

Junia Reinstated: Her Sisters Still Waiting

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This article presents evidence to show how exegetical traditions have shaped the text of Scripture to comply with that tradition. The particular focus is on how this has happened within the church in its opposition to women taking leadership positions in the church. We will also note some of the methods used to deal with texts that are difficult and contrary to a given outlook and the position being defended.

Among methods used to help one's case in theological debate is the 'dilution method'. One dilutes the meaning until it can be accommodated to one's theological position. Dilution can be achieved through the process of translation or by watering down the meaning of a 'difficult' word or phrase. As this article will focus on evidence relating to Junia, a female apostle, we note that 'apostle' can simply be defined as 'one who is sent'. If this is all the word means, a sheep dog can be an apostle!

Another way out of difficulty is to say passages are allegorical, metaphorical or poetic. Some certainly are. For long periods in the church's history difficulties in the Old Testament have been interpreted allegorically. A third

method is to 'sledge' opponents to sully their argument, calling them heretical, liberal, fundamentalist, anti-feminist, feminist, and so on.

Tradition must have the support of Scripture. We can have tradition in various forms. We can rely on a translation tradition such as the King James Version (KJV) as our authority. However, we know the Greek text retains primacy. A translation tradition can be quite misleading. We are reminded that

Luther made the discovery that the biblical text from the Latin Vulgate, used to support the sacrament of penance, was a mistranslation. The Latin of Matt. 4:17 read *penitentiam agite*, 'do penance', but from the Greek New Testament of Erasmus, Luther had learned that the original simply meant 'be penitent'. . . In this crucial instance a sacrament of the Church did not rest on the institution of Scripture.¹

We need also to check editions of the Greek New Testament (hereafter NT) against the ancient manuscripts from which a selection has been made. We cannot be satisfied with the Textus

Receptus which held sway from Reformation times until about the nineteenth century. Before Gutenberg invented printing in the 1450s, texts were copied by hand with variant readings coming into the textual pool. 'Variant readings . . . among surviving witnesses . . . must number in the hundreds of thousands.'² We cannot escape evaluating the traditions that the printed Greek NTs present to us.

In recent years an important contribution to NT textual studies appeared in the book by B D Ehrman titled, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. With this provocative title Ehrman was using the language of the claim he was evaluating, namely, that the heretics corrupted Scripture. He does not deny heretics did that. Rather, he uses evidence from the supporters of orthodoxy to show that they did the same thing. It has long been claimed that the text of scripture has been adjusted. Parker tells us that hard sayings were hard from the beginning, but 'passages which were the focus of contentious issues were particularly prone to change'.³ Finegan, quoting Jerome to Lucinius, notes that copyists sometimes wrote down not what they found but what they took to be the meaning.⁴ Read reports that 'the almost unanimous opinion of the Fathers was that the New Testament texts were affected by "Christological alterations" made by scribes'.⁵

As this article is an application of Ehrman's thesis to present issues, we need to clarify what Ehrman means by this provocative term 'corruption'.

My thesis is stated simply: scribes originally altered words in their sacred texts to make them more patently orthodox and to prevent their misuse by Christians who espoused aberrant views. Scribes sometimes changed their scriptural texts to make them say what they were already known to mean . . . these scribes 'corrupted' their texts for theological reasons.⁶

'Corruption refers neutrally to any scribal change of text.'⁷ The accusation that the heretics altered Scripture is ancient and is made by Eusebius. 'Who would falsify Scripture? According to Dionysius, the heretics would: It is therefore no wonder that some have attempted even to falsify the Scriptures of the Lord.'⁸ Blaming the heretics is not only an ancient practice. While Hort claimed that 'instances of variation that appear to be doctrinally motivated are due to scribal carelessness or laxity, not to malicious intent',⁹ Wallace has pointed out that a presupposition of the Majority Text movement, which is reflected in the *Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (1982) of Hodges and Farstad, is that the 'heretics . . . corrupted the text'.¹⁰ In the same volume Holmes asserts that 'Ehrman has demolished the still common assumption that only the heretics changed the text for doctrinal reasons'.¹¹ Ehrman stresses the importance of knowing the sociological and theological issues being debated at any time to understand how these affect the text,¹² whether the issues in our Patristic sources are 'early Christological debates; anti-Judaism; anti-feminism'.¹³

