role of women, this essay will summarize my findings on the didactic passages, and give more detailed attention to providing a thorough treatment of the descriptive references.

³For a helpful general treatment along these lines see T. R. Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 209–24.

⁴See E. E. Ellis, "Paul and His Co-Workers," *NTS* 17 (1970–71): 437–52 and idem, "Coworkers, Paul and His," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 183–89 (note the helpful chart in "Paul and His Co-Workers," 438="Coworkers, Paul and His," 184). See also W.-H. Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter: Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission* (WMANT 50; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1979).

*Women in the Pauline Churches and Mission**Data from Paul's Letters*⁵

A chronological survey of named women in the Pauline corpus yields the following list:⁶

Table 11: Named Women in the Pauline Corpus

| <i>Epistle</i> | <i>Names of women</i> | <i>Information provided</i> |
|----------------|--|--|
| Gal | none mentioned | |
| 1 Thess | none mentioned | |
| 2 Thess | none mentioned | |
| (2) 1 Cor | Chloe (1:11) Priscilla (16:19) | some "from Chloe" church at her house |
| 2 Cor | none mentioned | |
| (11) Rom | Phoebe (16:1) Priscilla (16:3) Mary (16:6) Junia (?) (16:7) | "our sister," servant/deacon (διάκονος) of church in Cenchrea, benefactress/ patroness (προστάτις) fellow worker (συνεργοί ; with Aquila), church at their house "worked very hard for you" "outstanding among the apostles" (ἀποστολοί ; with Andronicus) |

⁵The only woman mentioned in the Book of Acts in relation to Paul's ministry is Priscilla (18:2-3, 18-19, 26). When C. C. Kroeger, "Women in the Early Church," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (ed. R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 1216, claims that "[n]o fewer than eleven women are specifically named [in the book of Acts], and five are involved in church-related ministries," she discusses only the involvement of "Mary the mother of Jesus and her female associates" in 1:14 and Dorcas in 9:36-41. On women's roles in Acts see also C. S. Keener, "Woman and Man," in *Dictionary of the Later NT and Its Developments*, 1206-1207.

⁶The order of writing is judged to be: Gal, 1 and 2 Thess, 1 and 2 Cor, Rom, the Prison Epistles (Eph, Phil, Col, Phlm), and the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim, Titus, 2 Tim). Here, all thirteen are considered as part of the Pauline corpus, and references in them to people and places are taken seriously. Regarding the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, see my "Ascertaining," 107-108, n. 1. Unnamed women will be considered only if some identifying mark is provided, e.g. "the mother of Rufus" (Rom 16:13). The reference to Lois and Eunice (2 Tim 1:5) will not be included in the present study, because these two women had no *direct* involvement in the Pauline mission. Named women *in ancient times*, such as Hagar or Sarah, likewise fall outside the scope of the present investigation.

(Table continued on following page.)
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| <i>Epistle</i> | <i>Names of women</i> | <i>Information provided</i> |
|----------------|--|--|
| | Tryphena and Tryphosa (16:12) Persis (16:12) | "women who work hard in the Lord" "another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord" |
| | mother of Rufus (16:13) | "who has been a mother to me, too" |
| | Julia (16:15) | none |
| | sister of Nereus (16:15) | none |
| | Olympas (16:15) | none |
| Eph | none mentioned | |
| (2) Phil | Euodia & Syntyche (4:2) | coworkers (?), "contended at my side in the cause of the gospel" |
| (1) Col | Nympha (4:15) | church at her house |
| (1) Phlm | Apphia (2) | "our sister" (cf. Rom. 16:1), church at her house (with Philemon) |
| 1 Tim | none mentioned | |
| Titus | none mentioned | |
| (2) 2 Tim | Priscilla (4:19) | none |
| | Claudia (4:21) | none |

Nineteen passages in Paul's writings refer to a total of seventeen women.⁷ Two things are worth observing: First, references to women in Paul's writings are unevenly distributed, with almost two thirds occurring in Romans 16. Without this chapter, our knowledge of the ways in which women functioned in the early church would be rather minimal, at least as far as the biblical record is concerned. Second, references to women in Paul's remaining letters are either entirely absent or very sporadic. The only women mentioned outside of Romans 16 are Chloe and Priscilla (1 Cor); Euodia and Syntyche (Phil); Nympha (Col); Apphia (Phlm); and Claudia and Priscilla (2 Tim). Since the references to Chloe and Euodia and Syntyche are somewhat incidental, and virtually no information is given concerning the other women mentioned outside of Romans 16 (Nympha, Apphia, Claudia), Priscilla alone remains as a woman regarding whom more extensive information is available. We will return to this issue shortly.

⁷The only multiple reference pertains to Priscilla (three times). W. Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles in Paul's Churches: Countercultural or Conventional?," *NovT* 36 (1994): 350, n. 2, lists only thirteen women, not mentioning Persis (an oversight?), Junia (considered to be male?), Nympha (Colossians deutero-Pauline? oversight?), and Claudia (Pastorals deutero-Pauline?).

Before proceeding with a detailed study of each of the women mentioned in Paul's letters, it may be helpful to compare the references to women in Paul's letters with those to men. Including multiple references, the picture is as follows:

Table 12: Comparison of References to Women and Men in the Pauline Corpus

| <i>Pauline book</i> | <i>Ref.s to women</i> | <i>Ref.s to men</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Gal | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| 1 Thess | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 2 Thess | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 1 Cor | 2 | 13 | 15 |
| 2 Cor | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Rom | 11 | 23 | 34 |
| Eph | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Phil | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Col | 1 | 10 | 11 |
| Phlm | 1 | 9 | 10 |
| 1 Tim | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Titus | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| 2 Tim | 2 | 12 | 14 |
| Total | 19 | 88 | 107 |

Of the persons mentioned in relation to the Pauline mission in the apostle's writings, 82% are men and 18% are women. Once multiple references are eliminated, the Pauline epistles identify about five-five men by name as associated with Paul in mission, compared with seventeen women. Of course, this quantitative statistic says nothing about the status of these persons in the early church. Nevertheless, the conclusion can be drawn that, set in perspective, references to women in Paul's letters are rather sparse (especially outside of Rom 16). This shows that the major weight of responsibility borne for the Pauline mission rested on men, a fact that is frequently obscured in studies on the subject which give exclusive consideration to women.⁸

Discussion of References to Women in Paul's Letters

Before delving into the references to women in Paul's letters, it will be helpful to address two issues that pertain to the following discussion in

⁸E.g., Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles"; B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (SNTSMS 58; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). A notable exception is P. Richardson, "From Apostles to Virgins: Romans 16 and the Roles of Women in the Early Church," *TorJT* 2 (1986): 232-43.

general. These issues are, first, the fragmentary and frequently inconclusive nature of the available data, and secondly, the frequent yet fallacious hermeneutical procedure of drawing simplistic conclusions from a designation applied to a given person involved in the Pauline mission (such as “coworker”) in the assigning of that person’s overall status (e.g. of “leader”). Regarding the first issue, it must frankly be acknowledged that the information provided by Paul regarding women is frequently (if not regularly) inadequate to form firm conclusions regarding the precise nature of their ministry. This is certainly true of Chloe, Junia, Euodia and Syntyche, and a series of other women whose names appear in lists of greetings with virtually no further identification. The following discussion will seek to exercise restraint in creatively filling in these gaps and focus primarily on explicit textual and contextual cues. A survey of the relevant literature indicates that interpreters committed to women’s full participation in the church’s ministry, including leadership roles, tend to fill in gaps in ways that magnify the contributions of these women in the greatest way possible.⁹ The purpose of this procedure is readily apparent: once a certain woman (and all women mentioned in Scripture) have been elevated to the status of prototypical, paradigmatic “authoritative leaders” in the early church, they can be made models for contemporary egalitarian ministry in the church. But responsible scholarship must distinguish between explicit statements and gaps, and between firm conclusions from explicit data and mere inferences.

The second issue pertains to a fallacious form of argument that is employed with great frequency. It runs as follows: if person A is called X in one passage, and the same designation X is used for another person (person B; in the present case, a woman) in a different passage, it follows that persons A and B have the exact same ministry. But the logic of this kind of argument is demonstrably flawed: if the sky can be said to be grey, and a cat is grey, does it follow that the sky and the cat are the same in every respect? Of course not.¹⁰ *One* shared characteristic among two objects or persons, whether being grey or being Paul’s coworkers, does not establish equality between these persons or objects *in every respect*. To argue thus is to commit the fallacy of focusing exclusively on a certain degree of semantic overlap between two terms while ignoring other

⁹See e.g. E. Schüssler Fiorenza, ‘Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women’s Early Christian History’, *WW* 6 (1986): 420–33.

