

women's roles in Scripture than has been attainable previously.

Women Leaders in the Old Testament

Few today contest the fact that women appear in a variety of ministry roles in the Old Testament. The key questions are, Were these *leadership* roles? Did the community of faith affirm women in such positions? The biblical record yields a yes on both accounts.

From early on, women were affirmed as leaders. Miriam is a good example. She is portrayed in the Exodus narratives as a leader in and of her own right and is accorded a level of respect similar to that of Aaron and Moses. The congregation of Israel viewed her role as essential to its mission, refusing to move ahead on one occasion until she was restored to leadership after her criticism of Moses (Num 12:15).

Her impact can be gauged by the affirmation she received from subsequent generations. Tradition commends her as a *prophet* sent by God to join her brothers in leading Israel out of Egypt and *redeeming* them from the land of slavery. Her memory is celebrated by the community of faith for the leadership she provided at this crucial juncture in Israel's history (Mic 6:4; cf. Ex 15:20).

Women proved to be capable leaders during Israel's subsequent history. During the period of the judges, Deborah particularly comes to mind. She assumed a variety of leadership roles, including "prophet" (Judg 4:4, 6-7), "judge" (Judg 4:5) and "mother of Israel" (Judg 5:7). In the role of prophet, her leadership was accepted without dispute as from "the LORD, the God of Israel," indicated by Barak's response to her summons (Judg 4:6).⁶ This is due, in part, to cultural familiarity.

⁶Barak's submission to a woman has sometimes been construed as a sign of weakness for two reasons: his insistence on her presence in battle and Deborah's reply (Judg 4:8-9). In response to the first issue, it should be noted that Barak's demand that Deborah go with him most likely meant that he valued her leadership as a prophet so greatly that he would not fight without her. In response to the second, it should be noted that the NIV's "Very well . . . I will go with you" (changed to "Certainly I will" in TNIV) and the TEV's "All right . . ." (Judg 4:9) are misleading. The Hebrew participle used along with a finite form of the same verb serves to intensify rather than suggest a grudging agreement: "Swirely [or 'Indeed'] I will go with you" (most translations). The LXX translator reflects this understanding by rendering it with the intensive: *poruomenē poreusomai*. See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 35.3.1-2; E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910), no. 133L; and F. C. Conybeare and St. George Stock, *A Grammar of Septuagint Greek* (Boston: Ginn, 1905); reprint Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1980), no. 81.

The NIV's "but because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours" is also questionable (Judg 4:9). 'Efes with a noun clause introduced by *ti* is restrictive, not causative: "How-

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WOMEN LEADERS IN THE BIBLE

Linda L. Belleville

Studies of women leaders in the Bible can be readily found. Yet three research tools are now in hand that make revisiting the topic both prudent and worthwhile. First, there are recently published Qumran papyri and Greco-Roman inscriptions, which challenge considerably the common stereotype of women in both Jewish¹ and Greco-Roman² circles as little more than chattel. Second, there are current sociohistorical studies that show that there were more women leaders in antiquity, particularly in formerly male-dominated arenas,³ than has commonly been acknowledged.⁴ Third, Greek computer databases⁵ permit a more informed and accurate understanding of

¹The Babata documents from Qumran, in particular, show the legal capabilities of women in the most religiously conservative Judean circles. Here is a woman who inherits the properties of two husbands, buys and sells properties and supervises her holdings. The number of legal transactions that Babata handled is remarkable even by modern standards. Thirty-five legal documents were found in her possession. This accords with what is found in early mishnaic legal materials. A woman of independent means could bring suit for damages (*Mishnah Bava Qamma* 1.3), sell property in her possession (*Mishnah Ketubbot* 11.2), testify in court (*Mishnah Ketubbot* 2.5-6), swear an oath (*Mishnah Shewi'ot* 5.1; *Mishnah Ketubbot* 9.4; *Nedarim* 11.9), manage her earnings (*Mishnah Bava Metzi'a* 1.5) and arrange her own marriage (*Mishnah Qiddushin* 2.1).

²Greco-Roman inscriptions show that women under Roman law enjoyed more freedoms and privileges than has traditionally been supposed. These privileges included ownership and disposal of property, terminating a marriage, suing for child support and custody, making a will, holding office, swearing an oath and giving testimony. For further discussion of women's roles in Jewish and Greco-Roman first-century society, see Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000), pp. 71-96.

³Literature on women in antiquity has mushroomed since the 1960s. For an overview and bibliography, see *ibid.*

⁴For example, the decision whether the Greek name Junia(s) in Romans 16:7 is the masculine Junias or the feminine "Junia . . . outstanding among the apostles" can now be determined with relative ease and confidence. See the second section of this chapter, "Women Leaders in the New Testament."

⁵E.g., Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG, ancient literary works), the Packard Humanities Institute (PHI, ancient papyri and inscriptions), and the Perseus Project (archaic and classical texts and artifacts).

