

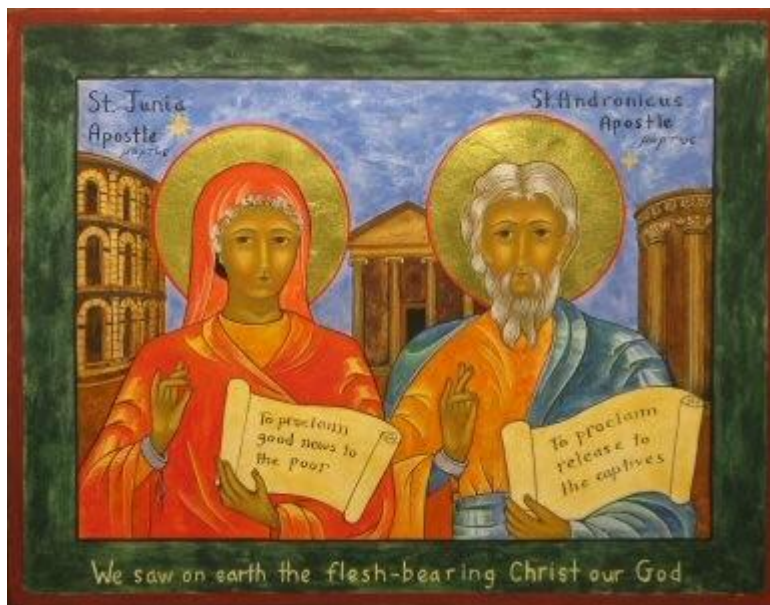
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Adult Education Seminar – Sunday, May 15th, 9:30 – 10:15 AM
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Who was St. Junia? ***Controversies about "Apostleship" in the New Testament***



The Junia and Andronicus icon pictured above is by Sr. Ellen Francis, Order of Saint Helena (2008) <http://www.ellenfrancisicons.org/index.html>

The scrolls read: "*To proclaim good news to the poor*" and "*To proclaim release to the captives.*" Note that they are in chains. The caption says: "*We saw on earth the flesh-bearing Christ our God.*" Junia and Andronicus were mentioned by St. Paul in Romans 16:7: "***Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my prison companions; they are prominent among the apostles [notable apostles] and they were in Christ before me.***" Their feast day is celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox Church and in some Episcopal dioceses on May 17th. Junia is the only explicitly named female apostle in the NT.

Additional Notes Regarding the Junia and Andronicus Icon:¹

These two saints had a stable pattern of veneration or cult within Eastern Orthodoxy for over fourteen hundred years but they were not affirmed as equals; both were considered equally Apostles but in their icons, Andronicus is often shown vested as a bishop, while she is usually not. This icon was designed and painted in 2007-2008 by The Rev. Sister Ellen Francis, a member of the Order of Saint Helena, a religious order in the Episcopal Church for lay and ordained women.

The saints face the viewer, each holding a scroll in the left hand and delivering a blessing in the right hand -- an Apostolic, Episcopal and priestly act although the finger positions come from a later tradition. They wear manacles with a broken chain link. In that era, men and women were not yet segregated in Roman prisons so they were probably together in prison along with Paul at some point. The wrist chains plus the reference to releasing the captives and his name, Andronicus, which was virtually always considered a slave name, suggests that they lived out Galatians 3:28. Junia or her mother were probably freed slaves from *gens Junia*. The color of their skin and eyes recognizes they were Mediterranean Jews most likely from western Asia.

Their scrolls hold coordinated messages based on Isaiah 61:1-2 and also quoted in Luke 4:18-19. Hers says "to proclaim good news to the poor..." while his reads "to proclaim release to the captives..." When they began their proclamation of the Gospel, no Gospels had yet been written down. The scrolls are curved, perhaps as a visual reminder of Jewish Scripture scrolls because Jesus himself read this passage from a scroll in Nazareth. It is believed they may have been disciples of Jesus before his death. Junia holding the scroll with the first wording emphasizes her taking initiative in their proclamation. They are depicted with gray hair because Paul knew them in the time they traveled to Rome, and he wrote the Epistle to the Romans about 58 CE – so by then, they would have been ministering for two decades.

The inscription on the lower border of the icon, "We saw on earth the flesh-bearing Christ our God" is actually taken from a 9th century hymn written by St. Joseph the Hymnographer used every May 17th in Orthodox Churches. It serves as a reminder that one of the requirements for being an Apostle was later seen by Luke as having seen and followed Christ on earth before his death. Also they were to have been sent out by the Risen Christ for a specific mission. But long before Luke wrote Acts 1:21-22, Paul wrote I Corinthians 15:7 confirming his position that "all the Apostles" including himself had seen the Risen Christ.

The darker than usual color of the sky suggests a new day is dawning, that life in Christ is a new creation. Roman architecture in the background is an important context. The Coliseum is on the left, where many Christians were martyred. Whether they were martyrs is uncertain but the Greek word, *martus*, inscribed on the icon means 'witness,' not martyr. The building in the middle is the main temple for the god, Portunus. On the right is the Temple of the Sibyl, Tivoli from early 1st century BCE. The monuments convey the fact that the saints were in Rome at the time Paul wrote his Epistle. They represent the power and wealth of Rome, and its pagan life in which these saints served their Apostolic mission.

¹ Kathryn Piccard (In preparation). **The Icon of Ss. Junia and Andronicus, Apostles, which was painted by Sr. Ellen Francis, O.S.H.: Background, Design, and Use.**

Quick Overview of Adult Education Seminar

We reviewed the so-called "Junia controversies." New Testament [NT] concepts of "apostleship" evolved between Pentecost and the completion of the Gospels decades later. While in the first millennium, the church was perfectly clear that Junia was a woman and her companion Andronicus was a man and an apostle, it was ambivalent about Junia's standing as an apostle, and de-emphasized it but without actually denying her in liturgical texts. Then in the west, Giles of Rome (1245-1316) called them both "men"! A couple hundred years later in 1515-16 Luther did the same, and this idea that Junia was a man became increasingly popular in the west. Also, instead of translating the verse to say that Junia and Andronicus were "prominent among" or "notable apostles," it was increasingly translated to say that they were merely "known by" the apostles. All this functioned to hide and deny the fact that the Bible calls the woman, Junia, an Apostle. And, of course, Andronicus was likewise obscured in the process. The term, 'Apostle,' evolved and narrowed in meaning over the course of the NT, which we briefly considered.

