

SHAPES OF MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND EARLY CHURCH



"Honor," 1995 by Carolyn Gard Waldron (cotton, silk, linen, rayon, metal thread)

by Robert M. Johnston

The ministerial role of any group in the early decades of the Christian church cannot be considered apart from an investigation of the nature of ministry¹ in general and the dynamics that shaped it. In our study it will be convenient to distinguish between two types of ministry, based on the mode of reception, even though the distinction was not always a sharp one.² One type of ministry was that to which a person was called directly by Christ or his Spirit; since it was marked by the

bestowal of a spiritual gift (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11) we shall refer to it as charismatic ministry since the Greek word for gift is *charisma*. The other type is that to which a person was appointed by the church; we shall call it appointive ministry.

The Charismatic Ministry: Apostles

In the beginning Jesus called and appointed twelve men "to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mark 3:14, 15).³ The parallel in Matt. 10:1 calls the Twelve "disciples," while that in Luke 6:13 adds that Jesus named them "apostles." The term "disciples" reflects Mark's remark that they were "to be with him," while "apostles" was an appropriate title for those who were "to be sent out," since the Greek *apostolos* (plural, *apostoloi*; the word comes from the verb *apostello*; to send out) literally means "one who is sent out." Luke is apparently using the term technically as a title, for Jesus is said to have "named" them thus.⁴ Both Matthew and Luke, immediately after the report of the calling of the Twelve, describe their being sent out on a missionary journey. Mark reports this mission in his sixth chapter and uses the title "apostle" in 6:30.

Origen's definition holds: "Everyone who is sent by someone is an apostle of the one who sent him."⁵ Such a person represents the sender, and comes with the authority of the sender to the extent that he/she faithfully fulfills the mission that is committed to him/her. In John 13:16 Jesus says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him." The Twelve were sent out by Jesus as his representatives with the assurance, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me" (Matt. 10:40).⁶

In harmony with Origen's definition, we later find *apostoloi* of churches, as in 2 Cor. 8:23 (where the RSV translates the term as "messengers"). When used in this sense, apostleship might have become something more like an appointive office than a charismatic one, but we do not know how such *apostoloi* may have been chosen. It may well be that a church merely ratified the Holy Spirit's choice revealed through prophets, as in Acts 13:1-3 (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14).

The Twelve chosen by Jesus were the apostles *par excellence*. The number twelve was significant,

corresponding to the twelve Patriarchs and twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 21:12-14). They were clearly not the only disciples that Jesus had, but they occupied a special place in the scheme of things.

So important was the number twelve in the thinking of the infant church that they felt it necessary to fill the vacancy left among the twelve apostles by the defection and death of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26). "The Twelve" was so firmly established as a synonym for the original group of apostles that Paul referred to them thus even when they had become only eleven (1 Cor. 15:5)! Furthermore, it was important that the office not be seen as bestowed by human choice or appointment, so the vacancy was filled by casting lots after prayer (Acts 1:23-26). But Peter did lay down special qualifications that must be met even to be considered as a candidate: an apostle must have been an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:21, 22; cf. 2:32).⁷ The lot fell on Matthias, about whom we read nothing more in the New Testament.⁸

It is understandable, then, that the earliest Christians in Palestine, largely Jews for whom the twelve were especially significant, were unwilling to concede that anyone other than the Twelve could be a legitimate apostle. But this limitation was shattered by Paul, in a development that was vehemently resisted. Paul needed constantly to defend his apostleship. In 1 Cor. 9:1, 2 he did so by insisting on his qualifications: he was an eyewitness to the risen Lord (a claim supported in 15:8 and by Acts 9:3-5 and 22:11) and had done the work of an apostle. In Gal. 1:11-19 he argued that by revelation he received his commission directly from the Lord, so that his apostleship was in no way inferior to that of the Twelve.