DISCOVERING BIBLICAL EQUALITY

Archaeological finds show that female prophets, both professional and lay, were well known in antiquity.⁷

Deborah's stature as a judge is confirmed by the types of cases she handled. Intertribal disputes too difficult for the local judges fell to her (Deut 17:8).⁸ She held court in the hill country of Ephraim between Ramah and Bethel, where men and women alike came to her to have their disputes settled (Judg 4:4-5; a similar itinerant route to that of the prophet Samuel, 1 Sam 7:16).⁹

Deborah's ability as a commander-in-chief is also clear. When the tribes were incapable of standing together against their oppressors, Deborah not only united them but led them to victory. This is underscored by the placement of her name ahead of that of Israel's general: "Deborah and Barak . . . sang [a victory song] on that day" (Judg 5:1).

Deborah's overall leadership skills are highlighted in several ways. Her gender is placed first for emphasis: "Now Deborah, a woman prophet" (Judg 4:4 BBE). Her judicial role is expressed in the participial form ("judging Israel"), thereby emphasizing her ongoing activity (Judg 4:4). Her posture ("she used to sit under the palm," Judg 4:5) is that of an official exercising her duties. As a judge, she made a profound difference. Before her tenure "the roads were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. Village life in Israel ceased" (Judg 5:6-7 NIV). With Deborah's ascendancy came a return of security in the countryside.

In her honor, the site was named "the palm of Deborah" (Judg 4:5) and the title

⁷ *ever*, you will have no glory on the enterprise" (most translations). See Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976), nos. 427, 558, "a restrictive clause"; cf. Wälchle and O'Connor, *Hebrew Syntax*, 35.3.5e: "but [contrary to your expectations], there will be no glory for you."

⁸ For instance, there were a large number of female prophets (lay and professional) at Mari, Syria, during the third and second millennia B.C., who were contemporaries of Israel's patriarchs and judges. This included King Zimrilim's own daughter. See Abraham Malamat, "A Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy: The Mari Documents," in *Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp. 33-47.

⁹ "If a judicial decision is too difficult for you to make between one kind of bloodshed and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another—any such matters of dispute in your towns—then you shall immediately go up to the place the LORD your God will choose" (Deut 17:8). Deborah's legal role is sometimes disputed (e.g., Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, NAC 8 [Nashville: Broadman, 1995], p. 197). This, however, overlooks legal language such as *ham-mishpat*, which has to do with "decisions" made in response to particular legal inquiries. See Robert Boling, *Judges*, Anchor Bible 6a (New York: Doubleday, 1975), p. 95, n. 5.

¹⁰ The political involvement of female prophets in antiquity is well documented. See Herbert Huffmon, "Prophecy in the Mari Letters," *BA* 31 (1968): 101-24.

"mother in Israel" was bestowed on her (Judg 5:7). The phrase "in Israel" commends her as a national leader. "Mother in Israel" is comparable today to an honorary doctorate bestowed in recognition of national leadership contributions.¹⁰

Similarly, the prophet Huldah provided leadership during the time that prophets of the stature of Jeremiah (Jer 1:2), Zephaniah (Zeph 1:1), Nahum (Nah 3:8-10) and Habakkuk (Hab 1:6) were active. Huldah was related by marriage to a court official, which placed her at the center of public affairs (along with Zephaniah). Her renown as a religious counselor was such that when King Josiah commanded his advisers to "go, inquire of the LORD . . . concerning the words of this book that has been found [the book of the law]," they sought out Huldah (2 Kings 22:13-14).

The size and prestige of the embassy that sought her counsel indicates something about not only the seriousness of the situation but also Huldah's professional stature: the high priest (Hilkiah), the father of a future governor (Ahikam), the son of a prophet (Achor), the secretary of state (Shaphan) and the king's officer (Asaiah). Huldah's counsel was immediately heeded, and sweeping religious reforms resulted (2 Kings 22:8-20; 23:1-25).

Some speculate that the king's advisers picked Huldah because she was a political insider. Yet the prophet Zephaniah was more closely identified with the ruling class as a descendant of King Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.; Zeph 1:1). More likely Huldah was approached because of her track record of prophetic leadership and expert counsel. The narrator calls attention to the fact that the whole people of God (including "the prophets") pledged themselves afresh to the covenant as a result of her counsel (2 Kings 23:1-3). Indeed Huldah's role in Josiah's reforms may have helped elevate all the true prophets to their rightful place in Judah's religious community.

It is sometimes remarked that God permitted women to lead at times when Israel lacked adequate male leadership. But the examples of Miriam, Deborah and Huldah, who ministered in the context of other renowned male figures (Moses, Barak, Josiah, Jeremiah, etc.), demonstrate the opposite. Others plead exceptional circumstances. They argue that Israel's nomadic existence during the wilderness years and a leadership vacuum after years of slavery in Egypt called for exceptional measures. The period of the judges, they point out, was a unique time when everyone did whatever was deemed right in their own eyes. Yet if there was any time when

¹⁰ See Roman codes such as the Theodosian Code 16.8.4.

wise spiritual counsel was in evidence, strong leadership was in place and the nation was on an even keel, it was during King Josiah's reign—and Huldah's tenure. The prophet Jeremiah speaks highly of Josiah (Jer 22:15-16), as does the author of 2 Kings (2 Kings 22:2).