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We also touched on evidence within the NT, and other research about house churches and early Christian communities within the first century. There are reasonably good resources for understanding relationships between early Christian communities and house churches with their families, master-slave and freedmen relationships.



Icon of Saint Junia The Apostle by Eileen McGuckin. www.sgitt.org

Who was Saint Junia?

Biblical and Historical Data: In the earliest generation of Christianity, there was a female Apostle named Junia whom Paul said was prominent among the Apostles before he himself was converted. Junia and her co-worker in the faith, Andronicus, were among several women and men greeted by Paul (Romans 16:7):

It is likely that Junia and Andronicus held positions as church founders or missionaries in the early Jerusalem Church. Their conversion apparently goes back before the time of Stephen, and they may have been among the 72 Galilean missionaries mentioned in Luke 10:1-24. In the Eastern Christian tradition, they are associated with the 'Seventy,' the larger body sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1-17). The name, Junia, is said to be a 'clan name' (*nomen gentile*) suggesting membership in an aristocratic extended family in Rome, the *Gens Junii*. This couple was probably Jewish, so it is possible she belonged to this family because of having been adopted, or as a freedwoman or slave descendant that *Gens Junia* previously owned. It is said that many freedwomen of such aristocratic clans became very powerful. This couple was probably among the 500 who saw Jesus in his 'forty days' after his resurrection and before his ascension.

Some sources suggest she may have been a wealthy *Archsynagoge*, or an overseeing female patron of a first generation house church in Rome. Possibly she actually traveled with Jesus, along with other women who were described as funding and supporting his mission.²

We may speculate that they were among those out of Jerusalem who were persecuted by Paul prior to his conversion. Paul says they were imprisoned together but we don't know when or where – Paul was imprisoned often because of his preaching. They were apparently in Rome when the Letter to the Romans was written and delivered by Phoebe.

Was Junia the same person as Joanna [Luke 8:3, 24:10]? Kathryn Picard+ cites the work of Richard Bauckham, a well-known scholar, who in 2002 raised this possibility. She says that although it is possible that they are the same, "...both St. Junia and St. Joanna have entirely separate and developed cults in the east, and separate cults in the west, though their cults are not much developed in the west." (page 278 in Rev. Kathryn's+ forthcoming book, from prepublication draft).

Was Junia's name mistranslated? Some scholars have translated her name as male – '*Junias*' – but no such masculine name is found in any known Greek or Latin document or inscription of the NT era. The feminine, *Junia*, appears in over 250 Greek or Latin inscriptions in Rome alone. The feminine form for the name was dominant in the early writings of the Church Fathers. For example, Chrysostom in the 11th century left no doubt that Junia was an apostle, and an outstanding one along with Andronicus:

² Luke names three who traveled with Jesus from the beginning, having seen him heal, and as funding the work: (1) Mary Magdalene; (2) Joanna, wife of King Herod's Minister; (3) Susanna. Luke [8:1-3] also mentioned that there were "many others."

"Even to be an apostle is great, but also to be prominent among them³ – consider how wonderful a song of honor that is. For they were prominent because of their works, because of their successes. Glory be! How great the wisdom of this woman that she was even deemed worthy of the apostle's title."

Eldon Epp, an important biblical scholar in the Junia debates, says that none of the purported masculine forms of the name have ever been found anywhere. The reading of the Greek name was understood as a woman by ancient Christian writers in late antiquity "without exception (Page 23)." The masculine rendition was found from Erasmus in 1516 to a Bible version by Erwin Nestle in 1927 and during this 400-year time span, there was only one writer, Wymouth (1892) who even suggested there might be an alternative translation. But all of the early biblical manuscripts (Old Latin, Vulgate, Sahidic, Bohairic Coptic and Syriac) translate the name in the feminine form as did Tyndale (1526/1534) until the end of the 19th century.

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Was she named "as" an Apostle or simply "known by" them? Another example of mistranslation which diluted the status of Junia rendered the passage as "well known *to* the Apostles" rather than "distinguished *among* the Apostles." In order to resolve the translation and interpretive issues, scholars look for other biblical passages using the phrase or non-scriptural literary works for comparison. Grammatical features argue for the meaning being "distinguished among" rather than "well known to" based upon comparison with Hellenistic literature. A nearly perfect parallel to the Romans passage was found in Lucian's Dialogues of the Dead [438]. A detailed assessment of the various translations, exegetical and interpretive issues by Eldon Epp has finally resolved the Junia controversies. Current scholarship is nearly unanimous that Romans 16, where Junia is mentioned, is part of the original letter that Phoebe delivered to Rome.

Only since the Reformation, following Luther's translation, did the view that Junia was a man by the name of 'Junias' begin to prevail. Cultural values led to the assumption that the gender *had to be masculine* because women *couldn't possibly be* apostles.

Phoebe, a deacon and Paul's benefactor, was thus the letter's first bearer and interpreter [Romans 16:1-2]. She is introduced as a deacon. Several women were specifically singled out in this passage for their labor on behalf of the Gospel, not just because they were partners or wives. The 16th chapter in Romans in which Junia and Andronicus are mentioned also lists more than two dozen people who are sent greetings from Paul – 17 men and 8 women. But those who are described as having contributed the most to the churches are 7 women and 5 men. Prisca, another woman (Priscilla) was named ahead of her husband, Aquila, and this order of listing is probably significant [Romans 16:3-4]. Other women are mentioned in other Pauline letters, such as Eudia and Syntyche [Phillipians 4:2-3].

³ Note that Chrysostom's translation/interpretation a thousand years ago is the same as that of Eldon Epp and others in the 21st century.

Best sources: Eldon Jay Epp (2005). **Junia: The First Woman Apostle**. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. Used from Amazon for \$12, Kindle Edition, \$10.

Piccard, Kathryn A. (In press). **The Biblical Apostles Andronicus and Junia: Introducing the History of Their Veneration as Saints**. Forthcoming from Lulu.com. Rev. Kathryn+ is an Episcopal priest whom I was honored to spend two weeks here at St. Junia's House in the summer of 2009. Her scholarly book will be a major source for understanding the background on Andronicus and Junia's recognition across the centuries in the Christian world. I will notify you when this book becomes available. I was gifted with a prepublication copy!