¹⁰For the semantic fallacy of confusing sense and reference, cf. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 63–64.

aspects of a word's range of meaning that come into play by way of context in one instance but not necessarily in another. Thus the mere fact that both Timothy and the one hand and Euodia and Syntyche on the other are called "co-workers" of Paul does not necessarily imply that all had identical ministries. All that can be said is that Timothy, Euodia and Syntyche can be called "co-workers" of Paul in a meaningful sense. But their ministries may very well differ.¹¹ The strongest piece of evidence for this distinction is the fact that the New Testament calls certain men "co-workers" of God.¹² But it stands to reason that no human being can be a "co-worker" on equal terms with God. Thus it is possible to link two people by the term "co-worker" without necessarily implying total equality (or equal authority) between those two persons. Sometimes, the word may refer to lateral "colleagues"; at other times, there may be genuine collaboration, but not on equal terms. Even in the case of Timothy, who is called a "co-worker" of Paul, it would be naive to assume that Paul and Timothy were on an equal footing. Paul frequently takes authority in sending Timothy as his emissary (e.g. Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19; 1 Thess. 3:2); not once does Timothy send Paul. But Paul can still call Timothy his "co-worker." The conclusion is obvious: when the term "coworker" (or another term potentially conveying the notion of leadership or authority) is applied to a woman in Paul's writings, we cannot necessarily assume on the basis of this designation that this woman functioned as an equal partner of Paul in his mission. This must be established on further contextual and other grounds. Schreiner says it well: "All church leaders would be fellow-workers and laborers, but not all fellow-workers and laborers are necessarily church leaders."¹³

With these preliminary caveats in place, the study of the seventeen women mentioned in Paul's writings may proceed, following the chronological order in which they are mentioned.

¹¹Cf. Ellis, "Paul and His Co-Workers," 440: "Co-workers may be described as equal to one another, as are Paul and Apollos in 1 Cor. iii. 8 f., but this is not implicit in the term." Contra e.g. S. J. Grenz, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 85: "the terms Paul uses in this text [Rom 16] suggest the participation of women in all dimensions of the ministry."

¹²Timothy is called "co-worker of God" in 1 Thess 3:2 (τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ). The same designation is applied to Paul and his associates in 1 Cor 3:9 (θεοῦ γὰρ ἔσμεν συνεργοί). Cf. Ellis, "Paul and His Co-Workers," 440, who further points out that Philo, with reference to the plagues on Egypt, can call the insects God's συνεργοί (Philo, *de vita Mosis*, 1.110). Ellis provides further examples on p. 440, n. 3.

¹³Schreiner, "Valuable Ministries of Women," 219.

Chloe. The first woman referred to in Paul's correspondence is a woman named Chloe (1 Cor 1:11). In the introduction to 1 Corinthians, Paul says that he had been informed "by some from Chloe" (ὕπὸ τῶν Χλόης) that there were divisions in the Corinthian church. These people are more likely slaves or freedmen than family members, since in the latter case a father's name would have been used, even if he were deceased.¹⁴ Moreover, in light of the fact that Paul mentions Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus as the Corinthian church's official representatives (16:15–17),¹⁵ it is probable that those "from Chloe" were people with whom Paul had more informal contact. Perhaps while on business in Corinth, they had gotten acquainted with the divisions plaguing the Corinthian church and mentioned this to Paul (upon their return?) in Ephesus.¹⁶ The scarcity of evidence does not allow any firm conclusions. All that can be said is that Chloe was presumably a well-to-do (Christian?) woman, perhaps resident in Ephesus or Corinth.

Priscilla.¹⁷ A second reference in the same letter is to Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19) in connection with her husband Aquila (who is mentioned first here) and the church meeting at their house. Paul, apparently writing from Ephesus (cf. 1 Cor 16:8), passes on Aquila's and Priscilla's greetings from there to Corinth, where he had first met this couple (cf. Acts 18:2–3). Priscilla, together with her husband Aquila, is mentioned again in Rom 16:3, where both are called Paul's "fellow-workers in Christ Jesus" who risked their lives for him.¹⁸ Apparently, Priscilla and Aquila had

¹⁴G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 54, n. 32, referring to G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (ed. and trans. J. H. Schütz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 57. See further Theissen's comments on pp. 93–94.

¹⁵Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles," 351–52, fails to address this piece of evidence. She thinks Chloe was a wealthy member of the church at Corinth, primarily because she believes the vague reference indicates that Chloe was well-known in the community.

¹⁶For a similar view, see Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 54, n. 34, referring to William Ramsay, "Historical Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians," *Expositor* 6th series (1898–99), 103–105.

¹⁷The diminutive "Prisca" is used in Acts, while "Priscilla" occurs in the epistles.

¹⁸The term "fellow-workers" (συνεργοί; used elsewhere in Rom 16:9, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 1:24; 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 3:2; and Phlm 24) denotes work in ministry, with the particular kind of ministry not specified. Cf. D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 920. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 111, claims on the basis of 1 Cor 16:16–18 and 1 Thess 5:12 that the term "co-worker" implies "a

returned to Rome by that time (cf. Acts 18:2). The final reference to Priscilla and Aquila is found in 2 Tim 4:19 where Paul sends greetings to the couple (back in Ephesus?) from his Roman prison.

In four of the six instances where she is mentioned in the New Testament, Priscilla's name appears before that of her husband (Acts 18:18–19, 26; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19).¹⁹ Scholars have speculated that the reason for this is that Priscilla was converted before her husband, perhaps having led Aquila to faith in Christ, or that she played an even more prominent part in the life and work of the church than her husband.²⁰ Alternatively, it has been conjectured that "Prisca was the more dominant of the two or of higher social status, and she may either have provided the financial resources for the business or have been the brains behind it."²¹ But none of this is explicitly stated in the text.

According to Acts 18:26, the couple invited Apollos to their home and explained to him "the way of God more adequately." Some have concluded from this that Priscilla serves as a paradigm for a woman teacher or preacher. But this claim is unwarranted. All that can be said is that Priscilla, together with and in the presence of her husband, and in the context of their home, helped provide corrective instruction to a man, Apollos.²² Moreover, the genre of the book of Acts is historical narrative, so that care must be taken not to exaggerate the alleged normative charac-

leadership function involving some form of authoritative speech," whether "teaching, preaching, or both." But his argument is fallacious, for even if it were said in certain contexts that certain *συνεργοί* were in positions of "authority" or "leadership" (notoriously slippery terms), it is illegitimate to conclude that this necessarily applies to everyone designated Paul's "co-worker" in his letters. To argue thus is to confuse meaning and reference. See above.

¹⁹Aquila is mentioned first in Acts 18:2 and 1 Cor 16:19.

²⁰C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 2:784.

²¹J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38b; Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 892.

²²The wording chosen by C. S. Keener, "Man and Woman," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 589, that "Luke portrays her [Priscilla] as a *fellow-minister* with her husband, joining him in instructing *another minister*, Apollos (Acts 18:26)," is misleading, because it generally suggests an *ordained* minister in modern parlance, which (as far as we know) neither of those people was. See already the heading in C. S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 240: "Priscilla, a woman minister."

ter of Priscilla's practice for all women (even though there is no indication that Luke is critical of what Priscilla did).²³

Nevertheless, according to the book of Acts and Paul's epistles, Priscilla and Aquila were among Paul's most strategic allies in his Gentile mission (καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἐθνῶν; Rom 16:4), playing important roles in such major centres as Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome.²⁴ Together they hosted house churches in their home wherever they went, instructed others such as Apollos, and even "risked their necks" for Paul (Rom 16:4).²⁵

Phoebe. Paul's epistle to the Romans contains references to several women.²⁶ It should be noted that the concluding chapter of Romans includes an unusually large list of people, probably because Paul had not planted or even visited the church before and thus wanted to establish that he knew, either personally or through other means, a significant number of individuals who were now members of the Roman congregation in order to solicit the church's support for his mission to Spain (Rom 15:24).²⁷

²³Contra Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 156, who claims that, "[b]y including this story [Priscilla and Aquila instructing Apollos], Luke reveals the new roles women ought to be assuming in his view in the Christian community" and that "[b]y the very fact that Luke portrays women performing these various roles, he shows how the Gospel liberates and creates new possibilities for women." It is hard to escape the conclusion that Witherington's analysis is significantly influenced by contemporary agendas while flowing less from an accurate historical apprehension of the "first horizon" of Scripture.