With Paul as the "point man" as it were for expanding the apostolate, the number soon increased. Both Paul and Barnabas are called apostles in Acts 14:14, 4-9. The list that can be compiled from the New Testament also includes at least Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6, 9), Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1; cf. 2:6), Titus (2 Cor. 8:23, Greek), and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25).¹⁰

A Female Apostle

An especially interesting case is presented in Rom. 16:7, amidst a series of greetings Paul sends to friends and acquaintances in the church in Rome. The significance of this verse is usually missed because of the difficulty of translating it into English. However the various versions may deal with the verse, the

correct translation is as follows: "Greet Andronicus and Junia my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, and who were in Christ before I was." The main problem¹¹ revolves around the second name, which is commonly taken to be Junias. Both Junias, a masculine name, and Junia, a feminine name, are first-declension nouns, easily distinguishable in the nominative case but indistinguishable in the accusative case, used here as direct object of the verb "greet." It is therefore impossible to determine on the basis of grammar alone whether the name should be Junias or Junia. We are not without further recourse, however. It is possible by computer or more laborious means to trace the usage of words and names in Greek and Latin documents through the centuries. When this is done, we discover that the male name Junias does not occur until some dubious references in the Middle Ages, but the female name Junia was well known in New Testament times.¹² It is most reasonable to conclude, therefore, that we are dealing here with a female apostle named Junia.¹³ We can probably agree with ancient commentators that Andronicus and Junia were husband and wife, forming an apostolic team.

Other Charismatic Ministries and Their Implication

As noted at the beginning of this article, in three of Paul's letters and in 1 Peter we find lists of spiritual gifts (*charismata*). In three of the lists (1 Cor. 12:28; 12:29-30; Eph. 4:11) apostles stand at the head; in the remaining lists apostleship does not occur. By placing apostleship among the charismatic gifts Paul completes its "democratization," making it available to anyone to whom the Holy Spirit should choose to distribute it. These gifts are not limited to one gender: "It is the same God who inspires them all in every one. . . . All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Cor. 12:6, 11). Indeed this is explicitly the case with another of the gifts, prophecy, which along with apostleship and teaching is mentioned more widely than most of the other gifts. Peter's Pentecost sermon quotes Joel's prophecy that in the last days "your sons and your daughters will prophesy" and God will pour out His Spirit on His "menservants and maidservants" (Acts 2:17, 18). We know that women publicly prophesied at Corinth, where Paul directed that they should

do so with their heads covered (1 Cor. 11:3-10).¹⁴ Philip the evangelist had "four unmarried daughters, who prophesied" (Acts 21:9).

It seems reasonable to assume that what was true of one spiritual gift was true of them all. The Holy Spirit distributed them as he willed, untrammelled by any artificial human limitation, and women received them also. It was God who called men and women to charismatic ministry.¹⁵

The Appointive Ministry

Acts 6 reports that administrative questions threatened to distract the twelve apostles from their ministry of preaching and teaching (6:1, 2). The Hellenistic Jewish Christians were complaining that their widows were not receiving what they should in the daily distribution of supplies to the needy. The apostles directed that the believers elect seven men, "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," to this work (6:3). This was done and, judging from the Hellenistic names of the seven, they were chosen from among those who had complained; indeed, one was a proselyte. The seven stood before the apostles, and they¹⁶ prayed and laid their hands on them (6:6). This was the beginning of the appointive ministry, leaders selected by the people and given authority by the laying on of hands.¹⁷ Giles's understanding of the act has some plausibility:

The people set apart in this way are explicitly depicted as Spirit-filled leaders, who have already had a significant ministry. The laying on of hands by those assembled therefore does not signify the bestowal of a ministry, or of the Spirit, but rather that from now on their ministry is no longer an individual one: they are from this point on representatives of their community. What they do, they do not undertake in their own name, but in the name of the community that has set them apart as its representatives.¹⁸

What was the office assigned to the seven men of Acts? The office is not named. It has often been assumed that they were deacons.¹⁹ They have equally often been called elders.²⁰ It is necessary to lay aside conceptions and distinctions that developed later, sometimes much later.²¹ It is true that in Acts 6:2 we find the verb *diakonein*, cognate with the noun *diakonos*,

whence the English word deacon. But this by itself is not conclusive, for in Acts 1:25 we find *diakonia*, belonging to the same word group, applied to apostleship. The words mean, respectively, to serve, a servant, and service. Equally satisfactory synonyms are to minister, a minister, and ministry.