This paper will document how the text of Scripture has been adjusted by the orthodox to downplay the role women played in the early church, or to remove them completely from some roles. We will first note the evidence from our own time, then from the time of the early church. Our first example draws heavily on a recent work of E J Epp on the question whether we should read Junias (male) or Junia (female) as the apostle mentioned in Romans 16:7.¹⁴ Epp points out that 'during the past decades Romans 16:7 has been recognized as of pivotal importance in determining what leadership roles women assumed in earliest Christianity'.¹⁵ Much depends on how the Greek word in the accusative case, *lounian*, is accented. With the acute accent, *lounían* almost certainly means that a female, Junia, is meant. With the circumflex, *louniān* means a male, Junias, the circumflex indicating a shorter form of a longer name such as Junianus.

Epp has brought together other possible contentious points in this debate. He has dealt fully with the possibility that Junias is an uncontracted male name which would be accented with the acute. He has checked the two places where the Church Fathers referred to Junias according to a few manuscripts. The Junias mentioned by Origen according to Rufinus's Latin translation is not reported as such in the manuscripts until the twelfth century and then in only very few. Until then the manuscripts write Junia.

Epiphanius also refers to Junias. However, Epiphanius also designates Prisca as a man. Burer and Wallace suggest that Junia was 'known to' the apostles rather than 'outstanding among them', but write, 'Epiphanius's identification of Junia as a man is almost surely incorrect . . . he calls Prisca in the previous sentence a man too!'¹⁶ Epiphanius's casualness in quotations has been noticed by others. Fee observes that 'the citing habits of the Fathers range from rather precise (e.g. Origen) to moderately careful (Eusebius) to notoriously slovenly (e.g. Epiphanius)'.¹⁷

Epp has answered the theory of Burer and Wallace 'that Junia was well known to the apostles rather than outstanding among them'.¹⁸ However, he did not point out that Burer and Wallace were using the dilution method in reducing the meaning of *episemoi* in Romans 16:7 to 'known to', which loses the sense to 'stand out' implied in the stem *sem-* as in *semeion* (outstanding sign). Epp was also unaware of several other examples which counted against the Burer and Wallace theory. He does draw attention to Luther's translation of Romans 16:7, 'Grüßet den Andronicum und den Junian' (both males), noting that 'the influence of Luther's Bible cannot be easily overestimated'.¹⁹ Luther is an example of the orthodox 'corruption' of Scripture in translating Erasmus's Greek NT. Erasmus in his 1516 Annotations had clearly stated that a female was to be read here; *lounian* meant Junia, since Paul gives a Julia her own place later in 16:15.²⁰ Luther,

as a child of his time translated according to the tradition that restricts women's roles in the church rather than according to the text.

'Aegidius of Rome (1245–1316) is commonly credited as the first to identify Junia as a male', an interpretation with considerable impact on future exegesis.²¹ Though the text had long been read to refer to a male Junias, Epp asserts that until the mid 1990s there was no extended discussion of whether *lounian* was male or female.²² Those who could not accept a woman as an apostle were all too ready to accept a reading that helped their cause, even if it was not based on sound evidence.

Evidence for *lounian* (feminine) in Romans 16:7 will come only from the Bible Society (BF¹ 1904; BF² 1958, UBS¹ 1966 to UBS⁴ 1993) and Nestle (N¹ 1898 to N/A²⁷ 1993) Greek NTs, being those most widely used.

Junia's bumpy ride

The Nestle Greek text from its first edition in 1898 until the 1927 edition, and the Bible Society in its first edition of 1904 until its 1958 edition printed only the acute accent without any footnote. At Romans 16:7 we are to read Junia (f) in both texts.