²⁴Cf. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 114.

²⁵C. C. Kroeger, "Women in the Early Church," 1218, in a section of considerable length, seeks to revive the suggestion made by von Harnack that Priscilla and Aquila might be the authors of the epistle to the Hebrews, complete with the conspiracy theory that "if Priscilla were perceived as the primary author, there might be a tendency to suppress this fact." But this relies on the unconvincing argument that the use of a masculine singular to refer to the writer at Heb 11:32 (δηγούμενον) "may [merely] indicate male input (!) [rather than male authorship]."

²⁶For an analysis of Rom 16 in light of ancient inscriptional evidence, see esp. P. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* (WUNT 2/18; Mohr-Siebeck, 1987), 135–53.

²⁷Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 734. For a decisive refutation of the view taken by some that Rom 16 is not an integral part of Romans, see Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:5–11. Among the most extensive arguments against the "Ephesian hypothesis" concerning Rom 16 are W.-H. Ollrog, "Die Abfassungsverhältnisse von Röm 16," in *Kirche. Festschrift*

The first woman mentioned is Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2), “our sister” (that is, a fellow-Christian) and “a servant (**διάκονος**) of the church in Cenchrea.”²⁸ Paul commends Phoebe to the Roman church, using the technical epistolary expression for introducing a friend to other acquaintances (**Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν**).²⁹ He asks the believers in Rome to give this woman any help she might need, again using the usual expression in a letter of recommendation, “in whatever affair she may need [you or your help]” (**παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρήζη πράγματι**).³⁰ The reason for Paul’s request is that the woman so commended “has been a great help (**πρόστατις**) to many people, including me.” This may refer to the hospitality extended to Paul when he visited Cenchrea at the occasion of his three-month stay in Corinth (cf. Acts 20:2–3).³¹ In the present instance, Phoebe may have been the bearer of Paul’s letter to Rome, which would explain why Paul mentions her first in his list of greetings in the concluding chapter of Romans.³²

The designation **διάκονος** may be a generic reference to this woman’s ministry as a “servant” (cf. e.g. 2 Cor 3:6; 11:23; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7). More likely, in light of “the official-sounding nature of the phrase by which Paul identifies her” (a **διάκονος** of the church at Cenchrea);³³ the use of the masculine term **διάκονος**;³⁴ and perhaps also because of the conjoined term **πρόστατις**,³⁵ Phoebe served as a deaconess (cf. esp. 1

für Günther Bornkamm zum 75. Geburtstag (ed. D. Lührmann and G. Strecker; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980), 221–44, esp. 234 (see also Ollrog’s comments on Paul’s intentions in writing Rom 16 on pp. 239–42); and Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen*, 124–35.

²⁸The term **ἐκκλησία**, as in vv. 4, 5, 16, and 23, probably refers to a local congregation, presumably a house church.

²⁹Keener, “Man and Woman,” 589, notes that twice as many women as men are commended in Rom 16, adding that “[t]his may indicate his [Paul’s] sensitivity to the opposition women undoubtedly faced for their ministry in some quarters.” Paul may well commend Phoebe, in this instance, for a variety of other reasons than this.

³⁰Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 728, 731.

³¹Ibid., 731.

³²Ibid., 729.

³³So S. B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1980), 119.

³⁴T. R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 787.

³⁵Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 888–89, is probably correct in suggesting that Phoebe’s two roles, **διάκονος** and **πρόστατις**, should be seen as linked. He is

Tim 3:11).³⁶ Deacons were set apart for “the practical service of the needy” in the early church (cf. Phil 1:1; Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:8–13).³⁷ They were to be of proven Christian character but, unlike overseers, not required to be able to teach (cf. 1 Tim 3:2 with 1 Tim 3:8–10, 12–13) or to participate in the governing of the church (cf. 1 Tim 2:12; 5:17). Neuer maintains that the office of deaconess “certainly did not involve public proclamation of the word, teaching, or leading the church. Perhaps it involved serving the congregation, by bringing material help to the needy (Rom 16:2), in serving women, the sick, and strangers.”³⁸

As a wealthy woman, a “benefactress” or “patroness” (προστάτις, the feminine form of **προστάτης**), Phoebe would have used her financial means to come “to the aid of others, especially foreigners, by providing housing and financial aid and by representing their interests before local authorities.”³⁹ This would have been a needed ministry in a busy seaport

followed by France, *Women in the Church's Ministry: A Test Case for Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997 [1995]), 88.

³⁶See esp. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, 119–23.

³⁷Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:781; Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 913; W. Neuer, *Man and Woman in Christian Perspective* (trans. G. J. Wenham; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991 [1981]), 121. See also the comments by Theissen, *Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 88–89. Contra F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 122, who in his discussion of Acts 6 suggests that “it might be better to render it [the term **διάκονος**] by the more general term ‘minister’ ” and is followed by Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 239; and esp. Ellis, “Paul and His Co-Workers,” 442 (following D. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 27–32), who claims that “the *diakonoi* appear to be a special class of co-workers, those who are active in preaching and teaching. They appear in Paul’s circle not only as itinerant workers but also as workers in local congregations, such as Phoebe (Rom. xvi. 1).” Ellis reiterates this claim in “Coworkers, Paul and His,” 185: “It [the term *diakonos*] is probably best rendered ‘minister’ since it refers to workers with special activities in preaching and teaching.” But Ellis fails to address the absence of the requirement “able to teach” for deacons in 1 Tim 3:8–13, and the rather general nature of the majority of New Testament references to **διάκονος** just cited. See also the following discussion and note.

³⁸Neuer, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 121. Contra D. C. Arichea, Jr., “Who Was Phoebe? Translating *Diakonos* in Romans 16.1,” *BT* 39 (1988): 409, who contends, without adducing evidence, that **διάκονος** in Rom 16:1 describes “a person with special functions in the pastoral and administrative life of the church; and such functions would most probably include pastoral care, teaching, and even missionary work.”

³⁹So Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 916. The term **προστάτις** often refers to the function of “protection,” such as in Appius, *BC* 1.11. Cf. also Cranfield,

such as Cenchrea. “Phoebe, then, was probably a woman of high social standing and some wealth, who put her status, resources, and time at the services of traveling Christians, like Paul, who needed help and support.”⁴⁰ However, this does not mean, as is alleged with some frequency, that patronesses were leaders of houses.⁴¹ Moreover, to call her “president,” or even “leader” of the church at Cenchrea, goes beyond the evidence, as does the claim that “Phoebe held a position of considerable responsibility, prominence, and authority in her congregation.”⁴²

Junia. A controversial reference is that to Junia in Rom 16:7, who, together with Andronicus, is called “notorious among the ἀποστόλοι” (ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις).⁴³ The accusative Ἰουνίαν could derive

Romans, 2:783, who comments that the choice of the expression προστάτις “implies that Phoebe was possessed of some social position, wealth and independence”; and Theissen, *Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 115, argues, on the strength of the use of προϊσταμένος in Rom 12:8, that Phoebe may have held the formal position of “a person in charge of the charitable work of the church,” but this is pure conjecture.

⁴⁰Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 916.

⁴¹Cf. e.g. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 240, and the critique in the following note.

⁴²Cf. R. R. Schulz, “A Case for ‘President’ Phoebe in Romans 16:2,” *LTIJ* 24 (1990): 124–27; the list of commentators given in Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 731; and Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 239. Schulz, in seeking to make his case for “president” Phoebe in Rom 16:2, (1) inappropriately links the verb form προϊστήμι with the noun προστάτις; (2) inappropriately equates the meaning of the feminine προστάτις with the masculine προστάτης (cf. Schreiner, “Valuable Ministries of Women,” 219–20; the same flaw can be detected in Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 240, whose evidence for his suggested meaning of the term προστάτις consists of an article on προστάτης and two references in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius likewise featuring προστάτης [p. 252, n. 26]); (3) unduly minimizes the possible connection between προστάτις and the verb παρίστημι (which means “to help”) in the same verse (cf. Schreiner, “Valuable Ministries of Women,” 219); (4) unduly suggests that προστάτις must mean “leader” or “president” here because it is linked with διάκονος (which, whether it is used here as a technical term or not, bears the original meaning “servant” and was in any case not equivalent to the function of overseer in the early church); and (5) adduces tenuous background information regarding the role of priestesses in (goddess) worship in Greek religion. Moreover, it is puzzling how Schulz can claim that “*prostatitis* may be the closest NT word we have to ‘president’”: why not terms such as ἐπίσκοπος (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7)?