Significantly, the word *diakonos* never occurs in the book of Acts, but *presbyteros*, meaning "elder," is frequent and used as a title for a church officer. The first occurrence of the word with the latter meaning is in Acts 11:30, where we are told that the famine relief for the Judean believers that Barnabas and Paul brought was delivered over to the elders. In other words, the kind of work for which the seven were appointed in Acts 6 is said to be done by the elders in Acts 11:30.²² Their method of appointment in the churches, reported in 14:23, resembles somewhat that of Acts 6. In Acts 15 we hear of only two offices in Jerusalem, those of apostle and elder. We must conclude that the church at this early stage knew of only one appointive ministry, which Luke designated "elder."²³

The Gordian knot can be cut if we recognize that to begin with there was only one appointive ministry that could be called either *diakonos* (suggested by *diakonein* in Acts 6:2), a word describing function, or *presbyteros*, a word describing dignity. Only later did this one ministry divide into two levels, and the two terms came to be used to designate the two levels of ministry.²⁴ A similar branching into two ranks took place still later, between bishop²⁵ and elder, terms which were earlier interchangeable. The final result, in the time of Ignatius, was a three-storied ministry of bishops, elders, and deacons.²⁶

The first indication of a distinction between elder and deacon is in the salutation of Phil. 1:1, mentioning "bishops and deacons."²⁷ This is a two-tiered ministry, indicating that "bishop" was still synonymous with "elder." This synonymy is also exhibited in Acts 20, where the same people who are called elders (*presbyteroi*) in verse 17 are called *episkopoi* in verse 28. See also Titus 1:5-7, where Paul speaks of appointing elders and then immediately lists the qualifications of "bishops," and 1 Tim. 3:1; 4:14; 5:17, 19.²⁸ The distinction between deacon and elder/bishop is hardened in the pastoral epistles, especially in 1 Tim. 3:1-13.²⁹

The lists of qualifications for bishop and deacon in 1 Timothy 3 call for some comment, for there is much about them that is problematic. Dibelius and Conzelmann list some of the more

general questions: "Why are 'bishops' (*episkopoi*) and 'deacons' (*diakonoï*) described in very similar ways? In the catalogue of their duties, why are particular requirements for office not specified, but instead qualities which for the most part are presupposed for every Christian?"³⁰

Of particular interest is an item in the list of qualifications for both bishop and deacon, "the husband of one wife" (verses 2 and 12; cf. Titus 1:6; note also the parallel expression, "having been the wife of one husband," 1 Tim. 5:9). Interpreters have long debated whether this means "married only once," the traditional explanation, or "married to only one wife (at a time)," the explanation advanced by fathers of the Antiochene school. Some recent interpreters have suggested that the words are a prohibition of polygamy, while A. T. Hanson and others argue that it is a prohibition against remarrying after divorcing a previous wife.³¹

What is of particular interest to us is the use of this clause by some to rule out female ministers, since obviously a woman cannot be the husband of one wife.³² Several considerations militate against such a conclusion. First of all, and most obviously, the same qualification is mentioned for both *episkopos* and *diakonos*, but Rom. 16:1 proves incontrovertibly that the early church had female *diakonoï*, as we shall note below. Though this verse clearly destroys the contention in view, the question remains why the qualification is stated in such a way as to seem to exclude what Romans 16 supports.

At this point we need to review some philological considerations. Greek is an Indo-European language that possesses grammatical gender, as do also the Semitic languages. In such languages, when one has a group of mixed gender in view, or a person who could be of either gender, one must perforce use the masculine.³³ Were we not to read the Bible thus, the tenth commandment of the Decalogue (Exod. 20:17) does not forbid a woman to covet her neighbor's husband, and Jesus's warning in the Sermon on the Mount not to look at a woman lustfully (Matt. 5:28) leaves a woman free to lust after a man. But such a construal of these passages would be both hermeneutically and morally absurd. The application of the clause "husband of one wife" that we have been considering is in the same class.