Why, though, were there so few women leaders? The lack of a comprehensive history of the period makes it difficult to know actual percentages. Matter-of-fact references to female prophets may indicate that women such as Miriam, Deborah and Huldah were only the tip of the leadership iceberg. There are a number of unnamed women that suggest as much: the female prophet whom Isaiah was instructed to marry (Is 8:3), the female prophets Ezekiel spoke against (Ezek 13:17-23) and Noadiah, mentioned by Nehemiah (Neh 6:14). Some, like their male counterparts, were lured by fame and fortune. The prophet Ezekiel pronounced judgment against both the sons of Israel and the daughters of Judah, who prophesied "out of their own imagination" (Ezek 13:2, 17; cf. Jer 28:1-17).

There were women who served as advisers to heads of state. One example is the "wise woman" from Tekoa during David's reign, who advised the king regarding Absalom (2 Sam 14:1-33). Another example is the "wise woman" of Abel-beth-maacah who saved her city from destruction at the hand of David's troops by giving expert counsel (2 Sam 20:16-22). Such would not have been the case had these women not had significant standing and authority within their local setting.¹¹

Women leaders are also well attested in the political arena. City records and inscriptions give ample evidence of their civic-mindedness. Women's names appear in connection with the underwriting of temples, theaters, gymnasiums, public baths and other civic projects.¹² From time to time women even served as heads of state. Athaliah ruled Judah 842-836 B.C., albeit unwisely (2 Kings 11:1-3; 2 Chron 22:10-12); Salome Alexandra, honored queen of the Hasmonean Dynasty, reigned 76-67 B.C.; and Cleopatra was the effective ruler of Egypt from 51 to 31 B.C.

Though there appear to have been more men than women in the political spotlight, it was not due to a lack of intelligence, temperament or political savvy. Nor

¹¹See Claudia Camp, "The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Early Israel?" *CBE* 43 (1981): 14-29.

¹²For example, Phile, the first woman magistrate in Priene, Asia Minor, dedicated at her own expense a cistern and the water pipes (1st-century B.C. *Epigraphica* 2.5.G). Another woman, Eumachia, was public priestess of Pompeii, Italy, and patron of the guild of fullers, one of the most influential trade guilds of the city (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 10.810, 1st century A.D.). See H. W. Pleket, *Epigraphica II: Texts on the Social History of the Greek World* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1969).

is there any notion in the Old Testament that women leaders were inappropriate. The only exception is the Levitical priesthood, where purity laws precluded Jewish women's serving in certain ceremonial roles due to uncleanness related to childbirth and menstruation. Men too were excluded but for different reasons (e.g., not being a Levite, sexual uncleanness or physical defect). Other roles, however, show women and men serving side by side. Women were involved in building and furnishing the tabernacle (Ex 35:22-26) and standing watch at its entrance (Ex 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22).¹³ They played musical instruments in public processions (Ps 68:25), danced and sang at communal and national festivals (Judg 21:19-23), and chanted at victory celebrations (1 Sam 18:7). Women brought offerings, performed rituals prescribed for purification and pardon, performed vows (Lev 12:1-8; 13:29-39; 15:19-29; 1 Sam 1:11, 24-28), and were recipients of divine communication (Judg 13:2-7; 8-20).¹⁴ There is also every indication that women and men worshiped and ministered side by side. Together they sang in the choir (2 Chron 35:25; Ezra 2:65; Neh 7:67) and offered sacrifices (1 Sam 1:24-25).

Women Leaders in the New Testament

Women leaders come to the fore with the advent of the apostolic period. Several factors explain this. One is the Spirit's empowerment of both women and men for ministry. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was an equal opportunity event. The women among Jesus' disciples were enabled for witness just as the men were (Acts 1:8, 14-15; 2:17-18). The result was a major paradigm shift from the male priesthood of the Jewish cult to the charismatic worship format and gender-inclusive leadership of the early church.¹⁵ "When you assemble," Paul states, "each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation" (1 Cor 14:26 NASB).

Another factor was the involvement of women in leadership positions in Greco-Roman religion and politics.¹⁶ Recent sociohistorical studies have shown that off-

¹³The Hebrew *isaba'* ("to serve") is used elsewhere of the Levites to describe their role in the tabernacle (Num 4:23; 8:24) and of Israel's warriors (Num 31:7, 42).

¹⁴In these respects they functioned in a parallel fashion to women in the pagan cults. See Phyllis Bird, "The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus," in *Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp. 397-411.

¹⁵See chapter sixteen in this volume.

¹⁶There were some political exclusions. Women were not present in the Roman assemblies and did not hold positions of command in the military. Public speaking roles were also scarce. Although this restriction was increasingly a formality, women continued to need a male guardian for perform-

(Rom 16:7). This would place them most naturally during the early years of the church's outreach in Jerusalem (Acts 2-7).