⁴³Regarding the latter phrase, see further the comments below.

either from the nominative **Ἰούνια** (accusative accented as **Ἰουνίαν**), in which case the person referred to would be a woman, or **Ἰουνιάς** (accusative accented as **Ἰουνιᾶν**), a male name.⁴⁴ The name is a Latin one transcribed into Greek.⁴⁵ It is taken by some to be a shortened form of *Junianus*, *Junianius*, or *Junilius*.⁴⁶ But “[i]f *Iounias* is indeed a shortened form of the common name *Iounianus*, why then does the name *Iunias* never occur?”⁴⁷ Indeed, “(1) the female Latin name *Junia* occurs more than 250 times in Greek and Latin inscriptions found in Rome alone, whereas the male name *Junias* is unattested anywhere; and (2) when Greek manuscripts began to be accented, scribes wrote the feminine **Ἰουνίαν** (“*Junia*”).”⁴⁸ In 1977, B. Brooten could state that “we do not have a single shred of evidence that the name *Junias* ever existed . . . all of the philological evidence points to the feminine *Junia*.”⁴⁹ In the past

⁴⁴Both UBS 3 and 4 as well as Nestle-Aland 25th and 26th print the masculine accentuation. Note that a few textual witnesses (esp. p⁴⁶ [ca. 200 AD]) read **Ἰουλιαν**, which Metzger regards as a “clerical error” (cf. Rom 16:15). Cf. B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (corr. ed.; New York: UBS, 1975), 539.

⁴⁵So Cervin, “Note Regarding ‘Junia(s),’ ” 464–70.

⁴⁶So *BADG*, 380: “**Ἰουνιάς, ἄ, ὁ Junias** (not found elsewh., prob. short form of the common *Junianus*; cf. Bl.-D. §125.2; Rob. 172) . . . The possibility, fr. a purely lexical point of view, that this is a woman’s name **Ἰουνία, ας, Junia** . . . deserves consideration (but s. Ltzm., Hdb. ad loc.).” However, the assertion by H. Lietzmann, *Die Briefe des Apostels Paulus: I. An die Römer* (HNT 3; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1906), 73: “**Ἰουνιαν** muss wegen der folgenden Aussagen einen Mann bezeichnen, also **Ἰουνιάς** = *Junianus*,” is sheer dogmatism. Bl.-D. §125, 2 cite as possible parallel the shortening of **Σιλουανός** (Paul and 1 Pet 5:12) to **Σιλᾶς** (Acts) or **Σιλέας**; V. Fàbrega, “War Junia(s), der hervorragende Apostel (Rom. 16,7), eine Frau?” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 27/28 (1984–85): 49, adds the shortening of **Ἀντιπᾶς** for **Ἀντίπατρος** (Rev 2:13), of **Κλωπᾶς** or **Κλεοπᾶς** for **Κλεόπατρος** (John 19:25; Luke 24:18), and of **Λουκάς** for the Latin *Lucius* or *Lucanus* (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24). See also M-M, 306 who comment that “**Ἰουνιάς** is probably a contracted form of *Iounianus*, which is common in the inscr., e.g. *CIL* III. 4020.”

⁴⁷Cervin, “Note Regarding ‘Junia(s),’ ” 466. Similarly, R. R. Schulz, “Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?” *ExpTim* 98 (1986–87): 109: “The Junias theory is an argument from silence.”

⁴⁸B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; New York: UBS, 1994), 475. For a survey of patristic exegesis, see esp. Fàbrega, “War Junia(s) . . . eine Frau?” 54–63, who discusses in particular the references in Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Origen.

⁴⁹B. Brooten, “Junia . . . Outstanding among the Apostles (Romans 16:7),” in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, ed. L. and A. Swidler (New York: Paulist, 1977), 142–43.

twenty years, no one has been able to refute these claims, and no further evidence has come to light.⁵⁰ In light of these arguments, and the complete lack of evidence for the existence of a male name “Junias,” it must be concluded that, until evidence to the contrary is forthcoming, the person referred to in Rom 16:7 is a woman named Junia.

Andronicus and Junia are identified as Paul’s **συγγενεῖς**, which could mean “ ‘fellow-countrymen’ [that is, Jews; cf. Rom 9:3], and not ‘relations’ ” [that is, relatives].⁵¹ In this case it is unclear, however, why Paul, in chapter 16, calls (except for Andronicus and Junia) only Herodion (v. 11), Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater (v. 21) Jews, but not Aquila and Priscilla (v. 3), Mary (v. 6), or Rufus and his mother (v. 13).⁵² It is therefore more likely that **συγγενεῖς μου** means “my friends” or “my close associates” as an expression indicating collaboration in ministry, equivalent to the expression **ἀγαπητός μου** in Rom 16:5, 8–9.⁵³ This would explain why even Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, who are commonly suspected not to

⁵⁰Reference should be made to Brooten’s claim (“Junia . . . Outstanding among the Apostles,” 144, n. 4) that Migne’s edition of the text of the earliest commentator on Rom 16:7, Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–253/54), has *Junia* emended to *Junias*, but that the MSS themselves have *Junia* or *Julia*. To date, I have not been able to obtain these MSS to verify Brooten’s claim. But see Fàbrega, “War Junia(s) . . . eine Frau?” 59, n. 51, who points out that the name Junia is found in a commentary written by Hraban of Fulda in c. CE 820, which the latter claims to have taken verbatim from Origen’s (Rufinus’) commentary (is this the basis for Brooten’s claim?). In his extensive discussion (pp. 58–60), Fàbrega also notes that Origen’s Romans commentary, written in CE 244, has been preserved only in a Latin version written by Rufinus in CE 404. In this version, Rufinus frequently condenses Origen’s comments or even replaces them with his own. Also, Rufinus’ interpretation is based not on the Greek, but the Latin, text of the Roman epistle. With reference to the work of E. von der Goltz and O. Bauernfeind, Fàbrega concludes that it is likely that Origen himself did not comment at all on the list of names in Rom 16. The implication of this is that Origen should in future discussions of the issue be excluded as evidence for a patristic interpretation of **Ἰουνίαν** as male (or, of course, female, for that matter).

⁵¹So Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:788, referring to W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902 [1895]), 423. Contra Ellis, “Coworkers, Paul and His,” 186, who seeks to make a case that **συγγενεῖς** in Paul’s writings regularly refers to the apostle’s literal relatives. Consequently, Ellis conjectures that Andronicus and Junia “were very likely Jerusalem relatives who were missionaries from that church to Rome.”

⁵²Cf. Fàbrega, “War Junia(s) . . . eine Frau?” 49.

⁵³Fàbrega, “War Junia(s) . . . eine Frau?,” 50; following W. Michaelis, “**συγγενής κτλ.**,” *TDNT* 7:741–42.

have been Jews, can be called *συγγενεῖς μου* by Paul. Andronicus and Junia are further called his “fellow prisoners” (*συναιχμάλωτος*), a designation elsewhere applied only to Epaphras (Phlm 23) and Aristarchus (Col 4:10). Nothing is known about the specifics of this imprisonment; it is usually assumed that Paul refers to a literal imprisonment, which appears probable, though a figurative use of the term cannot be ruled out.⁵⁴

Moreover, Andronicus and Junia are identified as *ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις*, “notorious among the ἀποστολοί.”⁵⁵ Most commentators see the reference as inclusive, that is, as including Andronicus and Junia among the circle of ἀποστολοί, whatever meaning is assigned to this term (see below). However, it is possible that the reference is exclusive, that is, Andronicus and Junia are said to be “notorious” (i.e. well known) among the circle of ἀποστολοί (cf. PssSol 2:6: *ἐπισήμῳ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*, “a spectacle among the Gentiles”). If so, Andronicus and Junia could be church workers or Christians whose ministry is not further specified and who are identified as well-known among the apostolic circle (with ἀποστολοί perhaps having a more narrow compass).

Alternatively (and perhaps more likely),⁵⁶ “among” may be used in an

⁵⁴Cf. W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983), 57: “Andronicus and Junia(s) (Rom. 16:7) have also moved from the East, where they were imprisoned with Paul somewhere, sometime, to Rome . . .” Possibly Paul does not mean to indicate that Andronicus and Junia were imprisoned with him at the same time or in the same place but simply that they too had been imprisoned for the faith at some point. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 739. For an argument for a figurative use of this expression, see esp. Kittel, “*αἰχμάλωτος*,” *TDNT* 1:196–97.