In 1927 N¹³ changed the text by printing the circumflex accent but providing in the critical apparatus evidence that other readings had Junia (f). This remained the printed text in Nestle until 1998. However, the footnote saw changes not only with the Junia varia-

tions in Romans 16:7; other variations have gradually been included which will be explained later. The footnote to verse 7 referring to Junia indicates that the Greek texts of Westcott and Hort, of Tischendorf, and of Weiss accented with the acute, indicating Junia (f).²³ This footnote remained up to N/A²⁶ in 1979.

BF² in 1958 followed Nestle. Their text now has Junias (m). Their footnote only indicates the acute accent as a possibility without any reference to past practice. Also they introduce the variant reading of some manuscripts *loulian* (Julia), another female, in place of *lounian*.

UBS¹ which was published in 1966 presented an expanded footnote which remained with only slight additions until 1993. Unless it is correctly understood, this is a very misleading if not deceptive footnote. Now *lounian* has a circumflex accent also in the footnote, and one could easily assume that the long list of manuscripts and translations listed understood a reference to Junias (m). However, accents were added only in about the eighth or ninth century, and the Church Fathers who read this text unaccented all read *lounia* (f). The footnote here is contrasting the manuscripts and translations that have Junia with those which have Julia (P⁴⁶ etc). The misleading accent should not be here. Also there is now no indication of Junia (f), who had been there for more than eighteen hundred years.

Further, the capital {A} in its braces, introducing the footnote, is also

misleading. UBS¹ in its introduction tells us 'the letter A signifies that the text is virtually certain' (p x). One could be excused for thinking Junias (m) is 'virtually certain', but that is not meant. We have to wait until 1994 for Metzger to explain in his *Textual Commentary*: 'The "A" decision of the committee must be understood as applicable only as to the spelling of the name *lounian*, not the masculine accentuation'.²⁴ From 1966 until 1994 we would have to guess this.

In 1979 N/A²⁶ also removed all reference to Junia (f). She has disappeared without trace, in spite of the fact that the 'early church writers were unanimous in claiming Junia (or Julia) for Rom. 16:7'.²⁵

In 1993 both UBS and N/A made major revisions of their Greek NTs. As mentioned above, the N/A²⁷ text still has Junias (m). However, now their footnote has the Junia (f) possibility in two ways. First, a list of manuscripts is given which have the acute accent. In some manuscripts such as B², D² this was the work of a later hand adding accents to the text according to their understanding of the gender, namely Junia (f). The other manuscripts in their list were written later with accents. The second group listed as 'sine acc.' are the earlier manuscripts which do not have accents.

UBS⁴ also modified its footnote, but again the footnote has made a mess of things. The {A} classification is still there. However, now the Introduction to UBS⁴ tells us: 'The letter "A"

indicates that the text is certain' (p 3). Clarke claims that 'the UBS' letter rating system . . . has been one of the most heavily criticized elements of this Greek critical edition'.²⁶ It is most misleading. The footnote also prints *lounian* (m), then lists manuscripts and adds, 'but written without accents'. This is contradictory, for before accents were added the text was understood as feminine not masculine. The second list is as in N/A²⁷, indicating that when accents were added or were part of the original text they accented Junia (f).

Metzger's 1994 *Textual Commentary* provides revealing insights into the UBS committee's outlook. He reports, 'Some members, considering it unlikely that a woman would be among those styled "apostles" understood the name to be masculine'.²⁷ Some of the committee made decisions based not on textual evidence but according to presuppositions about the leadership role women could not have in the church. The comment also shows that these Greek scholars did not understand 'apostles' here as mere emissaries but as leaders in the church who were 'outstanding among' not merely 'known to' the apostles. Romans 16:7 informs us that Andronicus's and Junia's apostolic activities led to imprisonment. To its credit UBS⁴ has added another footnote in finer print, listing the Greek NTs and translations which have Junia (f) and those which have Junias (m).