Some try to circumvent the attribution of apostleship to a woman by changing the gender. The majority of English translations done from the 1940s to the early 1970s translate *Junian* as the masculine name *Junias*.²¹ On the other hand, older translations (e.g., Wycliffe Bible, Tyndale New Testament, Geneva Bible, KJV, Weymouth), more recent revisions (NKJV, NRSV, NAB, REB, TNIV) and newer translations (e.g., God's Word, NLT, Holman Christian Standard, NET, ESV) render *Junia* as the feminine *Junia*. They do so for good reasons. The masculine name *Junias* does not occur in any inscription, letterhead, piece of writing, epitaph or literary work of the New Testament period. The feminine *Junia*, however, appears widely and frequently. Perhaps the best-known *Junia* is the half-sister of the famed Roman general Brutus.²² The name *Junia* also appears in first-century inscriptions from such familiar New Testament locales as Ephesus, Didyma, Lydia, Troas and Bithynia.²³ "*Junia*" is found as well on tombstones—especially in and around Rome.²⁴

Others attempt to get around Paul's apostolic acknowledgment by translating the Greek prepositional phrase as "esteemed by" or "in the sight of the apostles"

²¹This requires that *Junian* be understood as a contraction of the masculine name *Junianus*. In this case, the masculine accusative ending of *Junianus* would be the same as the feminine accusative ending of *Junia*—except for the accent. The contracted (or shortened) form would have a circumflex. The feminine would have an acute accent. Ancient manuscripts typically did not contain accents, so the Greek technically can go either way.

Even so, from the time accents were added to the text until the early decades of the twentieth century, editions of the Greek New Testament printed the acute accent and not the circumflex. The reasons for this are clear. The shortened form of *Junianus* would be *Junas*, not "*Junias*." Also, while it is true that Greek nicknames were abbreviations of longer names, Latin nicknames were typically formed by lengthening the name, not shortening it—hence *Priscilla* for *Prisca* (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; cf. Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). See John Thorley, "*Junia* a Woman Apostle," *NovT* 38 (1996): 24-26.

²²Plutarch *Marius Brutus* 7.1.4.

²³The inscription evidence includes *Ephesus Ionia* 627.1; 788.1; 822.1; 2373.1; *Didyma Ionia* 225.1; *Troas Asia Minoris* V.1403.5; *Kyzikenae Propontiskuste Mysia/Troas* 2077.1.1; *Die Inschriften von Prusias ad Hypium* 93.1.

²⁴E.g., "Here lie infants [Anu]Junia Iounia Noeta," *Corpus inscriptionum Judaicarum* 10.1; cf. 303.1. For additional primary sources, see Peter Lampe, *Die frühchristlichen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten*, WUNT 2, no. 18 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), pp. 156-64. The evidence for "*Junia*" is so compelling that even the most traditional scholars are now conceding that *Junian* in Rom 16:7 is feminine. See, for example, Thomas Schreiner, "Women in Ministry," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blumberg (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), p. 198.

cial religion in the Roman Empire was gender inclusive and women leaders were a known phenomenon. For example, while Paul was planting the Ephesian church, Iuliane served as high priestess of the imperial cult in Magnesia, a city fifteen miles southeast of Ephesus.¹⁷ Also, because religion and society were inseparable, to lead in one arena was often to lead in the other. Mendorf, for example, served at one time or another during Paul's tenure as magistrate, priestess and chief financial officer of Silyon, a town in Pisidia, Asia.¹⁸

Women in the Roman church. The more Romanized the area, the more visible were women leaders. Since Paul's missionary efforts focused on the urban areas of the Roman Empire, it should come as no surprise that most of the women named as church leaders in the New Testament surface in his letters.

This is especially true of his letter to the Roman church. The letter carrier was a woman (Rom 16:1-2), and at least five of the nine women Paul greets were ministry colleagues ("co-workers," Rom 16:3, 6-7, 12). English translations stemming from the 1940s to the 1980s tend to obscure this fact. A hierarchical, noninclusive understanding of leadership during this period is partly to blame: women can't be leaders, so the language of leadership must be eliminated. Phoebe becomes a "servant" and Paul's "helper" (instead of a church deacon and Paul's patron; Rom 16:1-2),¹⁹ and the esteemed apostle *Junia* becomes the masculine "*Junias*" (Rom 16:7).

Junia is especially to be noted. Among the leaders recognized at Rome, she receives highest marks. Paul greets her and a coworker named *Andronicus* as "my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles" (Rom 16:7 TNIV). *Andronicus* and *Junia* could have been among "all the apostles" (beyond the Twelve) or among the five hundred to whom Christ appeared (1 Cor 15:6-7).²⁰ But the facts better fit their having been among the "visitors from Rome" who responded to Peter's preaching at Pentecost (Acts 2). Both were Jewish, both had Greek (Hellenized) names, and both preceded Paul "in Christ"

ing important transactions such as making a will, selling a piece of land, freeing a slave, entering into a contract or accepting an inheritance.