⁵⁵This is the almost unanimous view of commentators, including Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 894; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:789, referring also to R. Schnackenburg, “Apostles Before and During Paul’s Time,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce* (ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 287–303; and Cervin, “Note Regarding ‘Junia(s),’” 470, who also notes the Vulgate rendering, “qui sunt nobiles in [i.e. among] apostolis.” The term *ἐπίσημος* is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in Matt 27:16 (referring to the “notorious” prisoner Barabbas) and occurs eight times in the LXX (Gen 30:42; Esth 5:4; 1 Macc 11:37; 14:48; 2 Macc 15:36; 3 Macc 6:1; Pss 2:6; 17:30), generally to denote that which is distinguished or conspicuous as over against that which is insignificant, nondescript or otherwise unnoticed.

⁵⁶For this inclusive sense, see Lucian, *Merc. Cond.* 28.5: “he will be conspicuous among the clagues” (*ἐπίσημος ἔσῃ ἐν τοῖς ἐπαινοῦσι* [2nd cent. CE]); Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 10.14: “This man became most distinguished among the Greeks” (*ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐπισημώτατος ἐν τοῖς Ἑλλησι* [4th cent. CE]); Concilium Ephesenum 1.1.7.152.26: “a man prominent among the ἐκκλησιαστικοί” (*ἀνὴρ αἰεὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐκκλησιαστικοῖς* [5th cent. CE]).

inclusive sense, in which case this couple would be included among the **ἀποστολοί**, whichever sense the latter term has. In this case, if Junia is indeed a woman, and if she is called “notorious among the **ἀποστολοί**,” does the presence of a woman “**ἀπόστολος**” in the New Testament imply, then, that the early church placed no restrictions on the ministry of women?⁵⁷ This depends largely on the question of whether “apostle” is here used in a narrow or broad sense. Four types of use can be discerned in the writings of the New Testament. First, **ἀπόστολος** may refer to the Twelve (e.g. Matt 10:2). Second, the term is used for someone like Paul who had seen the Lord and was commissioned by him to a special ministry (e.g. 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Col 1:1). Third, the expression may denote an emissary sent out to perform a certain task or convey a particular message (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). And fourth, **ἀπόστολος** may refer to an itinerant missionary (e.g. Acts 14:4, 14 of Barnabas).⁵⁸

To which of these does the context in Rom 16:7 point in the case of Andronicus and Junia? At the outset, it is highly unlikely that these otherwise unknown figures are said here to stand out among noted apostles such as the Twelve (an impossibility) or Peter, James, or even Paul.⁵⁹ The sense “messenger, emissary” (cf. 2 Cor 8:23: **ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν**; Phil 2:25: **ὑμῶν ἀπόστολος**) appears more likely.⁶⁰ However, the designation “outstanding among the messengers” seems a bit awkward, for the role of

⁵⁷The ideological stake in this question is helpfully acknowledged by Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 923. Keener, “Man and Woman,” 589, may have a point when he comments that the proposal that **Ἰουνίαν** in Rom 16:7 represents a shortened form of *Iounianus* or the like “rests on the assumption that a woman could not be an apostle, rather than on any evidence inherent in the text itself.” Similarly, France, *Women in the Church’s Ministry*, 86–87. See also Brooten, “Junia . . . Outstanding among the Apostles”; and more recently, Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 211.

⁵⁸Cf. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 115, referring to C. K. Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 23ff.; and Schnackenburg, “Apostles Before and During Paul’s Time,” 293–94.

⁵⁹So rightly Ellis, “Coworkers, Paul and His,” 186. Contra Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 894, who exceeds the evidence when he “firmly conclude[s] . . . that one of the foundation apostles of Christianity [viz. Eph. 2:20] was a woman and a wife.”

⁶⁰This view is adopted by J. Piper and W. Grudem, “Chapter 2: 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), 81, who ascribe to Andronicus and Junias [sic] “some kind of itinerant ministry,” citing as parallels Phil 2:25 and 2 Cor 8:23.

messenger tends to be rather inconspicuous, and this description is like designating a person as an “extraordinary usher.” The meaning “travelling missionary” is therefore most likely, especially in light of 1 Cor 9:5 (cf. Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor 12:28; 1 Thess 2:7; Eph 4:11).⁶¹ In this case, Andronicus and Junia would be identified as “outstanding among (itinerant) missionaries” (an important office in the early church as well as today), perhaps in part because they were converted before Paul (Rom 16:7), which means that they must have become believers during the very early days of the church.

If this is the case, Andronicus and Junia were a distinguished senior missionary couple, and the designation *ἀπόστολος*, applied to both of them jointly, does not imply that Junia by herself occupied an authoritative leadership position in a local church or in the early Christian movement.⁶² Indeed, if Junia is mentioned in the present passage in tandem with Andronicus (who is unquestionably male) *because she is his wife* (note that other husband and wife pairs in Romans 16 include Priscilla and Aquila in v. 3 and probably Philologus and Julia in v. 15),⁶³ they would have exercised their travelling ministry jointly rather than indepen-

⁶¹Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:789, followed by Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 115; Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 924; Ellis, “Coworkers, Paul and His,” 186; France, *Women in the Church’s Ministry*, 87; and Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen*, 137. Fàbrega, “War Junia(s) . . . eine Frau?” 53 also cites the German commentators Lietzmann, Schmithals, Schnackenburg, and Wilkens as holding this view.

⁶²Contra Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 96, who claims that “the weight of evidence favors interpreting Junia as an authoritative apostle.”

⁶³This is called by some the consensus view of ancient commentators until the twelfth or thirteenth century (e.g. G. Lohfink; for a list of references, see Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 737–38). But this is inaccurate, since accented ninth-century minuscule MSS (e.g. 33) already bear the masculine form *Ἰουνιᾶν* and never the feminine form *Ἰουνίαν* (cf. P. Lampe, “Junia/Junias: Sklavenherkunft im Kreise der vorpaulinischen Apostel [Röm 16:7],” *ZNW* 76 [1985]: 132, n. 1; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 738). Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 242, appropriately comments that “[i]f Junia is a woman apostle traveling with Andronicus, a male apostle, certain scandal would result if they were not brother and sister or husband and wife. Since most apostles, unlike Paul, were married (1 Cor. 9:5), the early church was probably right when it understood them as a husband-wife apostolic team” (this does not imply endorsement of Keener’s use of the terms “apostles” and “apostolic” in this statement). See further J. Jeremias, “Paarweise Sendung im Neuen Testament,” in *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of Thomas Walter Manson* (ed. A. J. B. Higgins; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 139, who calls Andronicus and Junias a “Sendbotenpaar der Urgemeinde” in keeping with the Jewish pattern, emulated by both Jesus and Paul, of sending out messengers in pairs.

dently, similar to Priscilla and Aquila or the pattern mentioned in 1 Cor 9:5, so that even in this function Junia should not be elevated to “apostle” in isolation from (her husband?) Andronicus.⁶⁴

Other Women Referred to in Romans 16. Several other women referred to in Romans are said to have “worked (very) hard” (ἐκοπίασεν) for other believers (Mary; Rom 16:6) or “in the Lord” (Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis; Rom 16:12). No further information is available for Mary, a common Jewish name in that day. The root underlying the names Tryphena and Tryphosa means “soft” or “delicate,” and it is possible that Paul was aware of the irony of attributing hard work to two women thus called. Tryphena and Tryphosa may have been (twin) sisters, since it was common to assign children names from the same Greek root;⁶⁵ or these two women were grouped together because of the similarity of their names.⁶⁶

Πέρσις means “Persian woman” and was a typical Greek slave name.⁶⁷ In the case of each of these women, the reference to their hard work may simply pertain to a variety of good works which were to be the hallmark of a godly woman (cf. 1 Tim 2:10), even though this is not stated explicitly.⁶⁸

Also in Romans, mention is made of Julia (16:15); the (unnamed) sister of Nereus (16:15); and Olympas (16:15). In context, these probably refer to the wife (or, less likely, sister; Julia) and children (Nereus and his sister) of Philologus who is mentioned first, together with another member of their family or particular house church (Olympas) and others

⁶⁴Cf. Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 923, who calls Andronicus and Junia “this husband and wife ministry team.” Similarly, Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 894: “The most natural way to read the two names within the phrase is as husband and wife.” Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), 70, n. 29, cites Clement of Alexandria, who wrote that the apostles took their wives with them as “fellow ministers” through whom “the Lord’s teaching penetrated into the women’s quarters without scandal” (*Stromateis* 3.6.53). Note also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 739: “They could be considered paired messengers of the gospel, even if husband and wife.”