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What About Mary Magdalene? Who is Often Described as the "Apostle to the Apostles"

Ann Brock, in her Harvard Divinity School PhD dissertation, says that Mary Magdalene's validity as an Apostle is "at least as well attested" as that of Peter in the NT. This concept didn't first arise as popularized feminist thinking, nor was it derived from later "Gnostic" sources. Dr. Brock convincingly demonstrated the pattern within the four canonical gospels and other NT writings.

Where does the term, "Apostle," appear in the NT? It is a rarely used term, particularly by Paul, whose epistles predate the Gospels. We can see that the meaning of "Apostle" changed and differed across various NT communities.

- Matthew used it only one time [10:2-5].
- Mark used it only once [6:30].
- One usage can be inferred in John [13:6, 8] but it is believed that the same writer authored the Epistles of John, which conveyed numerous warnings about rank and seemed to have no particular esteem for the term.
- But the writer of Luke/Acts used it 34 times.

How did the meaning of Apostle develop and change over time? Paul, the earliest NT writer, used the term sparingly and had a more liberal definition than Luke, who used the term most often and with the most restrictive definition. It goes like this:

Paul's Definition of "Apostle"

- Representative of a congregation [2 Corinthians 8:23]
- Commissioned from a divine source [Galatians 1:1]
- Set apart [Romans 1:1]
- Claimed a resurrection experience or had it claimed for them [1 Corinthians 15:3, 6-7]
- Gender restriction seen later in Luke/Acts was absent in the Pauline texts [2 Corinthians 8:23; 11:5, 13; 12:11-12].

Gospels of Matthew and Mark:

- Witnessed a resurrection appearance of Jesus
- Received a divine calling by angels or Christ himself
- Chosen for a mission.

Luke + Acts:

- The “Twelve” were the only trustworthy witnesses of the resurrection.
- They were chosen from a larger group of followers [6:13]. But in Matthew [10:1-5] and Mark [3:14] the Twelve *were not* selected out of a larger group.
- John never offered the traditional list of twelve all-male apostles.
- The initial leaders in Jerusalem had precedence over all other leaders [Acts 4:35-37; 5:2, 27-32; 8:1, 14, 18; 9:27; 11:1-6, 22-23; 16:4].
- Other leaders are seen at Pentecost [2:14], and some are soon selected as table-servers [6:2], who are presented “to the apostles” [6:6] suggesting an emerging status difference.
- Paul was honored, but he did not fit Luke’s definition of apostle and was apparently subordinate to the leaders in Jerusalem. He had to seek approval for his plans from them.
- Fr. Jim Farris+ points out that there is actually a distinction between “The Twelve” and “apostle,” but obviously not a hard line because of the election of Matthias which came after the death of Judas. Meanwhile, Paul used the term ‘apostle’ to refer to others in the Christian diaspora. This is the same period in which the distinction between *episcopos* [bishop] and *presbuteros* [priest] was emerging. .

Luke’s Definition of Who is an Apostle:

- Only men who had accompanied Jesus the whole time of his ministry, from the beginning of the time of His baptism by John to the time he was taken up into heaven
- Only witnesses of the resurrection within the 40 days before Pentecost [Acts 1:21-22; Acts 1:3].
- These criteria eliminated James, the brother of Jesus who rose to the head of the Jerusalem Church, Paul, a later convert, all female apostles including MM and Junia as well as her male co-worker, Andronicus, and no doubt, many other men and women.

Roles Depicted in the Gospels for Mary Magdalene and Peter:

- In three gospels, Jesus Himself or angelic messengers appear to and send MM alone or with other women to proclaim the resurrection.

- In Matthew, Mark, and John, prominence is given to MM to tell the disciples to go to Galilee to meet Jesus. She seeks to embrace Jesus and is told to go tell the other disciples.
- She announced the resurrection.
- The only gospel in which Jesus exclusively appears to Peter is Luke [24:33-34], a tradition not found elsewhere. Brock concluded that Luke is a “pro-Petrine text” (page 32). Page | 8

Peter as depicted in Matthew and Mark compared to Luke:

- Peter rebuked Jesus and was rebuked by Jesus [Matthew 16:22-23; Mark 8:32-33].
- In Luke, there is no specific rebuke of Peter, but only the entire group of disciples [22:45-46].
- Jesus predicted Peter’s denial [Matthew 26:35].
- In Luke, there is no prediction of Peter’s denial.
- Peter denies knowing Christ, cursing and swearing in Matthew [26:74a] and Mark [14:71a].
- In Luke, Peter tones down his denial: “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about [22:60a].

Other Differences in the Passion Narratives in Luke and John:

Cultural scholar John Pilch of Georgetown University says there were two versions, one in Mark/Matthew, and the second version was seen in Luke and John. These later narratives contain much more conversation of Jesus. In Mark and Matthew at the Last Supper, Jesus speaks little. Luke adds more, but John left out the Last Supper entirely. There are four chapters of conversation between the apostles and Jesus. Dr. Pilch thinks that the passion story followed the story of the resurrection. He believes that as the first generation began to die off, the very sketchy I Corinthians information was expanded based on oral history.

Gospel of John

- This text combines two different traditions: (1) MM visited the grave, found it empty, and told the disciples; in various forms of the tradition, other names are added. This seems to be a well-attested and reliable tradition. (2) Peter visited the grave [Luke 24:12]. This is less well attested.
- But in the earliest and strongly attested tradition, Peter received the first Galilean appearance.
- Dr. Pilch notes that John gives special significance to MM who went to the tomb alone whereas the three synoptic Gospels report that a group of women went. Dr. Pilch says that a woman being alone outdoors is highly unusual, an anomaly,

and it highlights her importance – but perhaps not as a female *per se*, but as representing a particular theological position or important character trait.