¹⁷*Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander* 158.

¹⁸Inscriptions Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes 3.800-902.

¹⁹The translation "deaconess" in Rom 16:1 (RSV, JB, NJB, Phillips) is anachronistic, for the feminine *diakonissa* was not in use during the apostolic period. The first clear instance is about the time of the Nicaean Council in A.D. 325 (canon 19).

²⁰Paul uses *apostolos* more broadly than "the Twelve." James, *Andronicus*, *Junia*, *Barnabas*, *Silas*, *Timothy* and *Apollon* are all called apostles (Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 4:6, 9; 9:5-6; Gal 1:19; 2:9; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:7).

rather than "outstanding among the apostles." To do this, however, is to introduce a strange thought for Paul. In Paul's writings there are "us apostles" (1 Cor 4:9), "Christ's apostles" (1 Thess 2:6-7), "his [God's] holy apostles" (Eph 3:5), "the other of the apostles" (1 Cor 9:5), those "who were already apostles" (Gal 1:17) and "other of the apostles" (Gal 1:19). There are also the "pillars" (Gal 2:9) and the "super-apostles" (2 Cor 12:11), but not "the apostles." The terminology appears in the kerygma that preceded Paul. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 that he was faithful in transmitting to his converts and church plants "as of first importance" what he himself had received—"that he [Christ] appeared . . . to all the apostles." But "the apostles" is not native to Paul's own thinking or speaking.

To say that Junia was "esteemed by" or "prominent in the sight of the apostles" is to ignore early Greek translations and commentaries. For example, the Vulgate, the standard Latin translation of the Western church, has "Junia . . . notable among the apostles" (*nobilis in apostolis*). John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople in the fourth century, states, "To be even amongst these of note, just consider what a great conium this is! . . . Oh how great is the devotion of this woman [Junia] that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!" (*Homilies on Romans* 31 [on Romans 16:7]).²⁵

More recently the translation "outstanding among the apostles" has been challenged on the basis of usage outside the Bible. It is argued that every known instance of the adjective *epiśēmos* with the preposition *en* and the personal dative bears the exclusive sense of "well-known to" rather than the inclusive "notable among."²⁶ The first implies that Junia was outside the group of apostles but esteemed by them; the second implies that she was honored as one of them.

But all considerations support the latter. For one, *epiśēmos* is the adjective "notable" and not the passive verb "well known to."²⁷ Two, it is a compound of *epi*

(upon) and *sēma* (mark), yielding the literal sense "having a mark, inscription," "bearing the marks of," and the metaphorical sense "remarkable, notable" (LSJ s.v.). This would make Junia a "distinguished" or "remarkable" member of (not simply known to) the apostles. Three, overwhelming usage of the preposition *en* and the personal dative (inside and outside the New Testament) bears the local meaning "in/among."²⁸ While dative personal nouns often designate the recipients (to/for), this is not the case for the preposition *en*. In fact, the standard grammars and lexicons lack salient examples of its bearing the sense "to."²⁹ On the other hand, *epiśēmos en* with either a personal or impersonal object in each case yields the meaning "notable among," not "well known to."

- Additions to Esther 16:22 (NRSV): "Therefore, you shall observe this with all good cheer as a notable day among your commemorative festivals."
- Josephus *Jewish Wars* 2.418: "So the men of power . . . sent ambassadors; some to Florus . . . and others to Agrippa, eminent among whom were Saul, Antipas, and Costobarus."

²⁵A. T. Robertson lists numerous examples of an adjective followed by *en* plus the personal plural dative as "inclusive" (i.e., a member of the larger group; *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman, 1934], p. 587). See, for example, Matthew 2:6, "But you, Bethlehem, . . . are by no means least among the rulers of Judah [en tois hēgemosin Ioudai]"; Acts 4:34, "There were no needy persons among them [en autois]."

²⁶Bauer and Wallace's study ("Was Junia Really an Apostle?") assumes a conclusion not found in the evidence. Despite their assertions to the contrary, they fail to offer one clear biblical or extrabiblical parallel to support their position that in this idiom the *en* phrase is "exclusive," not "inclusive." First, it should be noted that evidence for this construction (*epiśēmos* as an adjective modified by *en*) is exceedingly rare, much too rare to support their sweeping conclusions. They do concede, somewhat grudgingly, that the one certain instance (Lucian *On Salaried Posts* 28) in fact supports the traditional view of Romans 16:7. On the other hand, what they perceive as the closest parallel to Romans 16:7 becomes so only because it is not cited accurately. When citing *Psalms of Solomon* 2.6, which reads *en epiśēmō en tois ethnēsin*, they drop the preposition *en*, permitting *epiśēmos* to be read as a straight adjective modifying the preceding "seal" (thus "with a seal, a spectacle among the Gentiles"). But that strains the plain sense of the grammar in every way; much more likely it is a neuter noun ("with a mark," "brand"). Thus: "Their [captive Jews] neck was with a seal [en sphragidī], with a slave-brand [en epiśēmō] among the Gentiles [en tois ethnēsin]" (i.e., describing what made "their captivity" in Babylon "gratifying"). "Aphrodite, glorious to mortals" (Euripides *Hippolytus* 103) looks to be an "exclusive" example. But translators (e.g., Rex Warner, 1949; Michael R. Halleran, 1995) and scholars on this text typically define *epiśēmos* as "renowned, notorious among" and not "glorious to." See Richard Hamilton, *Euripides' Hippolytus: Commentary* (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Bryn Mawr Greek Commentaries, 1980-1982), p. 8, line 103. Moreover, the Greek of Euripides predates Paul's by five centuries, when the adjective had not yet acquired a comparative sense, and thus does not offer a contemporary parallel.