⁶⁵Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 925, n. 54.

⁶⁶Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:793.

⁶⁷Ibid.; Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen*, 145.

⁶⁸Cf. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 894, who points out that κοπίω is a general term that does not denote leadership per se. But see A. von Harnack, “Κόπος (Κοπιᾶν, Οἱ Κοπιῶντες) im frühchristlichen Sprachgebrauch,” *ZNW* 27 (1928): 1–10, esp. 5, who contends that κοπιᾶν was used by Paul to refer to missionary service as well as to service in the church: “the Christian who works on behalf of others performs ‘hard labor’” (my translation); and Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen*, 137, who calls the term a “terminus technicus der Missionsprache.”

(similarly, v. 14).⁶⁹ Because these are common names for slaves and freedmen, it is frequently suggested that they were slaves of the imperial household in Rome.⁷⁰ The list of names in Paul's letter to the Romans also includes the (unnamed) mother of Rufus (16:13) "who has been a mother to me, too." The Rufus mentioned here may be the person referred to in Mark 15:21 where Simon of Cyrene is identified as "the father of Alexander and Rufus"; but this identification, while plausible, is less than certain. Paul adds that this woman was *ἐκλεκτός ἐν κυρίῳ*, "chosen in (by) the Lord."

Euodia and Syntyche. The final group of references is found in the prison epistles. In Philippians, Paul makes mention of two women named Euodia and Syntyche, who had contended at his side in the cause of the gospel but who now needed to work out their differences with the help of an arbitrator (Phil 4:2). The surprising fact that Paul chooses to identify both women by name may indicate that their disagreement threatened the unity of the entire church. Otherwise, it is hard to explain why Paul would embarrass these women by referring to them by name in a letter to be read aloud to the public assembly. Indeed, the book of Acts indicates that ("prominent") women played a significant part in the newly founded churches in Macedonia (16:14–15, 40; 17:4, 12).

Paul mentions that Euodia and Syntyche had contended (the verb is *συναθλέω*) at his side in the cause of the gospel (4:3).⁷¹ The fact that the same expression is used in 1:27 (the only other New Testament occurrence of this term) with reference to the entire congregation at Philippi suggests that these two women had participated in Paul's own struggle for the advance of the gospel as had the Philippian church as a whole (cf. 1:30).⁷² To have contended together with Paul in (the proclamation of) the gospel and to be called his "co-worker" is a fairly broad designation

⁶⁹Ibid., 2:795; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 742.

⁷⁰See e.g. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 898.

⁷¹See further *IPol.* 6:1: "Labor with one another, struggle together, run together, suffer together, rest together, rise up together as God's stewards and assessors and servants" (*συγκοπιᾶτε ἀλλήλοις, συναθλείτε, συντρέχετε, συμπάσχετε, συγκοιμάσθε, συνεγείρεσθε ὡς θεοῦ οἰκόνομοι καὶ πάρεδροι καὶ ὑπηρέται*), advice which is addressed to the entire Christian community.

⁷²P. T. O'Brien, *Commentary on Philippians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 481–82. The suggestion by Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles," 353, that Euodia and Syntyche "belonged to a team of men and women evangelizers" is unduly specific and thus exceeds the evidence.

and does not necessarily imply that Euodia and Syntyche had the same kind of ministry as Paul.⁷³ Internal evidence suggests that the nature of the Philippians' "partnership in the gospel" with Paul (Phil 1:5) centered significantly around their financial support of his ministry (Phil 4:10–19; cf. 2 Cor 8–9; Rom 15:25–29) and their willingness to suffer with him for the sake of the gospel (Phil 1:30).⁷⁴

In particular, the verbal parallel with 1:27 (*συναθλέω*) indicates that Paul is thinking of Euodia and Syntyche in the same way as he thought of the community as a whole, that is, as believers who bore courageous testimony to their faith and who shared sacrificially of their financial resources in order to advance the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The claim that Euodia and Syntyche were "important leaders," "two influential church leaders," "two women church leaders," or the like, is therefore overblown.⁷⁵

Other Women Referred to in the Prison Epistles and the Pastorals. In the closing section of Colossians, Paul includes in his greetings a reference to Nympha and the church meeting at her house (Col 4:15).⁷⁶ No further information is available. In his letter to Philemon, Paul refers to "our sister" Apphia (Phlm 2), a designation elsewhere in Paul's writings used only with reference to Phoebe in Rom 16:1. Apphia, not a recipient of the letter but merely included in the introductory salutation,⁷⁷ has been

⁷³See already the preliminary observations made above. Note also the early variant *καὶ τῶν συνεργῶν μου καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν* ("and my coworkers, and the others"; Codex Sinaiticus, p¹⁶), which, if original, would suggest that the women and Clement are not included in the category of "co-workers." Cf. M. Silva, *Philippians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 223.

⁷⁴This is argued persuasively by F. X. Malinowski, "The Brave Women of Philippi," *BTB* 15 (1985): 60–64.

⁷⁵The references are to V. P. Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 105; H. Koester, "Letter to the Philippians," *IDBSup* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 666; and R. Scroggs, "Woman in the NT," *IDBSup* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 966.

⁷⁶There is some uncertainty as to whether this refers to a man or a woman, but on balance a female reference seems to be preferred. Cf. P. T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC 44; Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 256; Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 71–72. On house churches, see also references to Philemon (Phlm 2; see further next note), Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40), Gaius (Rom 16:23), and Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5).

⁷⁷The reference to the church meeting in "your" (*σοῦ*) house is singular and refers to Philemon alone; cf. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 273. Contra Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles," 351, who claims that Apphia is one of "the main leaders of that otherwise faceless assembly," citing as evidence only that this

identified as Philemon's wife from early times.⁷⁸ If this is correct, it would explain Paul's mention of her immediately after Philemon, since as Philemon's wife Apphia would wish to know about the situation surrounding the runaway slave Onesimus as well.

Finally, Paul's second letter to Timothy makes mention of a woman named Claudia (4:21). Again, no further information is available.

Evaluation. All of Paul's travel companions were male.⁷⁹ This follows the precedent established by Jesus.⁸⁰ None of the women mentioned in relation to the Pauline mission serves as pastor-teacher or elder. Phoebe apparently functioned as a deaconess and is also called benefactress. If Junia was a woman (which is highly probable), she probably served as an itinerant missionary or, less likely, as a messenger, together with her presumed husband, Andronicus. Priscilla, together with her husband Aquila, had a church meeting in her house, as did Nympha and Apphia (with Philemon). Priscilla is also shown to have had a (leading?) part in instructing Apollos in her home, again together with her husband.

The positions of Euodia and Syntyche in the Philippian church were apparently significant enough to threaten the unity of the entire congregation. These two women were (in all probability) counted among Paul's co-workers and had contended at his side for the gospel (even though it is

is the view of E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroads, 1988), 177.

⁷⁸Cf. E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971 [1968]), 190 (followed by O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 273): "Since her [Apphia's] name follows immediately after Philemon's, one can assume that she is his wife," referring also to Theodoret: "Paul . . . adds the name of the wife . . . to that of the husband" (*Paulus . . . marito . . . jungit uxorem*).

⁷⁹W. Hadorn, "Die Gefährten und Mitarbeiter des Paulus," in *Aus Schrift und Geschichte. Theologische Abhandlungen Adolf Schlatter zu seinem 70. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1922), 73.

⁸⁰Luke 8:1-3 is no real exception, for the thrust of this passage is not that women were among those who were part of Jesus' regular travel companions but that some women who had benefited from his ministry supported him and the Twelve in their itinerant work. See D. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 713, who notes, with reference to C. H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 92-93, and B. Witherington, "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples-Luke 8:1-3," *ZNW* 70 (1979): 243-48, that it was unusual for women to travel with a rabbi in Jesus' day.

unclear precisely which form this partnership had taken). Rufus' mother had been like a mother to Paul, at least on one memorable occasion. Other women had worked very hard for other believers in the Lord (Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis). Too little is known about Chloe to ascertain her position in relation to the Corinthian church. Julia (possibly the wife of Philologus), the sister of Nereus (Julia's daughter?), and Claudia are mentioned without specific information about the nature of their ministry.