- Twice she says she does not know, and not knowing is a very important theme throughout 4G. MM is then given special knowledge by Jesus: “I am ascending to my Father and Your Father, to my God and your God (20:17).
- She stands out because she is not dependent upon anyone else for her special knowledge vs. Simon Peter who depended on Andrew, his brother (1:35-40).
- But her status comes not from the earthly Jesus but the risen Christ. So MM’s status is spiritual, not one where she gained earthly status by gender, ascription, birth or inheritance.
- John highlights spiritual knowledge and special revelations from Jesus to several women, including the Samaritan woman at the well (4:49), and Martha, a “beloved disciple” (11:5, 25).

Opposing Views as to Early Prominence of Women

Fr. Reginald Fuller and Fr. Daniel Westberg⁴ note that both conservative traditionalists as well as modern-day feminists would prefer for the Gospel accounts to be viewed as genuinely historical.

But they note that critics countering this position say that *the women are absent* from the earliest and most sketchy account given in I Corinthians 15:3-8, which is decades earlier than the Gospels. Hence it is stated that this absence of detail “argues decisively” against the primacy of the Gospel accounts. If we accept this logic, it would mean that we reject as not historical any later added details. They also say that the resurrection appearances were likely in Galilee, not in Jerusalem and so the originally distinct traditions of the empty tomb, the appearances, and their locations were collapsed.

But what is apparent in the four Gospels is that the *women are present in all of them* at the resurrection. John Pilch asks how did male patriarchal figures ever accept help from women in making sense of an empty tomb? One standard of authenticity used by biblical scholars is that if something is asserted that would run counter to expectation or preferences, then it is more likely to be valid. In this regard, women are given more credibility than would ever be expected in their era.

Well-known agnostic NT scholar, Bart Ehrman, who would seem not to have a bone in this dogfight, has addressed this controversy.⁵

⁴ St. Louis University Liturgical Website

⁵ Ehrman, Bart D. (2009). **A Brief Introduction to the New Testament, Second Edition**. NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., Page 155.

He says that "...some feminist historians have made an excellent case that the Gospels record a primitive and historically reliable tradition that in fact it was women, Mary Magdalene chief among them, who discovered Jesus' empty tomb..." Because this tradition is multiply attested and also passes another criterion used to assess validity, e.g. since men telling the stories would be unlikely to give women this much credit, then it is more likely to be accurate.

Dr. Ehrman says it may seem odd that when the Apostle Paul offers "evidence" of the resurrection in I Corinthians 15:3-8, he doesn't mention the empty tomb, or the women. He instead mentions the later appearances of the resurrected Christ. Other feminist scholars also cited by Ehrman say that Paul wrote long before any of the gospels and that he "...betrays no knowledge of an empty tomb tradition," so they ask if it is possible that Christians in Paul's era had not heard this story. If they weren't told, perhaps learning of it later, they could then explain their ignorance by saying it was only women and thus not credible: They were either giddy or frightened to say anything (Mark 16:8), or their stories were seen as coming from silly women telling idle tales (Luke 24:11). Hence, the story of the women would discredit them and would be a barrier to the credibility of the Gospel and hence was not reported by Paul.

There is another potential explanation: The I Corinthians passage is a kernel of an ancient Aramaic liturgical formula,⁶ that may have consisted of only the following words: "that Christ died for our sins *in accordance with the scriptures*, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day *in accordance with the scriptures*, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" [italicized emphases are mine]. Paul says he "handed on" what he "had received," using words that depict how the tradition was first passed on in oral form among the earliest believers including contemporaries of Jesus, and then was put in writing. They are not Paul's words! He affirms that the message did not originate with him!

Several terms within this passage used were reflective of an early creed, and were not Pauline phrases. He is using specific phrases that were previously formulated. "Cephas" is the Aramaic name for Peter, which is said to point to the mother congregation in Jerusalem as the place of the creed's origin. Another scholar, Richard Bauckham, says the terms used depict a practice of a "formal transmission of tradition." Hence, if it was an early orally transmitted creed, it would not necessarily have been expected to carry a lot of details or all the stories. Other scholars say this tradition arose very early, prior to Paul's visit to Jerusalem and possibly even within the first five years after the crucifixion. Another scholar, Larry Hurtado, points out that the "twelve" was a term used in association with the Jerusalem congregation throughout the NT. He also noted that Paul referred to Peter as Cephas in Galatians 2:6-9. He also says that the wording of the creed focused on tying Jesus back to the OT and the Jewish concept of

⁶ Overman, Dean L. (2010). **A Case for the Divinity of Jesus: Examining the Earliest Evidence**. NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Pages 29-35.

resurrection, thus the repeated use of the phrase *in accordance with the scriptures*. There is a similar confessional formula given by Paul in Romans 4:25: "It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification." These words also allude to Isaiah 52-53. Thus, if these creedal formulae were intended to tie Christian beliefs back to the Hebrew scriptures, and were transmitted orally, we would expect that the wording would be sparse and easy to remember. And we would hardly expect that the women or other narrative material would be mentioned.

Perhaps also Paul (and possibly others) focused on appearances of Jesus in the post-resurrection time frame as it would be enhancing of his own identity as an Apostle because Jesus appeared to him two or three years later. In the I Corinthians passage, Paul also says that Jesus had appeared to 500 other people as well.

Final Thoughts Regarding Women in the NT:

The four Gospels agree that women were the first witnesses to the Resurrection, something male writers were unlikely to make up. The I Corinthians early creed does not contradict the Gospel accounts. Across the four Gospels, where Peter's role is enhanced, Mary Magdalene is diminished and *vice versa*. There were diverging and competing traditions which arose very early and were probably modified by oral accounts in the process of writing them. Other differences in details were readily apparent which didn't have to do simply with women's roles but with differing emphases by the four Gospel writers. There were broad and narrow definitions of "Apostle" that emerged over time, seeming to correlate with prominent or diminished depictions of MM and other women vs. those where Peter's image is enhanced. Junia and Andronicus were early Apostles, possibly in the generation while Jesus was still alive, before the definitions narrowed in the emerging Christian faith.

We can lose the forest in the trees if we fail to note that the role of women was *only one issue!* In Jesus' own temptations in the desert, he deals with the issue of worldly power. We can see that ***during Jesus' ministry and later, men were mainly competing with each other for ascendancy, which Jesus himself continually discouraged.*** He said the last will be first, and the first will be last. When some of the disciples asked to be seated at his left and right in the coming Kingdom, he told them they did not know what they asked. In what was one of his final lessons to the disciples, he washed their feet, demonstrating the Servant role that we are to follow.