²⁷Subsequent Greek commentators echo the attribution (Theodoret *Epistles* 82.2 [4th century]; *Catena on the Epistle to the Romans* 519.32 [5th century]; *Chronicon Paschale* [7th century]; John of Damascus *Epistles* 95.565 [7th century]).

²⁸E.g., Michael Bauer and Daniel B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16:7," *NIS* 47 (2001): 76-91.

²⁹None of the standard Greek lexicons support such a meaning. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988-1989), no. 28.31, has "pertaining to being well known or outstanding, either because of positive or negative characteristics—'outstanding,' 'famous,' 'notorious,' 'infamous.'" Indeed, Louw and Nida render Romans 16:7 as "they are outstanding among the apostles" (contra Bauer and Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle?" p. 84 n. 39).

- Lucian *On Salaried Posts* 28: "So you must raise your thirsty voice like a stranded frog, taking pains to be conspicuous among those who praise [the mistress' page]."
- Lucian *Dialogues of the Dead* 438: "We had quite a crowd with us on our way down, most distinguished among whom were our rich countryman Ismenodoros [and others]."

Thus the clearest reading of this reference to Junia yields an example of a woman not only functioning as an "apostle" in the New Testament church but being highly esteemed as such by Paul and his apostolic colleagues. This flies in the face of arguments that Jesus excluded women from the Twelve because their gender precluded their functioning as apostles.³⁰

Women in the Philippian church. Euodia and Syntyche are singled out as leaders of the Philippian church. That Paul does this is significant. It is not his practice to name names in letters to his churches. In part, the public nature of his letters precluded it. They were written to be read aloud and concerned matters that affected the whole church (Col 4:16). When Paul does mention someone by name, it is with decided intentionality.

Paul's initial evangelistic foray in Philippi took place among a group of Jewish women during sabbath prayers (Acts 16:13-15). Some, such as Euodia and Syntyche, then partnered with Paul in the preaching of the gospel, as well as in leading the congregation. Paul's public appeal to a "loyal companion" to "help these women" to "be of the same mind in the Lord" says something about their stature within the Christian community (Phil 4:23).

Euodia's and Syntyche's differences were not of a petty or personal nature. Paul speaks to the issue of conflict in the church, spending significant time exhorting the church to stand firm in *one spirit* (Phil 1:27), to be of the *same mind* (Phil 2:2, 5; 3:15), *striving side by side for the faith of the gospel* and in no way intimidated by their opponents (Phil 1:27-28). Much of this same language is used of Euodia and Syntyche. They too are called to be of *the same mind*, having *struggled beside Paul in the work of the gospel* (Phil 4:2-3). Their role so clearly involves leadership that their disagreement put the unity of the church in jeopardy.

There is no hint that these or any other women should not be in leadership roles. If this had been so, Paul would have said as much. He is not shy to do so elsewhere (e.g. I Tim 1:19-20). Nor is the disagreement an indication that women

are not well suited for leadership. Paul himself sharply disagreed with a colleague on at least one occasion (Acts 15:36-41). At issue is simply two leaders not seeing things the same way in the context of outside opposition to the church.

Women in the Cenchrean church. Phoebe is commended as "a deacon of the church in Cenchrea" (Rom 16:1). Some translations obscure this fact by rendering *diakonos* as "servant" (e.g., NKJV, NASU, NIV). To do so is to miss the official character of Paul's commendation. Phoebe was Paul's designated letter carrier to the Roman church (Rom 16:2).

A church's welcome was based on the presentation of credentials. This is why Paul routinely provided credentials for his letter carriers (e.g., 2 Cor 8:16-24; Eph 6:21-22; Phil 2:25-30; Col 4:7-9). Since Phoebe was a virtual unknown, strong credentials would have been critical in her case. "Servant" would hardly have sufficed in the imperial capital. "A *deacon* of the church in Cenchrea" is what was needed (TNIV, NRSV; cf. NLT, NEB, CEV).