In 1998 N/A²⁷ issued a Jubilee edition, the fifth corrected printing,

where a dramatic change has taken place. Junia is reinstated. UBS⁴, which shares its text with N/A, in its third printing of 1998 also made the change. Now, in both N/A²⁷ and UBS⁴, we read Junia (f) in the main text. The footnotes have been altered accordingly. Only the minor footnote in UBS⁴ indicates that REB^{mg} and NRSV^{mg} translated Junias (m). Otherwise Junias (m) has virtually disappeared. The N/A²⁷ footnote also removes the evidence for Junias (m). Now Junias has disappeared from N/A without trace!

Several things emerge from this documentation. As Ehrman has pointed out, we need to know the conflicts in the church to understand the text. In this example, the removal of Junia (f) from the text coincides with the debate about the ordination of women. We can trace this debate fairly easily to 1859. In that year Catherine Booth wrote a pamphlet titled *Women's Ministry*, with the subtitle *Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel*. Junia, the female apostle, was part of her argument. In 1870 when her husband William Booth founded what later became the Salvation Army, all positions were open equally to men and women from the first conference (stated in Rule 12 of the 38 rules).²⁸

Early in the twentieth century some mainline churches followed. However, it was after the Second World War that the debate widened, to the dismay of some orthodox Christians. Our printed Greek texts of Romans 16:7 reflect this debate. In fact, the complete

removal of any evidence of Junia (f) between 1966 and 1993 coincides with the temperature of the debate. Ehrman's thesis is demonstrated by the above treatment of Junia (f): we should identify the social and theological issues of the day to understand the text; the orthodox change scripture to strengthen their own position and to weaken or negate the opposing view.

If it is heretics who corrupt scripture, we would have to say that the Bible Society and Nestle/Aland committees that give us our Greek NTs are made up of heretics. Hardly! Good and devout people, as Metzger explained, could not come to terms with a woman being an apostle. Since few update their Greek New Testaments, we can expect the promotion of Junias (m) for some years to come.

What ended Junia's seventy-year exile so suddenly? From the late 1980s and into the 1990s articles appeared challenging the Junias (m) theory. The most thoroughly researched of these were probably those of Thorley²⁹ and, in German, of Arzt.³⁰ The Junias (m) theory was shown to be without foundation, convincing even those on the Greek NT committees who in 1993 had been unable to accept Junia (f) as an apostle. As Epp summarises, 'there is overwhelming agreement among recent exegetes that Andronicus and Junia are outstanding apostles'.³¹

Other variants in Romans 16:7

Most other variant readings, except that of *louliau*, which had a {C} rating

in UBS¹⁻³, are now absent from UBS⁴. However, the N/A²⁷ text has other variants besides the list of manuscripts reading *loulian*. Epp informs us that 586 manuscripts have *lounian* against five with *loulian*.³² This is the reason for the UBS {A} classification in favour of *lounian*.

The second variant has *tous* (masculine plural definite article) added by P⁴⁶ and B. This opens up the possibility of reading: 'Greet Andronicus and Junia my kinsmen, and (greet) *those* fellow-prisoners of mine who are outstanding among the apostles'. Hence Paul's fellow-prisoners are the apostles and not Andronicus and Junia or, as Ehrman has put it, '[with] the addition of the article scribes have effectively prepared the way for scholars concerned to rob Junia of her apostleship'.³³

The next group of variants refer to those who were Christians before Paul. The P⁴⁶ variant here is worth noting. Firstly, it cancels out the possible meaning for P⁴⁶ that the fellow-prisoners were apostles because it now has a masculine singular, allowing the possibility that only Andronicus was an outstanding apostle who became a Christian before Paul.

The reconstruction of the P⁴⁶ text of verse 7 shows how differently this manuscript, currently our oldest, read. However, the number of variants in the Greek manuscripts in this verse is fairly typical of many if not most verses of the NT, especially where there was controversy at some time in the church.