Overall, the listed data indicate that the influence of women was to a significant extent informal and frequently centered around their home. There are instances of women exercising hospitality, including hosting a house church; devoting themselves to a variety of good works; having a part in raising their children in the faith; and, if wealthy, helping others financially, be it with or without a formal position in the church. Some were engaged in missionary work together with their husbands. What is more, when reading passages such as the sixteenth chapter of Romans, one gets the impression that women were thoroughly integrated in the Pauline churches, having a vital part in the mission and life of the early Christian community and fulfilling roles of significant, albeit not ultimate, responsibility within the church.⁸¹ This included "missionary work, carrying letters, serving in charitable tasks as deaconesses, providing aid or shelter for traveling apostles, etc."⁸² In the exercise of their respective roles, they functioned fully within the parameters of their Graeco-Roman surroundings.⁸³ The roles exercised by them also conformed to the pat-

⁸¹Cf. Schreiner, "Valuable Ministries of Women," 222: "it is clear that Biblical writers consistently ascribe ultimate responsibility to men for the leadership of the church." Ellis, "Coworkers, Paul and His," 187, may overstate his case when he maintains that "[a] remarkable number of women are mentioned as Paul's associates, both in Acts and in his letters. Some are *called ministers (diakonoi)* or coworkers (*synergoi*) or missionaries (*apostoloi*), several of whom were *engaged in ministries of teaching and preaching* (Rom 16:1, 3, 7; Phil 4:2-3; cf. Acts 18:26)" (emphasis added). See the discussion of **διάκονος** as "minister" and the treatment of Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, and Euodia and Syntyche above.

⁸²Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 116.

⁸³The primary focus of the present essay is the study of the relevant biblical passages rather than extensive exploration of the ancient cultural background. For a helpful survey, see e.g. Witherington, "Women in First-Century Mediterranean Cultures," in *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 5-23. Cf. also Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles," whose study is, however, marred by her ambiguous use of the terms "authority" and "leadership" and by her one-sided focus on descriptive Pauline passages at the exclusion of didactic portions (for a fuller critique, see my review in *CBMW News* 1/4 [1996]: 14).

tern characteristic of the ministry of Jesus. In the ministries of both Jesus and Paul, men bore the ultimate responsibility for the ongoing mission, with women actively supporting and contributing to that mission.

This concludes the survey of women named in the Pauline epistles in relation to their described function in the Pauline mission. We may now turn to a discussion of Paul's explicit *teaching* regarding the role of women in the church.

Pauline Teaching on Women in the Church

The literature on Paul's teaching regarding women is vast indeed, and the issue continues to be hotly debated in the contemporary church and scholarship. Moreover, the New Testament teaching on women is frequently treated as a test case in hermeneutics.⁸⁴ Since I have treated the subject in several publications elsewhere, I will limit myself here to a brief summary of the general contours of Paul's teaching on the subject.⁸⁵ We begin with a few programmatic comments.

Prolegomena

Several recent studies give short shrift to explicit Pauline teaching on the present subject.⁸⁶ Descriptive references are absolutized, while didactic passages such as 1 Tim 2:9–15 are marginalized as "difficult" or limited in application. However, the problem with this procedure is that it leaves the interpreter without a proper framework for evaluating the descriptive passages discussed above. There exists, of course, the opposite danger of filtering descriptive passages through a pre-established doctrinal grid derived

⁸⁴Cf. most recently France, *Women in the Church's Ministry*. See also Köstenberger, "Gender Passages in the NT," 259–83.

⁸⁵See esp. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner, and H. S. Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Köstenberger, "Syntactical Background Studies to 1 Tim. 2.12 in the New Testament and Extrabiblical Greek Literature," in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. A. Carson; JSNTSup 113; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 156–79; id., "Gender Passages in the NT"; id., "The Crux of the Matter: Paul's Pastoral Pronouncements Regarding Women's Roles in 1 Timothy 2:9–15," *Faith and Mission* 14 (1997): 24–48; "Ascertaining Women's God-Ordained Roles: An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15," *BBR* 7 (1997): 107–44.

⁸⁶Cf., e.g., Grenz, *Women in the Church* (see my review in *JETS*).

from didactic passages in Paul's writings.⁸⁷ The ideal to strive for is a balanced analysis of both descriptive and didactic passages in Paul, with enough tentativeness in the process to allow for the findings of the analysis of descriptive passages to inform the study of didactic passages and vice versa. Of course, inerrantist interpreters will expect Pauline teaching on women's roles, correctly interpreted, and the way women actually functioned in the Pauline mission and churches to be found in harmony.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Examples of this are the insistence of complementarian scholars such as W. Grudem and J. Piper that Junia(s) is a man, despite the fact that there is virtually no evidence to support such a claim, or the refusal by certain conservative interpreters to entertain seriously the possibility that Phoebe indeed functioned as a deaconess merely because their preconceived doctrinal commitments preclude such a possibility. On the first issue, cf. Piper and Grudem, "Overview of Central Concerns," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 79–81; and most recently W. Grudem, "Willow Creek enforces egalitarianism," *CBMW News* 2/5 (1997): 5, where the only two pieces of evidence cited are a debatable reference in Origen (see n. 50 above) and a probably unreliable piece of information from Epiphanius (as Grudem himself points out in a damaging concession, Epiphanius also identified the obvious feminine name "Prisca" in Rom 16:3 as a masculine name; p. 479, n. 19). Also, it is methodologically fallacious for Grudem and Piper to rule out completely from consideration relevant evidence from Latin literature as well as inscriptional evidence. This selective appraisal of the evidence is all the more remarkable as Grudem himself appropriately excoriates egalitarian scholars such as C. C. Kroeger for refusing to concede that κεφαλη regularly denotes "head" with the connotation of authority while maintaining, with evidence that evaporates when checked out, that it means "source." See Grudem's devastating critique of Kroeger, "Head," in the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, D. G. Reid; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 375–77, at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (November 21, 1997) and his article "The meaning source 'does not exist'," *CBMW News* 2/5 (1997): 1,7–8.

⁸⁸Contra France, *Women in the Church's Ministry*, 89, who concludes his survey of women in the Pauline churches with the comment that "[t]his material, together with the evidence we have cited from other Pauline letters and from Acts, is in such striking contrast with the refusal in 1 Timothy 2.11–12 to allow a woman to teach or to have authority, and with the concept of 'submission,' that it raises sharply the hermeneutical question of where within the varied and apparently conflicting testimony of the New Testament it is right to start to construct our biblical understanding of women's ministry." France's solution to this 'dilemma' is to follow F. F. Bruce (*Commentary on Galatians* [NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 190) in distinguishing between "basic principles" such as Gal 3:28 and "less basic" texts such as 1 Tim 2:11–15 (*ibid.*, 94). But this procedure is not only highly subjective (as France himself admits, *ibid.*; what criteria?) but also establishes a "canon within a canon" (also conceded by France, *ibid.*) that accentuates preferred texts while marginalizing (or altogether ignoring) unwelcome texts. For a critique, see the present author's "Gender Passages in the NT," 273–79.

Thus, if one starts with an investigation of descriptive passages and ends up with the notion that no clear parameters for women's ministry are evident from these texts, one should be prepared to revisit this issue once Paul's didactic passages have been studied, if such parameters emerge from those texts.⁸⁹ But in many instances, this dialectic never takes place.⁹⁰

In fact, didactic passages in Paul deserve to be given full weight, even priority, in the matter. For it would be unreasonable for one to expect to be able to glean a full prescriptive pattern for women's roles in ministry according to Paul from incidental references alone. Moreover, the possibility remains, at least in theory, that descriptive passages depict women functioning in roles in ways not permitted by Paul. Normativity must therefore be established rather than assumed. For these reasons descriptive references should be used primarily to illustrate and provide background for Paul's specific teaching on women's roles in the church. Indeed, as will be seen below, Paul indicates certain parameters within which women were (and are) to function in the church, and there is nothing in the descriptive portions of Paul's letters that actually conflicts with Paul's explicit teaching on the subject. But further discussion of this has to await the conclusion of this essay. We must first provide a brief synthesis of Pauline teaching on the roles of women in the church.

Discussion of Didactic Passages in Paul Regarding Women

The major thrust of Pauline teaching on women's roles may be characterized as follows. Paul infers from the creation account in Genesis that God has assigned to the man the ultimate responsibility for the family (cf. Eph 5:21–33 in conjunction with 1 Cor 11:3, 7–8).⁹¹ The man's role as "head" is not a function of the fall; the fall merely led to the man's abuse of his

⁸⁹Keener, "Appendix A: Women's Ministry Elsewhere in Paul," in *Paul, Women and Wives*, 237, acknowledges the tension he feels when he writes, "The biggest problem with interpreting 1 Timothy 2:11–15 as excluding women from teaching roles in the church is that Paul clearly commended women for such roles." But Keener is apparently not prepared to take 1 Tim 2:11–15 at face value and revisit the narrative sections of Paul's writings to see whether it was appropriate for him to read these as indicating "that Paul clearly commended women for such roles [of teaching in the church]" in the first place.