Is there other NT information about Jesus' own attitudes toward women disciples? Yes, but this would deserve a seminar by itself. But just a couple of brief highlights in passing: Jesus told Martha [Luke 10:41-42] that Mary chose "the better part" by sitting at his feet, listening and studying – an activity not permitted women in their era – rather than preparing and serving food. This is absolutely astounding!

The Gospel of John was probably finalized toward the end of the first century (90-100 CE) and is thought to be the last one. And in John [4:5-42], we see that Jesus engaged in theological discussion with the woman from Samaria. It is a nice piece of political subversion, perhaps reflecting different attitudes toward women in the Johannine communities. She asks questions that were normally reserved only for men, topics such as the disputed place of worship of the Samaritans vs. Jews, the Temple or the coming Messiah, but Jesus answers her personally rather than ignoring or shunning her questions. She then tells *village men* what she's heard, and in that era as we already know, women's testimony was not readily accepted, but in this story the men clearly confirmed what she had told them, and then went on to hear Jesus for themselves.

The development of bishops -- the episcopacy -- is a little later development, but we can see that the earliest understanding was a collegial relationship among bishops, not a pecking order where a Pope was over all the others. The best source for this is our brother, +Raphael Adams and his extensive article which was published in the new journal by the ECC Franciscan community and is available on-line. It takes a little perseverance to get through it, but it pulls together a lot of information that is hard to come by and is very readable and informative.

Best sources: Ann Graham Brock (2003). **Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School. Available used from Amazon for \$10, not available on Kindle.

Adams, R. (2010). Recovering and revisioning the office of bishop. **The Progressive Catholic Review**. <http://www.csfcecc.org/sfvhouse/ecr/v01n01.html>

But What About Paul's Other Writings, Telling Women to Be Quiet, to Learn at Home, to be Submissive to their Husbands? Doesn't This Contradict Women's Apostleship or Leadership Roles?

There are two passages in the NT that have been cited to argue that Paul believed women were to be excluded from teaching roles in the church:

- **I Corinthians 14:34-35:** This passage is believed by most scholars to have been a later insertion into Paul's original letter [see Epp, 2005]. Factors said to favor this idea include:
 - (1) These 2 verses interrupt the preceding discussion about prophecy, diverting the train of thought.
 - (2) Its content contradicts earlier verses within I Corinthians [11:2ff].
 - (3) It contains non-Pauline language.
 - (4) Verse 37 does not link with 36 but with 33a

- **I Timothy 2:12:** This verse has traditionally been interpreted to prohibit teaching authority to women, but very recently has been shown to have been seriously mistranslated. Ed Wilshire⁷ compared the Greek word, *authenteo* or *authentein*, with all known Greek documents 200 years before and 200 years after the writings of Paul, using the magnificent computerized TLG [*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*]. He found a total of 306 references to this word and its cognates. But its use in Timothy 2:12 stands completely alone in the NT. In this verse, it is in the infinitive form, *authentein*. There's nothing else to compare to within the NT. Hence, we have to look to Greek sources outside the NT to understand what the word meant in its time.

Dr. Wilshire concluded that the meaning of *authentein* is best capsuled as "committing violent action" not "having authority."

Wilshire traces its meaning. In the *Septuagint* [Greek version of the Hebrew Bible] in the Book of Wisdom (250 BCE), it is used to describe "murderous parents" or "parents that kill" (*authentas goneis*). Among the Greek Patristic writers, it is found in Clement several times, again with a meaning of "murderer," "self-murderer," "murder" or "suicide," but also rendered as "omnipotent" and with additional adjectives did seem to mean "authority."

In the late Roman period, there were also two meanings, "murder," and "exercise authority." Other definitions included "ignorance dominates (*authentei agnoia*).

A detailed analysis of translations over the two centuries before and after Jesus shows that "...very few citations during this four century period...have the meaning of 'exercising authority,' 'holding sway or using power,' or 'being dominant'...the preponderant number of citations...have to do with self-willed violence, criminal action, or murder...." (Page 29).

So how does Dr. Wilshire interpret '*authentein*' in the I Timothy context? He offers several possibilities.

- He says it could be "...a literary hyperbole, an exaggeration meant to lend power by overstatement to the phrase, 'but teaching I do not permit to a woman' (2.12a). If it is a hyperbole, it could be similar in its intent to James 1: 'What causes *wars*, and what causes *fightings* among you?' [Italicized emphases are mine.]
- Or, it could be a straight-forward usage showing the gravity of a particular incident in the life of the fellowship of believers at Ephesus. If it is a

⁷ Ed Wilshire is a retired professor, a historical scholar from Biola University, an evangelical Christian university. He waited until he retired to publish his book which was more than 20 years in the making.

straightforward literal term, it may speak of a more volatile situation among the group of believers at Ephesus than we think with our tendency to 'sanitize' or idealize first century churches." This more particularized view seems consistent with close analysis of the surrounding verses.

"The 'instigating violence' of I Tim.2.12b would then be an action for which the natural response, as we already have it in I Tim.2.12c is *hesychia* (calmness). Calmness is the opposite of violence, but not the opposite of authority or power. There are words available (*sige, phimos*) to express 'silence' if this had been Paul's concern (if 'silence' is an ordinary response to 'power' or 'authority').

"The 'instigating violence' of 2.12b could also be the action that stands behind the appeal for self restraint (*sophrosunes*) that ends the section (2.15). The writer of this pastoral epistle had pled earlier that members of the Christian community...were to 'lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way (2.2)....pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling' (2.8).It could be that the concern over possible anger or quarreling of men in I Tim. 2.8 found its parallel in the use of the word *authentein* in 2.12 relating to the possibility of 'violent intent' being done by women in the Ephesian fellowship [Pages 29-30]."

Another scholar, Ann Nyland, who is an ancient Greek lexicographer in the field of word meaning from NT times. She has published her own translation of the NT.⁸ She says that the I Timothy passage has usually been mistranslated into English:

'Let the woman learn in silence in all subjection. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man but to be silent. For Adam was formed first then Eve.' She makes the case that women were attested as synagogue teachers; inscriptional evidence also includes women as Jewish leaders, elders, and synagogue leaders. She traces the usage of *authentein* through papyri and found its meaning there was "original," "originator of," eventually taking on a meaning of "master," or "mastery (over)" but not until many centuries past NT times. However in two papyri, the meaning may be "ruler" or "ruling."