Paragraph changes

Another text besides Romans 16:7 that is pivotal in the debate about the role of women in the church is 1 Corinthians 14:33-40. This text also has been altered to strengthen the argument for the silencing of women by altering. The punctuation and paragraphing in our Greek editions was changed during the twentieth century, virtually coinciding with the removal of Junia (f) and surely for similar reasons. The introduction to UBS³ informs us: 'The punctuation apparatus includes some six hundred passages in which difference in punctuation seems to be particularly significant for interpretation of the text' (p xli). This is certainly the case in 1 Corinthians 14:33ff. Do we have a full stop or the end of a paragraph at verse 33a after 'peace', or are the full stop and end of paragraph at the end of verse 33b, after 'saints'? The Greek New Testaments have steadily moved from the latter option to the former. The end result is to link 'as in all the churches of the saints' with 'let the women be silent' and not to God wanting peace in all the churches of Christians. This is contrary to the manuscripts but is supported by an exegetical tradition which downgrades the role of women.

Metzger reminds us that 'the earliest manuscripts have very little punctuation . . . During the sixth and seventh centuries scribes began to use punctuation marks more liberally'.³⁴ Hence the punctuation in manuscripts before these dates (and even later) is particularly significant. The

earliest manuscripts before the seventh century as well as those dated later have punctuation marks not at verse 33b but at the end of verse 33a. Payne informs us,

Vaticanus clearly distinguishes v.34-35 as a separate paragraph as does P⁴⁶, Origen, Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Claromontanus (D^p), 33 and every other Greek manuscript of this passage I have been able to find – therefore [it is] consistently represented in the manuscripts as a separate paragraph and not grouped with v.33b'.³⁵

Epp makes a similar point, noting that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is 'marked in various manuscripts by sigla interpreted by some to indicate either that it was lacking in those manuscripts or dislocated'.³⁶ The significance of these 'punctuation' signs and the paragraphing cannot be ignored. Payne and Canart tell us that 'notation of textual variants should not be surprising since this practice was well established in Sumerian and Akkadian texts'.³⁷ The Alexandrians also created signs to indicate where a text was corrupt or was an apocryphal gloss; Origen used these critical annotations of the Alexandrians to prepare his Hexapla.³⁸ In a previous article I presented the evidence for verses 34–35 as an interpolation into 1 Corinthians 14.³⁹ What was not flagged there was the fact that our verse numbering breaks the text at the end of verse 33.

Verses were added to the text by Estienne (or Stephanus) in the fourth edition of his 1551 Greek NT, soon after Luther's death. He must have had good reason to break the text where he did. He worked with medieval manuscripts of the Textus Receptus type. The most obvious conclusion is that he broke the text at the end of verse 33 because, like the earliest manuscripts listed above, his too had breaks in the text or the punctuation marks of the scribes at the end of verse 33. This is confirmed by Payne's research. He reports, 'Even where the later minuscules do not have regular paragraph marks, each one I checked had a breaking mark at the beginning of v.34 and at the end of v.35 . . .'.⁴⁰ The punctuation changes in more recent Greek NTs have obscured if not negated the possibility of verses 34–35 being a later addition to the text. As pointed out above, this strengthens the case for silencing women by linking it to 'as in all the churches of the saints'. The following evidence shows how what is in the copies of the manuscripts has been supplanted by an exegetical tradition supporting the silencing of women in the churches.

The Nestle Greek NT in 1898 printed a full stop at the end of verse 33, with a comma at verse 33b. Their footnote shows that the margin but not the main text of the Westcott and Hort editions had the comma and stop reversed. A change was made in the text of BF¹ in 1904, which was followed in 1958 by BF², by placing a full stop at verse 33a and a comma at the end of verse 33. Their footnote

indicated that the Textus Receptus and the 1881 Revised English Bible had the older pattern. The Nestle text by 1912 and until N/A²⁶ in 1979 changed also to this pattern. It indicated in its footnote that the Westcott and Hort text had the opposite, but their marginal reading was as BF².

UBS¹ in 1966 developed this even further. Not merely a full stop but now a new paragraph was begun at verse 33b. Their footnote lists the Greek texts and translations with the other punctuation. One notes how from 1966 translations into English also start a new paragraph at verse 33b, a pattern which continues.