Here we do well to take our cue from the early church fathers. "Deacon" is how they universally understood Phoebe's role. Origen cites Romans 16:7 as an example of the fact that "even women are instituted deacons in the church."³¹ John Chrysostom understands *diakonos* to be a term of "rank."³²

Paul instructs the Roman church to "receive [Phoebe] in the Lord" and to "give her any help she may need" (Rom 16:2). Elsewhere this is technical language for an itinerant missionary (e.g., I Cor 16:10-11; 2 Cor 7:15). In Phoebe's case it indicates that Paul entrusted her with a mission beyond carrying his letter. This was certainly within the scope of a deacon's job description. Ignatius, bishop of Rome at the turn of the century, twice refers to a deacon of one church serving as an ambassador to another church.³³

Women in the Lycus Valley churches. Priscilla and Aquila are twice greeted by Paul as "co-workers" (Rom 16:3-5; 2 Tim 4:19). It is a common misconception within evangelical circles that Greco-Roman women rarely left their house and that when they did go out they did not speak to members of the opposite sex. There was no stratum of Roman society where this was the case. Even the wives of Roman artisans worked side by side with their husbands (Acts 18:3). Priscilla and Aquila were no exception. They are recognized throughout the New Testament as a team.

The language Paul uses of both Priscilla and Aquila points to the equivalent of

³¹ Origen *Homilies on Romans* 10.17 (third century).

³² John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 31 (on Rom 16:1, late 4th century).

³³ Ignatius *Letter to the Philadelphians* 10.1; *Letter to the Ephesians* 2.1.

³⁰ Contra Michael J. Wilkins, "Women in the Teaching and Example of Jesus," in *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective*, ed. R. L. Saucy and Judith TemElschhof (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001) pp. 91-112, esp. 105-6; on this matter see chapter seven in this volume.

today's church planter, a role very much like his own. They are Paul's "co-workers in Christ Jesus," "they risked their lives" for him, and "all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them" (Rom 16:3-4).

What is unusual is the order of their names. As in our "Mr. and Mrs." nomenclature, the Roman husband's name typically appeared first. When New Testament writers refer to their occupation of tentmakers and to "their house," the order is "Aquila and Priscilla" (Acts 18:2; 1 Cor 16:19). But when ministry is in view, the order is "Priscilla and Aquila" (Acts 18:18; Rom 16:3; cf. 2 Tim 4:19). This is also the case with the instruction of Apollos (Acts 18:26), suggesting that Priscilla possessed the dominant ministry and leadership skills of the duo.³⁴

Women were also among the ranks of deacons in the Ephesian church: "Women [deacons], likewise, are to be worthy of respect, not slanderers, temperate, and trustworthy in everything" (1 Tim 3:11, my trans.). That Paul is speaking of women in a recognized leadership role is apparent not only from the listing of credentials but also from the fact that these credentials are duplicates of those listed for male deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-10. Also, the Greek word order of 1 Timothy 3:8 and 11 is identical: "[Male] deacons likewise [*diakonos hōsautōs*] must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine. . . . Women likewise [*gynaikas hōsautōs*] must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate" (1 Tim 3:8, 11 NRSV).

Postapostolic writers understood Paul to be speaking of women deacons. Clement of Alexandria (second-third centuries), for instance, says, "For we know what the honorable Paul in one of his letters to Timothy prescribed regarding women deacons."³⁵ And John Chrysostom (fourth century) talks of women who held the rank of deacon in the apostolic church.³⁶

Among the Lycus Valley churches, Nympha surfaces as another woman leader. Paul greets her at the close of Colossians: "Give my greetings to the brothers and

³⁴Luke is precise throughout Acts about the order of names in ministry teams. For example, when the famous missionaries are commissioned by the church at Antioch, the order is "Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2-7). But when Saul takes the lead, the order becomes "Paul and Barnabas" (Acts 13:9-12, 43; 14:12, 20; 15:2, 22, 35). The two exceptions are Acts 15:12 and 15:25, where political diplomacy and expediency dictated the order. Andreas Köstenberger ("Book Review," *JETS* 44 [2001]: 346) claims that 1 Corinthians 16:19 proves otherwise: "Aquila and Prisca, together with the church that meets in their house, greet you warmly." But "their house" is a statement of ownership, not ministry, thus warranting the order.

³⁵Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 3.6.53.

³⁶John Chrysostom *Homilies on Timothy* 11 (on 1 Tim 3:11).

sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house" (Col 4:15). While the reference is brief, the implications are noteworthy. Patronage of a house church was an authoritative role. The householder in Greco-Roman times was automatically in charge of any group that met in his or her domicile. Households in the first century included not only the immediate family and relatives but also slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, hired workers, and even tenants and partners in a trade or craft. This meant that the female head of household had to have good administrative and management skills (see *oikodespotein*, "to rule one's household," in 1 Tim 5:14). Paul thus places great emphasis on a person's track record as a family leader, as it is a definite indicator of church-leadership potential (1 Tim 3:4-5; 5:14).