⁸ Nyland, Ann (2006). **The Source New Testament With Extensive Notes on Greek Word Meaning:** <http://sourcetestament.com> or <http://www.smithandstirling.com>. This is an expensive resource but is worthwhile because of its notes. Hard copy is \$27 and an ebook, but not Kindle, is available for \$35. As a general practice, I prefer bible translations done by balanced and recognized groups of scholars rather than a single individual, but there is material put together here that is invaluable. It should be noted that her work had been well accepted in some more fundamentalist groups who have more recently disclaimed her on the internet because she has come out with a study Bible for gay, lesbian and cross-gender Christians.

She says that the focus in the pastoral epistles, coming at the end of the first century and beginning of the second century, was confronting teachings contrary to those of Christianity. At that time, Gnosticism was beginning to become a competing view. There are *Nag Hamadi* manuscripts that depict the Gnostic belief that woman was first created, and then **she** created man, which is contrary to the Genesis story. Thus, it is possible that some of the women may have been exposed to this contrary teaching and were being educated and told not to teach it.

I Timothy 2:12-13 was translated by Dr. Nyland as follows:⁹ ***'A woman must learn and she is to learn without causing a fuss and be supportive in everything. I most certainly do not grant authority to a woman to teach that she is the originator of a man – rather, she is not to cause a fuss – for Adam was formed first, then Eve.'***

Dr. Nyland also explains that the words usually mistranslated as “to be silent” actually means “to cause less fuss, to become quiet in behavior.” It is the same word used in Acts 22:2 where the crowd caused less fuss.

The common feature of Nylund’s and Wilshire’s interpretive approaches is that both seem to say that a correct understanding of these verses requires that we consider the particular community, cultural, and religious contexts in which they were written. There was some event that disturbed the community that led to the need for pastoral intervention. Nyland’s mention of possible early Gnostic influence is an interesting idea. Hence, it would seem reasonable to say that a general principle about women’s roles applicable to all times and places was not being asserted, but an attempt was being made to solve a local issue that arose, either a conflict within the group or influence from an outside competing world view. They seem to disagree about when a translation of *authentein* began to refer to authority but their data sources may differ. Possibly, Wilshire may have had a broader or more systematic base from which to compare the meaning over time but I lack the linguistic or technical background to judge their respective sources.

⁹ Reviewers of **The Source** note that Nylund’s NT is “...an elegant generic translation that follows the Greek text tightly without becoming a slavish word-for-word rendition...” And it is “...meticulous, scholarly, and impressively informed by the most recent philological, lexicographical, and archaeological research.” About her own work, she says that “I have retained the tone of the writer....If the Greek is colloquial, I translate the colloquial tone, if the Greek is formal, I translate the formal tone.....”

Best sources: Eldon Jay Epp (2005). *Op. cit.* above

Wilshire, Leland E. (2010). **Insight into Two Biblical Passages. "The Anatomy of a Prohibition" I Timothy 2:12, the TLG Computer and the Christian Church.** Lanham, MD: University Press of America. This little book is expensive – about \$25. Feel free to borrow it from St. Junia's House.

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So What Do We Really Know About What Women Did in the First Century? If Women Were More Active, Why Did It Change?

The transition from home churches to use of public buildings for Christian meetings was associated with social and cultural pressures to alter the status of women in the church after the second century CE. Both more idealist or feminist views as well as traditional male-dominated views of women's place in the early church are probably biased and do not represent what really transpired.

- It is not the case as some who idealize the first century that Christianity upgraded the status of women over and above their status in their culture.
- Nor is a view that women had very circumscribed roles in leadership in the first century viable as taught today by some conservative theologians. They pretty well mirrored their culture and their time, about which we have to find information outside the NT itself.

Osiek and her colleagues (2006) suggest that at the time of Christian house churches, there was already within Roman society a movement toward improvement in social freedom for women in which Christians only partially participated. It was seen by a number of changes:¹⁰

- Disappearance of transfer of the female from father to husband;
- Augustus' granting freedom from legal guardianship to women who bore a certain number of children;
- A trend toward respectable women reclining at the table alongside their spouses;
- Women owning and conducting their own businesses and administering their own property.

But in general, in that era, societal norms were designed to protect the sexual adventures of free married men. It was acceptable for them to use both their male and female slaves for sexual purposes since they were regarded as property. A proper host was also expected to provide his guests with prostitutes. However, married women who had sex with their male slaves could be charged with adultery. What was good for the gander was not good for the goose.

¹⁰ In addition to Osiek *et al*, see also Nyland, pages 413-414 for more details about Roman law regarding gender freedoms and requirements.

There was little specifically said about their existing cultural sexual mores in early Christian texts. We know that there was an expected code of relationships within a household, consisting of husband, wife, servants and slaves. But we don't know from within the NT how their household code teachings continued to influence new believers with slaves who were used to sexual liberties being taken with them. There is an exhortation to treat slaves "justly" (Ephesians 6:9, see also Colossians 4:1, Ignatius Pol. 4.3-5.1). So perhaps this extended to respecting slave marriages and families.

In the Shepherd of Hermas¹¹, church members were seen meeting up again with former owners, who sometimes were fellow believers. Sexual encounters were a part of their shared past, so it is likely that many questions arose regarding what was appropriate among believers who were householders, slaves, or former slaves now free. But even freed people did not have all the rights of those freeborn, and still had some obligations to their former owners. We don't know if sexual use of slaves came to an end upon conversion of the master. We don't know all the ways a slave girl could be caught between teachings if told to obey her parents, obey her master and be chaste, when the master still wanted to have sex with her.