UBS³ in its 1983 corrected edition went a further step. Now all punctuation at the end of verse 33 has been removed; the manuscripts have been disregarded completely. There is also a misleading footnote which suggests WH^{m9} and BF² had a new paragraph at verse 33b, whereas they had a full stop only.

In its 26th edition of 1979 N/A also removed all punctuation marks at the end of verse 33 and also removed from the footnote all manuscript evidence and older practice in the Greek NTs. It also began a new paragraph after verse 33b. Just as Junia (f) disappeared without trace in both UBS³ and N/A²⁶, so now in N/A²⁶, and still to the N/A²⁷ eighth corrected printing of 2001, the manuscript evidence has disappeared without trace. One has to deduce other possibilities by noting a

list of manuscripts (D G 88* etc) which had all of verses 34 and 35 after verse 40. To its credit the UBS⁴ footnote still provides evidence of the older punctuation. How different the current Greek NTs are from that of Alexander Souter's 1910 Greek NT (1941), where a paragraph ends at verse 33. It would even better match the manuscript evidence if verses 34–35 were printed in our Greek editions as a separate paragraph after verse 33 or after verse 40, as in the manuscripts just listed. It would more plainly show what the scribes who copied and punctuated the manuscripts believed, that these verses were not originally part of Paul's text

Undisclosed evidence

The third modern example shows what our current Greek NTs have chosen not to publish. The UBS does not pretend to give us all the possible variant readings. The introduction to UBS⁴ tells us that the present edition 'continues to offer in its apparatus only a limited selection' of variant readings' (1). However, N/A²⁷ in its introduction claims to provide 'a critical appreciation of the whole textual tradition' (45); 'the variants included are important either for their content or for their historical significance' (46). Regarding the Church Fathers, it states that principal criteria for inclusion of patristic quotations are 'first, the quotation must be useful for textual criticism . . . furthermore the quotation must be clearly identified as from a particular passage of the NT' (72).

In spite of these claims, one finds in Romans 16:3 that the variant reading *syllaitourgos* (colleagues in the ministry) for Prisca and Aquila, found in Chrysostom's homilies on Romans 16 as reported by Migne,⁴¹ is not revealed. We have to find it ourselves. Chrysostom quotes the text and in three places repeats this word in his exposition, in one case (col. 665) singling out Prisca as Paul's *syllaitourgos*, his 'colleague in the ministry'.

Our Greek NTs today read only the diluted word *synergous* (fellow-workers) here. However, Chrysostom's text reaches back into the second century and seems to have escaped the orthodox adjustments to the text that resulted from controversies over the role of women at that time.

The reading *syllaitourgoi* could claim originality according to two important principles used in choosing between variant readings. First, the reading accords with the style of the writer on this topic. 'A variant consistent with the author's style and usage elsewhere is more likely to be original.'⁴² In Romans 15:16 Paul used *leitourgos* to describe his own ministry.

We should note the usage of Paul when he calls Christ *diakonos* in Romans 15:8 to describe Christ's ministry to his fellow-Jews in order to understand his next use of this word applied to Phoebe in 16:1. This suggests that Phoebe's ministry is a continuation of Christ's ministry. The word *syllaitourgos* implies a public ministry. The assertion has often been made that Prisca taught only in

private. If she did teach Apollos in private (Acts 18:26), it would need evidence to show she only ever taught in private. This reading of Chrysostom suggests otherwise.

The second principle asks whether the more difficult reading still makes sense. For those who have difficulty accepting that Prisca and Junia held high office in the NT church, this is certainly the more difficult reading.

Evidence from the Church Fathers is important for us in understanding the manuscripts. They help identify the controversies of their day and hence the likely textual adjustments made because of those disputes. Future Greek NTs should give the *syllaitourgoi* variant for Prisca and Aquila so we can make up our own minds.