Women in the Caesarean church. Luke commends Philip's four daughters as prophets in the Caesarean church (Acts 21:9). They belong to a tradition of women prophets stretching back to Mosaic times. In fact, if there was one gift that women consistently possessed and exercised throughout the history of God's people, it is this one. (Anna also continued this tradition in New Testament times; Lk 2:36-38.)

Luke's reference to Philip's daughters is brief. No further commentary was necessary, undoubtedly because women prophets were well established as church leaders. Postapostolic authors confirm this. Papias tells how he heard a wonderful story from the lips of Philip's prophetic daughters (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39). Proclus (third-century leader of the Phrygian Montanists) places their later prophetic ministry in Hierapolis, Asia. Eusebius ranks them "among the first stage in the apostolic succession" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.37.1).

Philip's daughters were not lone exceptions. A woman named Ammia in the Philadelphian church is also said to have prophesied during New Testament times (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.17.2-4). In fact, the second-century Montanists Priscilla and Maximilla used women like Ammia to justify their own prophetic office (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.17.4).

Some argue that early church prophecy was merely an impromptu movement of the Spirit and not a recognized leadership role in the church. Yet Luke makes it clear that the prophet was just such, when he identifies the leaders of the church at Antioch as "prophets and teachers" (Acts 13:1-3). Nor was prophecy, as some would claim, an activity valued less than other forms of ministry. This is evident from Paul's identification of prophetic speaking with "revelation" (*apokalypthē*, I Cor. 14:29-30) and his naming apostles and prophets together as the "foundation" of the church, when speaking of it metaphorically (Eph 2:20). He even goes further

conclude there was a substantially wider and well-established early Christian praxis of women leaders.³⁷

There is no indication that men and women functioned within any hierarchical leadership framework in the New Testament church. Indeed, the fact that Paul called women "laborers" and "fellow workers" means that what is said of other leaders must apply also to them. Paul urges the Corinthian church to "submit to such as these [who have devoted themselves to the service of God's people] and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it" (1 Cor 16:16). And he asks the Thessalonians "to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work" (1 Thess 5:12-13). It follows that Paul would presume such respect and esteem should also be shown toward the women who work and labor in the Lord—proclaiming, admonishing, teaching and leading.³⁸

and puts apostles and prophets in a category by themselves. It is to "God's holy apostles and prophets" that "the mystery of Christ . . . has now been revealed by the Spirit" (Eph 3:4-5). In a very real sense, therefore, the New Testament prophet carries on the "Thus saith the Lord" task of the Old Testament prophet.

Conclusion

Recent studies have focused appropriately on Paul's language for male and female leaders. The uniform conclusion is that Paul uses exactly the same language of colleagues in ministry be they male or female. The men are "fellow prisoners," "fellow workers" and "hard workers" who "risked their necks" for Paul and "labored side by side" with him "in the gospel" (Rom 16:3, 7, 9, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 4:12; 16:16-17; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:10-11; 1 Thess 3:2; 5:12; Philem 1:1, 24). The women are equally "fellow prisoners," "fellow workers" and "hard workers" who "risked their necks" for Paul and "labored side by side" with him "in the gospel" (Rom 16:3-4, 6, 12; Phil 4:2-3).

Parallel language reveals the same pattern in Greco-Roman society. Epigraphical data shows that terms such as *magistrate*, *chief officer*, *prophet*, *priest*/*priestess*, *patron*/*protector*, *overseer* and the like are used equally of women and men in the religious cults and civic associations of the day.

What is too often overlooked is the fact that women as well as men are named without qualification or geographical boundaries, and in commensurate numbers for each leadership role. Junia was "outstanding among the apostles" at Rome (Rom 16:7). Phoebe was a *deacon* of the Cenchranean church (Rom 16:1-2). Syntryche and Euodia were leaders of the Philippian church and *evangelists* alongside Paul himself (Phil 4:3; cf. 1:1). Philip's four daughters were *prophets* at Caesarea (Acts 21:9). Priscilla was a *church planter* alongside Paul (Rom 16:3-4) and a *teacher* at Ephesus who expounded "the way of God" to a man in exactly the same way Paul expounded the gospel to men and women in Rome (*exeihento* from *ektitheimi*, Acts 18:26; cf. 28:23). Under Roman law, Nympha had legal responsibility for and hence *authority* over the church that met in her house (Col 4:15).

These are facts hardly open to debate—although some remain eager and willing to attempt to circumvent them. To do so, however, one must dismiss the evidence of women leaders in the culture at large, deny the impact of the union of religion and life on the church, or impose on the biblical women the image of a cloistered domestic female that did not exist in the Greco-Roman world of antiquity. If anything, the matter-of-fact mention and listing of women in ministry permits us to

³⁷ Stefan Schreiber, "Arbeit mit der Gemeinde (Röm 16.6, 12): Zur versunkenen Möglichkeit der Gemeindeführung durch Frauen," *NIS* 46 (2000): 204-26.

³⁸ Keith A. Gerberding, "Women Who Toil in Ministry, Even as Paul," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 18 (1991): 285-91.