⁹⁰Cf. e.g. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*; Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles."

⁹¹On Eph 5:21–33, esp. v. 32, see my "The Mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, 'One Flesh,'" *TrinJ* 12NS (1991): 79–94.

God-given authority in relation to his wife.⁹² But even in the church age, Paul affirms that the wife is to submit to her husband who in turn is exhorted to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–19).

The marriage relationship restored in Christ thus does not lead to a completely “egalitarian” relationship. Rather, the creation ideal, which included the man’s bearing of ultimate responsibility for the married couple (viz. the term “helper” applied to the woman in Gen 2:18, esp. in relation to the Pauline statements in 1 Cor 11:8–9 and 1 Tim 2:13),⁹³ is again made possible and freed from the distortions introduced by sin. It is not authority that is sin, but its abuse.⁹⁴ And submission does not imply inferiority, since even Christ chose to submit to the Father with whom he is united as equal in the Godhead (1 Cor 11:3).⁹⁵ Paul does not claim to be innovative in this regard; he consistently takes his cue from the foundational narrative of humanity in Genesis 1–3.⁹⁶

What does constitute a Pauline innovation, however, is Paul’s extension of the biblical teaching regarding marriage to the roles of men and women *in the church*. Since the church is God’s “household” (e.g. 1 Tim 3:15), it follows that the church, as a “family of families,” functions according to the pattern established for the family and the household in the beginning.⁹⁷ And, as argued above, according to this pattern the man has been given ultimate responsibility. Thus as in the family, so in the

⁹²R. C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 95–112.

⁹³I am aware of the discussion surrounding the Hebrew term for “helper” in Gen 2:18, but remain unconvinced that the expression, in context as well as understood by later Christian interpreters such as the apostle Paul, refers to nothing but the woman’s equal position to the man without connotations of functional subordination. Cf. esp. Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship”; and Köstenberger, “Gender Passages in the NT,” 271, n. 45.

⁹⁴This seems to be missed by Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 216–18, who writes: “[T]he complementarians’ more hierarchical understanding of church structure tends to undermine their good intention to maintain a servant focus. It is difficult to see pastors primarily as servants of God’s people when ordination appears to endow a privileged few with power and status” (p. 218).

⁹⁵Cf. J. Cottrell, “Christ: a model for headship *and* submission,” *CBMW News* 2/4 (1997): 7–8.

⁹⁶See Köstenberger, “Gender Passages in the NT,” 267–71.

⁹⁷Cf. V. S. Poythress, “The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 233–47.

church, the man bears ultimate responsibility (cf. the qualification of “faithful husband” [not “wife”] for an overseer in 1 Tim 3:2, esp. in conjunction with 1 Tim 2:12).

Conversely, Paul does not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man (1 Tim 2:12).⁹⁸ Why? Because of the man’s priority in creation (1 Tim 2:13) and the woman’s “priority” at the fall where the creation pattern was reversed (serpent–woman–man–God rather than God–man–woman–serpent; 1 Tim 2:14). Nevertheless, women have a significant role in managing the household, including childrearing and support of their husband (1 Tim 2:15),⁹⁹ as well as ministry to other women (Titus 2:3–5), children, and a variety of good works.

Regarding the faith, there is no difference between men and women: women, like men, become believers through faith in Christ (Gal 3:28).¹⁰⁰ As Peter wrote, both are “fellow-heirs” of grace (1 Pet 3:7). But equality in worth and dignity does not mean equality in function or role. This seems to be the clear implication from Paul’s teaching on the role of women and men in the church.

It is neither possible nor necessary here to discuss all the instances where issues pertaining to women are addressed in Paul’s letters, such as his teaching on caring for widows (1 Tim 5) or singleness (1 Cor 7), or even the puzzling passage on head coverings (1 Cor 11:2–16), since these issues are at best of marginal significance for women’s roles in the Pauline mission. We conclude with some pertinent observations tying together our study of descriptive and didactic passages on women in Paul’s letters and the book of Acts.

⁹⁸Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 121–22, did not have the benefit of the evidence presented in Köstenberger et al., *Women in the Church*, particularly Köstenberger, “A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12.” He correctly points out that in a (unique) passage by Chrysostom (ca. CE 390) the crucial word **αὐθεντεῖν** apparently means “act the despot” or the like; but he fails to consider that the sentence structure of 1 Tim 2:12 requires **αὐθεντεῖν** to have a positive connotation. Thus Paul is shown not merely to correct a local abuse in the Ephesian church but to set abiding parameters for the ministry of women in the church: they are “not to teach or have authority over a man.”

⁹⁹For a recent interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15, see Köstenberger, “Ascertaining Women’s God-Ordained Roles.”

¹⁰⁰On the interpretation of Gal 3:28 in the context of recent discussions of women’s roles, see my “Gender Passages in the NT,” 273–79.

Conclusion

Paul's teaching on the role of women and the way in which women actually functioned in the Pauline churches are consistent.¹⁰¹ Paul taught that women were not to serve as pastor-teachers or elders, and there is no evidence in Paul's epistles or Acts that women functioned in such roles in the churches established by Paul. Where the principle of the man's bearing of ultimate responsibility for God's household was not jeopardized, Paul allowed women to serve without further limitation. Thus in 1 Tim 3:11, he lays down qualifications for deaconesses, and in Rom 16:1 we learn that Phoebe apparently functioned in such a role.¹⁰² Women also supported the Pauline mission by exercising numerous other ministries.

The pattern of women's roles in the Pauline mission and churches also coheres with that found in the mission of Jesus. Jesus, too, chose only men for his Twelve; but he ministered to women and was supported by women in a variety of ways. Above all, both Jesus and Paul sought to integrate women fully in the community of believers, treating them with dignity and appreciation for their contribution. But they did so demonstrably and precisely without removing all parameters for women's ministry.¹⁰³ Frequently, this is not so much explicitly argued as assumed, for Jesus' and Paul's contemporaries generally were not likely to challenge a pattern of ministry that assigned ultimate responsibility for the community of believers to men. Men, not women, were generally regarded as heads of households, and elders in Jewish synagogues, to give but one example, were regularly men rather than women.

What are the implications of these observations for the practice of the contemporary church? While this has not been the primary focus of the present essay, I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the significance of the findings of this investigation for contemporary church practice. While it is not the purpose of the book of Acts or Paul's letters to legislate for every conceivable circumstance, I do find several principles that

¹⁰¹Cf. Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 927.

¹⁰²See Schreiner, "Valuable Ministries of Women," 213–14 and 219–20.

¹⁰³See esp. Neuer, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 122: "His [Paul's] attitude is in complete agreement with that of Jesus, who in his teaching and actions recognised the differences between men and women. Jesus and Paul agree that creation and redemption do not conflict with each other; rather they constitute an inseparable unity, since both nature and grace are the work of God. For this reason Jesus and Paul do not abrogate the created order of the sexes in the kingdom of God, or the church, but expressly acknowledge it."

have abiding significance for the role of women in the church. Negatively, women are not permitted to serve in positions of ultimate responsibility over the entire church, such as pastor-teacher or elder. Positively, women may serve in roles of hospitality, missionary work, benevolence of various kinds, private teaching in conjunction with their husbands, ministry to younger women, responsibility for raising children together with their husbands, and other significant ministries.

As in Old and New Testament times, what is to determine women's roles is not the dictates of contemporary culture but the designs of God. God's plan is consistent from the time of creation to the age of the church, and from his pattern for the family to that for God's "household." As the present essay has shown, women made a vital contribution to the Pauline mission; they continue to make an important contribution today.

It is not easy to write on a subject that continues to divide the church. May the present essay help to shed light on this important issue. I conclude with a pertinent observation by E. E. Ellis: "Paul and his colleagues are not called 'teacher' or 'leader' although some of them do teach and lead. For they have one teacher, the Messiah, and they are all brothers. Probably in response to their Lord's command, they eschew titles of eminence. With reference to their task they are the workers, the servants, the special messengers, with reference to one another they are the brothers."¹⁰⁴ We would do well to emulate the example of Paul and the early church. For we who are "in Christ" are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and together strive to fulfill the mission entrusted to the church today, seeking to hasten the coming of our Lord whom we will soon see face to face.

¹⁰⁴Ellis, "Paul and His Co-Workers," 451.