Second century evidence: the Western Text

A debate about the role of women in the church within the orthodox family of Christians in the second century also affected the texts. A well-known example is how in Acts and elsewhere the Western Text, manuscript D (05) plays down the role women played in the early church. This fifth-century text reaches back into the second century, with most text critics dating its beginnings in the first half of the second century AD.⁴³ Metzger agrees, noting that it 'was used by Marcion, Tatian, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian . . . The Old Latin versions are noteworthy witnesses to a western type of text.'⁴⁴

Acts 1:14 in manuscript D reads 'women and children' in the list of those gathered for prayer to choose an apostle to replace Judas. In case one might think the women were leaders, D implies the women were present as mothers minding children.

In Acts 2:18 D has omitted 'and they will prophesy', since this would involve the women mentioned carrying out this public activity.

Acts 17:4 reports the result of Paul's preaching in Thessalonica. Instead of 'a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women' (NIV) joining Paul and Silas, D reads 'many of the God-fearing Greeks and the wives of many prominent men'. The women are not leaders but the wives of leaders.

Acts 17:12 records that at Berea 'many Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men' (NIV). However D tells us that 'of the Greeks both men of prominence and many women believed'. Again women take a secondary place.

In D at Acts 17:34 Dionysius becomes a 'prominent' member of the Areopagus and the woman Damaris, worthy of special mention in most manuscripts, is omitted entirely.

At Acts 18:2 in D, Paul goes to see only Aquila, not both Prisca and Aquila, suggesting he was the prominent member of this famous couple. Barrett notes that 'Aquila is unique in the NT in that whenever he is named

his wife is named too . . . It is most improbable that she would have been mentioned so frequently by name if she had not been an outstanding person in her own right.'⁴⁵ In Acts 18:26 the D text reverses the names to read 'Aquila and Priscilla' lest she should be seen as the leader.

In Colossians 4:15 D has a masculine name Nymphas where the feminine Nympha is virtually universally preferred. The pronoun is masculine (his house); someone could not accept that a woman could be the leader of a house church.

Witherington concludes that this evidence suggests a concerted effort in the late first or early second century 'to tone down texts in Acts that indicated that women played an important and prominent part in the early days of the Christian community'.⁴⁶

Acts of Paul

The author of the 'Acts of Paul' was not doing anything original in using an apostle's name, as we know from the 'Apocalypse of Peter' and the 'Gospel of Thomas'. He probably suspected others also were writing in Paul's name around that time. Ehrman notes, 'Our evidence suggests that the practice of forgery was remarkably widespread . . . [A]ll sides . . . were occasionally liable to the charge.'⁴⁷

The author of the 'Acts of Paul', a presbyter in Asia, believed the apostle was being misrepresented, particularly in the way he did allow

women to take leadership roles in the NT church. So he wrote this religious romance that tells of a female apostle Thecla who died in old age: 'Thus then suffered the first martyr of God and apostle and virgin Thecla'.⁴⁸ This embellished tale must have had some historical basis, as the oral tradition was still strong at the time of writing and the eyewitnesses were only one or perhaps two steps removed. Enslin informs us that the 'Acts of Paul' is first mentioned by Tertullian (on Baptism 17) who

strongly disapproved of it as it encouraged women to preach and baptize, and who records that its author, a presbyter in Asia, had been convicted and removed from his office although he had confessed that he had written it solely from love of Paul.⁴⁹

In spite of the author's admission, the writing was not proscribed but enjoyed wide popularity. It is included in manuscript D as part of the 'Scripture' for the church which that manuscript served into the fifth century and later. Thus, for a limited time it enjoyed a degree of canonicity with other apocryphal books.⁵⁰

Included in these Acts is what we call Third Corinthians, a condemnation of docetic Christology by our orthodox writer. This became part of the scriptural tradition of the Armenian and Syriac churches. One would like to ask the presbyter whether his text of 1 Corinthians 14 included verses 34–35!

Dilution by translation

During the second century AD, when there was debate about the role of women in the church, the first translations from the Greek into Latin and Syriac appeared around AD 180. Even with a limited knowledge of Latin, one can see how the Latin translation of Romans 16:1–2 has diluted the importance of Phoebe.