It should be noted that the institution of marriage did not exist in their era in the same form as it is today. Lots of couples got married, but their marriages had only some of the features we think of as essential today. Hence we often "project" biblical admonitions into our modern-day conceptualizations that actually didn't exist in their time. Legal marriage didn't exist except for two free citizens and was completely unavailable to slaves. Freed persons and slaves in early church groups could not always have stable, ongoing family relationships. We simply don't know how their fluctuating status influenced or was influenced by their becoming Christians.¹²

¹¹ Wikipedia says [citations omitted]: ***The Shepherd of Hermas*** (Greek: Ποιμήν του Ερμά; Hebrew: ; sometimes just called ***The Shepherd***) is a Christian literary work of the 2nd century, considered a valuable book by many Christians, and considered canonical scripture by some of the early Church fathers such as Irenaeus. The Shepherd had great authority in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Along with the Apocrypha, it was bound with New Testament in the *Codex Sinaiticus*, and it was listed between the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Acts of Paul* in the list of components of the *Codex Claromontanus*. Please note that the term, 'codex,' refers to an early NT manuscript, all of which have been named or numbered for ease of biblical scholars in working with them.

¹² Similarly, research into the existence of stable monogamous same-sex couples in the ancient Christian world and the interface between being gay in that culture and becoming Christian is not clear. Rabbi Artson, whom I've already cited, concluded that such stable same sex coupling was virtually unknown. I have asked Rev. Mo. Kathryn Piccard+ for input as I have no background whatsoever in this area. She comments: It is not yet known if such same-sex monogamous couples were active in the Church. The following three books are very scholarly and technical. John Boswell wrote *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Press, 1980. He also wrote *Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*. NY: Villard Books, 1994. His work was groundbreaking but it also has some mistakes, including an absence of gender analysis. He includes liturgies for blessing male-male relationships, which are not the same as legal marriage, although some male-male legal marriages also occurred in that era.

In order to protect the emerging Christian movement, sexual mores would be explained in more conservative ways especially to outsiders. In particular, male writers who wanted to address issues regarding women who might be viewed as pushing the envelope in acceptable boundaries, called for a return to tradition or less visibility. Roman society was, in itself, very patriarchal, with an honor/shame code of values. Women remaining passive, compliant, and chaste was a higher value than for men to contain themselves sexually. If Christians went too far beyond the expectations of their culture, they would be accused by their critics of sexual depravity. It must be remembered that this was an era in which Christianity moved from being persecuted to being accepted and integrated into the culture. Without a doubt, in some situations, women's place was a lower priority than achieving this recognition and acceptability.

There was a lot of overlap between household roles and church management so at times it is difficult to ascertain whether some biblical exhortations pertained to behavior within family units or broader roles within the house church. Relationships were multifaceted rather than more autonomous or separate roles. A wife and mother in the community may have been viewed as a woman "presbyter" but most of the available data seem to describe such authority as specifically in relation to other women and the education of children. Indeed, even today, among married Orthodox priests, there is a term for such women as "*presbytera*."

Even within the household, there were different places allowed for women and men. There were differences in use of space at home between Roman and Greek households, where Roman women were allowed in the front area while Greek women were segregated in the back.

So, the house church was not, as many have thought, simply a private area guided by private rules. Rather, it fell somewhere between a public and a private domain. Nor is it the case that the Jewish synagogue was considered more "public," as the use of private homes for public meetings was common in both groups. We know that women were both patrons and heads of house churches, but the evidence seems to indicate that they were more often patrons than actual leaders.

House Churches were often led by women who were widows. In the Christian subculture, these older unattached women had particular roles. They probably hosted *and* presided, including the *ekklesia* assembly. Ignatius referred to such women alone by name rather than paired to a husband, which he'd be unlikely to do so if they were married.

Bernadette Brooten, in *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, is an outstanding study and corrects Boswell's errors (Pages 10-13, 364). On legal marriages between women, see especially pages 332-336.

Women reportedly participated in all the social, communication, hospitality, educational, evangelization, and missionary activities. The house church was the place of initial instruction in the faith as well as advanced instruction by teachers such as Justin, in mid-2nd century Rome. But there is some evidence that formation was more often led by male teachers for men and female teachers for women. For example, Hermas delivered his message to presbyters, while Graphte *had her own copy of the text* to instruct women and children. It is interesting that she was able to read in an era when few men, let alone women, could do so.

Many of these women were wealthy and astute business women, who traveled in association with their trades. This allowed them to fund the Christian movement. It is very probable that the patronage system existing both in Jesus' own time as well as continuing in the first two centuries of Christianity formed the basis for political and religious authority by women.¹³ Even in Jesus' times, there were women who traveled with the disciples and also funding them. Communication between house churches to warn of persecution or to pass important information was a very important activity, and it was through women's already existing organized social networks that letters would be passed. We have evidence that this was how at least some of Paul's letters were sent. But when the church moved into public buildings and out of the house churches, the patronage system was supplanted and the power or authority of women quickly waned.

Celibate marriages seem to have begun in Corinth, and widows who were "officially enrolled" in Timothy's church were not allowed to remarry. They had important roles regarding hospitality for visitors, relief for the sick or imprisoned, and other charitable work. Much of this kind of work fell to deacons. For example, deacons visited Perpetua and her prison companions before her execution along with Felicitas.¹⁴ In Lucian's account of the imprisoned Peregrinus,¹⁵ many orphans and widows visited him. Pairs of missionary partners could be husband/wife, sister/brother, parent/adult child, or two men or two women. The women were not simply domestic supporters, but had their own special leadership roles. "Sister wives" were as valued by Paul as "brother husbands."

¹³ Torjessen, Karen Jo (1993). **When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity**. HarperSanFrancisco.

¹⁴ Wikipedia says: **Perpetua and Felicity** (died 7 March 203) are Christian martyrs of the 3rd century. Perpetua (born in 181) was a 22-year old married noble, and a nursing mother. Her co-martyr Felicity, an expectant mother, was her slave. They suffered together at Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. *The Passion of St. Perpetua, St. Felicitas, and their Companions* is said to preserve the actual words of the martyrs and their friends. According to this *Passion*, in the year 203, during the persecutions of the emperor Septimius Severus, five catechumens, among whom Perpetua and Felicity, were arrested for their faith and executed.

¹⁵ Wikipedia says: **Saint Peregrinus** was the Bishop of Terni, and was credited for founding the city's cathedral. His feast day is May 16th.