If the twofold ministry of elder/bishop and deacon—as well as the subapostolic threefold ministry of bishop, elder, and deacon—exhibits a branching out from one original ministry that could at first be called interchangeably either deacon or elder, and if one single ministry eventually divided into two and then

three ranks, a logical consequence results: at least in the earliest period, what can be said of "deacon" also applies to "elder." Both were ministries which in the beginning were one, and they likely remained one in many places for several decades. Even in the pastoral epistles, Timothy is called a *diakonos* (which the RSV translates "minister") in 1 Tim. 4:6, though he had a charismatic gift that was somehow associated with prophetic designation and the laying on of hands (1:18, 4:14).

A Female Appointive Minister

Rom. 16:1 contains Paul's commendation of a woman named Phoebe, who is designated as *diakono*⁸⁴ a word used for both genders. The New Testament makes no distinction between deacons and deaconesses. English translations of *diakonos* in Rom. 16:1 vary: The KJV, NASB, and NIV read "servant," while the RSV has "deaconess." None of them brings out the fact that Phoebe occupies the same position as the deacons of 1 Timothy 3. Paul requests that she be given the same kind of reception as his other representatives, the same kind of support and respect that Paul enjoins for Titus and the other *apostoloi* (Titus in 2 Cor. 8:24; Timothy in 1 Cor. 16:10). Such a letter of commendation was the only kind of credential that the early church could offer.

If there could be one female minister there could as well be many, and this is confirmed by a letter sent by Pliny the Younger to the emperor Trajan about A.D. 108.⁸⁵ As governor of Bithynia, he arrested and interrogated Christians to find out what he could about their worship. He wrote: "I thought it the more necessary, therefore, to find out what truth there was in this by applying torture to two maidservants, who were called *ministrae*."⁸⁶ These women were apparently officers in their churches.

Translators and commentators are divided about the meaning of the women in 1 Tim. 3:11. Are these the wives of the deacons that are discussed before and after this verse, or are they female deacons? The verse is as puzzling as its placement is awkward.⁸⁷

That there were women in the appointive ministry implies something about that ministry that logically should have remained true even after it began to be differentiated into two and then three levels, just as the qualities of a piece of clay remain the same even when it is divided in two. But at some unknown point in history it ceased to be true, and women were squeezed out, at least from certain levels.

Other Developments

We also know that at some point, during New Testament times, ministry became professional. In 1 Pet. 5: 1-4 elders are warned to tend the flock of God "not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock." Among the unworthy motives for serving is the desire "for shameful gain." There would be no need to warn against this motive if the ministers were not paid. Paul, in 1 Cor. 9:4-15, insists on the gospel worker's right to remuneration, but he himself chooses not to exercise that right. In Paul's argumentation he cites Deut. 25:4, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." He alludes (in v.14) also to the Lord's instruction, recorded in Matt. 10:10. The same Scripture and saying of the Lord are cited in 1 Tim. 5:17,18, where it is laid down that "the elders who rule well, . . . especially those who labor in preaching and teaching," should be considered worthy of double pay.⁸⁸

Conclusions

This survey may serve as a warning against what has been called "structural fundamentalism," the idea that one pattern of church organization and ministry was laid down once and for all time. In fact, we have seen the ministry of the early church change and develop before our very eyes. The apostolate changed from a small and exclusive circle of twelve men to an ever-expanding circle that ultimately included at least one woman. Before Acts 6 there was no appointive ministry, but in that chapter it begins, and it later develops ranks.

These changes did not occur all at once, nor did they occur without resistance. But they were generally natural developments dictated by necessity and determined pragmatically. A careful comparison of the ecclesiology of the various New Testament writings, as well as early subapostolic writings, reveals that the changes did not occur uniformly in every place. A Christian traveling around the Roman Empire early in the second century would encounter a twofold appointive ministry in some places and a threefold ministry in others. In some places he would find that apostles and prophets were cherished, and in others they were in disrepute and being replaced by appointive ministers, especially bishops.⁸⁹

We do not know at what point and in what places women came to be squeezed out of the ministry. Sociology suggests that as revolutionary movements become institutionalized, women play a decreasing role in their leadership. In the early period, at least in the churches that Paul knew, that had not yet happened. How the change took place is not something to be explained theologically, but rather sociologically. Two women in Romans 16, Junia—representing the charismatic ministry of the apostolate, and Phoebe representing the appointive ministry—stand at the gate of history and hold open today the door for women to ministry. If “ordination” simply means credentialing, Junia and Phoebe clearly had it, for Paul’s commendations of them are explicable on no other grounds.