1 Commendo autem vobis Phoebem sororem nostram, quae est ministra ecclesiae, quae est Cenchreis, 2 ut eam suscipiatis in Domino digne sanctis et assistatis ei in quocumque negotio vestri indiguerit, etenim ipsa astitit multis et mihi ipsi. (N/A 1997)

The Greek has been diluted in translation. A Greek noun *prostatis* (leader, ruler) has been translated by a verb *asto* (assist, help). Phoebe is one who has done a few things rather than held a position or had a title. In verse 2b *assisto* is appropriate for the Greek *paristanai*, to 'stand beside' or 'help', but the other Greek word *prostatis* has the preposition *pro* in the compound. The Latin translation assumes that the prepositions *para* and *pro* mean much the same in a compound word. That is true for some prepositions when compounded in a verb. In Titus 2:15 it makes little difference whether one reads *periphronēin* or the variant *kataphronēin*, both meaning to 'despise' or 'disregard'. Similarly, in Luke 2:39 both *epistrephein* and the variant *hypostrephein* mean 'return'. However, the preposition *pro*, which takes only the genitive case, retains

the meaning 'before' in reference to either place, time or position. In the NT, the verbal form of *prostatis*, namely *proistanai*, has the meaning to 'manage', 'rule' or 'lead' (Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4,5,12; 5:17). Had the Latin translators of *prostatis* wanted to use a matching verb, the word *praesto* was available to them.

The English translations and even the revised Greek-English dictionary Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich have words suggesting 'help' for *prostatis*. The dictionary justifies this meaning by referring to Lietzmann⁵¹, who claims that the Greek noun has only a figurative (*bildlich*) meaning in Romans 16:1. As a child of his time he appears to hold the conviction that women could not be leaders in the church. We note that the classical Greek dictionary of Liddell and Scott gives neither the meaning 'helper' nor 'host/ess for *prostates/is*.

According to Acts 18:18, Paul took a vow while at Cenchrea. Did this vow restrict Paul's ministry while in Cenchrea? From Acts 21:23,24 it seems Paul withdrew from the public ministry in Jerusalem when he joined others who had taken a vow. Most likely in Cenchrea, when the vow was Paul's vow, he also withdrew, accept-

ing the local leadership, in this case Phoebe's. Hence he can say in Romans 16:2 that Phoebe 'has been a leader of (or presided over) many people, including me'. Paul's reference in verse 1 to Phoebe as 'minister' of the church in Cenchrea accords with this meaning.

The diluted translation of Romans 16:1-2 by Latin Fathers in the second century, at the time of the debate over the role of women in the church, is another example of Ehrman's thesis that the orthodox altered the text of Scripture. Evidence for women as leaders has here been negated in the western church, which used the Latin as its authoritative Scripture until recent times. The meaning to 'assist, help' in the Latin has probably led to this meaning appearing in our Greek NT lexicons and in commentaries.

Parker says, 'Orthodox scribes literally rewrote the text in order to make it say what they knew it meant'⁵² — or what they thought they knew it meant. A revision of Romans 16 in our Greek NTs has begun in the case of Junia, based on the manuscript evidence rather than on exegetical tradition, and will hopefully address other issues raised here.

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- ⁵ Peter M Read, 'Christological and Textual Transmission: Reverential Alterations in the Synoptic Gospels', *Novum Testamentum* 35, 1993, 106.

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- 7 Ehrman, 29.
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- 10 Daniel B Wallace, 'The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods and Critique', *Studies and Documents* 46, ed Bart D Ehrman and Michael W Holmes, 1995, 299.
- 11 Michael W Holmes, 'Reasoned Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism', *Studies and Documents* 46, 343.
- 12 Ehrman, 277.
- 13 Bart D Ehrman, 'The Use and Significance of Patristic Evidence in New Testament Textual Criticism', in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis and Church History*, ed B Aland and J Delobel, Kok Pharos, Kampem, 1994, 130. 'Anti-feminism' is Ehrman's term. Those opposed to the ordination of women are not necessarily anti-feminist; many are women.
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