But in the Church pairs of missionary heterosexual couples were understood by others to be married even when there was no legal recognition. Prisca and Aquila are probably the best attested couple, described by three different church writers from mid-first century to early 2nd century. Over a ten-year period of time, they lived in Rome, Ephesus, and Corinth. They helped people get information they needed, to go where they needed to go, and created infrastructure and support for risky moves. They are described as offering hospitality to Paul, and together teaching Apollos at their house. They were also tent-makers like Paul. Since her name appears before Aquila's in several passages, this suggests Prisca was either of a higher status and/or that she was the more successful missionary. But it should be noted that after we get past Paul's letters and Acts, there is virtually no evidence of specific married couples making contributions to house churches. They were, however, likely vital to the community infrastructure and were much more numerous and common than believed. As is still true today, women often provide the underlying network and cooperative efforts to keep a church going.

If younger women were not under male control, it was urged to get them remarried as soon as possible. But acceptable "safe" older widows did not necessarily remarry. And, over time, there were consecrated female virgins in early Christian groups. But there were also numerous examples of married female evangelists. In their culture, women were typically classified by their sexual status, and yet in the Pauline and Ignatian letters, there are many women whose marital or sexual status isn't specified. This suggests that Paul's inspiration from the Holy Spirit that there is no difference between male and female, slave and free, Jew or gentile, was in some respects already being recognized. But I am not convinced that this ideal was ever achieved. It seems likely that women serving in what we would regard as more clear-cut clerical roles was more the exception than the rule. Women were very important in the early church, and very clearly served as deacons, a fact that is well documented. But with increased public and political intertwining in the Church, their place was made more clearly subordinate. It is for us in succeeding generations of Christians to define our relationships with one another consistent with Jesus Christ's example.

But the burning question is still: How did women function in the early Church at the common Eucharistic meals? We can only make educated guesses.

- Complete absence of women at the Eucharistic meal is unlikely, and secondary or separate dining rooms is also unlikely in house churches.
- The possibilities are that they were grouped by families with men and women reclining together or the women and children separately but in the same area.
- Particularly in Roman colonies such as Philippi or Corinth, reclining together was more likely.
- After awhile, the seating disappeared so that all stood during the service, possibly with women and men on different sides of the room. This is reminiscent of practices in Orthodox churches today.

- However, if they followed contemporary synagogue seating patterns, according to archaeological evidence, they apparently did not have any architectural division of the area to make separate sections for men and women, based on the research of Bernadette Brooten.
- Late 3rd and 4th century Catacomb drawings suggest women participating and also serving as leaders in Eucharistic meals, funeral banquets and family rituals, evidencing practices that probably originated earlier.

Best source: Osiek, C., MacDonald, M. Y. & Tulloch, J. H. (2006). **A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity**. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press. Available used for \$13, and for Kindle for \$14.40.

So What? Final Comments

Should we be disturbed by seeming discrepancies about women's roles across the NT? No! Some of our friends in other Christian groups may be more ill-at-ease with this material. We need to remember that our scriptures were written within their own unique communities and usually in different time frames. There were many developments, influences, and cross-currents across the first 50 years or so of the new faith. We can view the seeming discrepancies as a window into the issues that were being discussed and debated at that time. The differences give us information that helps us understand early Christian developments. Even though they may have different emphases and perspectives, all of the Gospel and Epistle writers agreed on the central issue, the Good News of the Gospel!

Should we try to replicate the NT pattern of male/female relationships? First of all, there is no single pattern or one-size-fits-all seen in the NT. Some Christian groups understand the apparent NT male/female patterns as not just instructive in the ancient world, but to be generalized to all situations and *still mandatory* in our own -- and *for all time and places*. Husband/wife relationships are still defined in this light by some groups. In the Roman Catholic Church, it is still held that women cannot be priests because purportedly there were no women among the Twelve.¹⁶ We can see

¹⁶ **The Twelve Disciples:** If you'd like to read a short overview of what is known of the Twelve Disciples, read Pope Benedict XVI's book, **The Apostles** (2007). It is good if you can overlook the polemics of proprietary ownership of the catholic faith by the Roman Catholic Church, e.g. referring to one of the lesser known of the twelve disciples as a "...very important member of the Apostolic College..."!!!

Roles of Women: And despite the Pontiff's research, there is one glaring oversight in the "co-workers" section in the back of his book where some men in the second generation after the Resurrection are listed along with all the women. Perhaps it was too difficult to explain Junia away -- whom Paul himself specifically named as an Apostle [Romans 16:7] who had been in the faith prior to himself. Our own Fr. Greg Singleton+ says that "...it is unlikely that any Roman Bishop (including the Bishop of Rome) is going to go anywhere near the implications of the clear reference to Junia as an apostle in Romans 16:7. ...The Roman Catholic Hermeneutic is deductive, starting with the tradition of the Church and reading the scriptures from that perspective. We know they are going to wind up in a different place."

historically that there were a range of roles for women in the early church, definitely including serving as deacons and probably as presbyters (priests).

An anonymous woman, cited by Rev. Kathryn Piccard+, as a little girl wanted to be an acolyte but only boys were allowed this privilege in her parish. She knew that the deacon Phoebe was named in the Bible and she learned of the justification for not ordaining women, e.g. that the Bible doesn't mention any women priests, bishops, or Apostles." For a long time because of falsified biblical translations, she was unaware of the Apostle Junia. After she learned about Andronicus and Junia, she reportedly prayed:

***"Thanks be to Jesus Christ
For calling both women and men to be Apostles,
And to the Holy Spirit for empowering them,
And for preserving proof in the Holy Bible! Amen!"***

I think if we carefully study what Jesus has to say to us, and seek with our hearts to discern the intent of scriptures plus honoring the collective wisdom of our past and ongoing Christian traditions, we can flourish spiritually. We can live authentic Catholic Christians without becoming slaves to literal interpretations or to the past in ways that no longer serve the Body of Christ. Such a stance also will allow us to more meaningfully process and support those Christians living with gender or sexual identity or orientation differences, and who seek to live in committed same sex unions.

The point of examining the Junia passage and her place in the early Church and other passages pertaining to women is that some passages, as traditionally interpreted, have led Christian women to think *less* of themselves than they should. And they have also led some Christian men to think *more* of themselves than they should, and consequently, the life of the Church has suffered in both directions. So as we reexamine our spiritual lives in light of the early Christian era as well as our own time, I pray we will truly come to understand the liberty we have in Christ Jesus, which will help us become better role models for justice in our world.

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