Furthermore, if one of the functions of laying on hands was to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8:17 and 1 Tim. 4:14), we cannot pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and at the same time deny the laying on of hands to any, man or woman. “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17).

Notes and References

1. The word “ministry” has come to denote a special privilege in the church, in the sense that one who has it is somehow a cut above those who do not have it. Ministry is indeed a privilege, but the correct connotation can be perceived only if we understand that its proper synonym is “service.” A minister is a servant.

2. In 1 Pet. 4:10, 11 the spiritual gifts are connected with the verb *diakonein*, related to *diakonos*, deacon. Hans Küng makes the point, “charisma and diakonia are correlative concepts” (*The Church* [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967], 393–94, cf. Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians*, Melbourne: [Collins Dove, 1989], 54).

3. Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations in this article are taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Important manuscripts insert into Mark 3:14 a second clause, “whom he also named apostles,” but this looks like a case of harmonization, influenced by Luke. It is also possible that the variant reading is authentic and the source of Luke’s statement, but the Marcan verse exhibits considerable textual confusion.

4. Judaism also had functionaries called apostles (in Hebrew *shaliach*, in Aramaic *sheliach*). These were sent out from Jerusalem on various missions and errands to the Jewish communities scattered throughout the Roman empire and beyond. They also collected funds for the support of the temple, and generally kept the network of worldwide Judaism together (cf. Acts 28:21). Saul of Tarsus (Paul) was a Jewish apostle before he became a Christian apostle (cf. Acts 9:2). The term is used for Ezra as an emissary of the king of Persia in Ezra 7:14.

5. *Commentary on John* 32:17.

6. In harmony with Origen’s definition and Christ’s declaration, Mishnah *Berakoth* 5:5 says, “A man’s *shaliach* is as himself.”

7. This clearly only meant being an eyewitness to the risen Lord, able to give personal testimony to seeing Jesus alive after he died, since none of the Twelve had actually seen the resurrection itself occur. Only angels and perhaps some Roman soldiers saw that. The first witnesses afterward were two women, “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.” See Matt. 27:65–28:15.

8. That nothing more is heard of Matthias in the New Testament is not unusual, for the same can be said of the majority of the Twelve. Nevertheless, it has often been maintained that the 120 brethren under the leadership of Peter who filled the vacancy with Matthias made a mistake and should have kept the place open for Paul (who, of course, had not been converted yet). A typical expression of this view is by G. Campbell Morgan: “Casting lots was wholly out of place, and was never resorted to after the coming of the Spirit. That the action was a mistake is revealed in that in His own time and way God found and fitted an apostle. It is to be noted how in consequence of this initial blunder, Paul had constantly to defend his right to the place of apostleship.” *An Exposition of the Whole Bible* (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1959), 450.

9. Ellen White regards the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas by the Antioch church as an ordination and remarks: “Paul regarded the occasion of his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his life-work. It was from this time that he afterward dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 164–65). Paul was called and appointed by God in Acts 9, as reported also in Acts 22, but that calling needed to be recognized and ratified by the church. In other words, he needed credentialing. There is no hint here, however, of anything like the later doctrine of “apostolic succession,” and it appears that the laying on of hands and commissioning were an act of the whole congregation. Not even the presence of one of the Twelve is mentioned. Paul, in fact, insisted that those “who were of repute added nothing to me” (Gal. 2:6).

10. In the case of Epaphroditus it can be argued that *apostolos* is not used in the same way as elsewhere, but only in the sense of one sent by a congregation and representing it.

11. An additional question concerns the understanding of the phrase “among the apostles” (*en tois apostolois*). Does it mean merely that the reputation of Andronicus and Junia has come to the knowledge of the apostles, or that they are to be numbered among the apostles? The phrase is somewhat ambiguous, but the second option is the more probable for the following reasons: (1) It is the most natural way to take the Greek; (2) Ancient commentaries, when not ambiguous, such as that of Chrysostom, understood it that way (see note 15, below); (3) Paul, who was always anxious to defend his apostleship, would not have spoken of the apostolic opinion in such a way as to seem not to include himself; (4) The first option is not usually taken when the person in question is thought to be a man named Junias. See Stanley J. Grenz, *Women in the Church—A Biblical Theology of Woman in Ministry* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995), 93; Richard S. Cervin, “A Note Regarding the Name ‘Junia(s)’ in Romans 16:7,” *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 470.

12. See lexica, s.v. *Iouuias*. Arndt and Gingrich list the name *Iouuias* but note that it is not found elsewhere, other

than Rom 16:7, and conjecture—without evidence—that it is probably a short form of Junianus. (The normal masculine name corresponding to Junia would have been Junias.) They further assert: “The possibility, fr[om] a purely lexical point of view, that this is a woman’s name *Iunia, as, Junia* . . . is prob(ably) ruled out by the context” (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], 381). The “context” is the fact that the two people named in the verse are numbered among the apostles. But such an argument is obviously circular. Since a woman could not have been an apostle Junia/Junias must not be a woman, which is begging the question. These lexicographers are apparently unmoved by a fact that they note: “Ancient commentators took Andr. and Junia as a married couple.” The decisive facts, therefore, are these: (1) The feminine name Junia is grammatically possible; (2) The feminine name Junia is lexicographically and historically probable; (3) Ancient commentators whose mother tongues were Greek and Latin understood the person to be a woman. For these and other reasons Peter Lampe without hesitation identifies Junia as a woman and female apostle (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:1127; see bibliography there). Not until the twelfth century do we encounter the view that the person was a male, no doubt prompted by the same logic that influenced Arndt and Gingrich.

John Piper and Wayne Grudem, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 79–81, argue against this, appealing to their computer search using the CD-ROM database *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. They found only three certain occurrences of the name Junia/Junias in Greek literature outside the New Testament: one in the first-century pagan writer Plutarch, one in Epiphanius, and one in John Chrysostom, the latter two fourth-century church fathers. In Plutarch the reference is clearly to a woman, Junia the sister of Brutus and wife of Cassius. The other two references are to the person in Rom. 16:7. The Epiphanius reference speaks of Junias, a man who became a bishop. The Chrysostom reference understands the person to be a woman, Junia. Piper and Grudem conclude from this that the church fathers were divided and that therefore no argument can be made from Greco-Roman usage, but somewhat more weight should be given to the Epiphanius reference.

Piper and Grudem here make two blunders. The first is that their Epiphanius source, *Index discipulorum*, is spurious, probably from the twelfth century and therefore pseudepigraphical (Luci Berkowitz and Karl A. Squitier, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and works* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990], 152). It can be characterized as a late attempt to masculinize what had originally been feminine. Piper and Grudem themselves note that this eccentric source even designates Prisca (Priscilla) as a man (*Recovering Manhood and Womanhood*, 479, n. 19)!

The second blunder is that Piper and Grudem limited their search to Greek literature, though Junia is a Roman name, derived from the name of the Roman goddess Juno, the queen of the gods and Jupiter’s sister and wife, divine protectress of women and goddess of childbirth. Junia meant “one belonging to Juno.” In the Latin sources, again with the aid of the computer, we find more occurrences of the name (e.g., *Scriptores Historiae Augustae Maxim.* 27.5.5; Suetonius *VG Cal* 11.1.12; 12.1.7; Tacitus *Annals* 12.4.3; 13.19.3; 14.12.14; Velleius *History* 2.88.1.3). These references

are all to women. For further evidence, see *Cervin*, 464–70; see also James Walter, “Phoebe and Junia(s)—Rom. 16:1–2, 7,” *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Carroll D. Osburn (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1993), 1:167–90.

13. The first writer of record to comment on this verse was Origen, whose commentary on Romans survives only in a Latin translation by Rufinus. In it Origen understands the person to be Junia (feminine): “Therefore Paul himself, after considering the sum of the most transcendent mystery, identifies both Andronicus and Junia as some of his fellow prisoners in this world, and well known among the apostles” (*Ita ergo et Paulas tale aliquid de se et Andronico, ac Junia, secundum occultioris sacramenti intuens rationem, concaptivos eos sibi in hoc mundo nominat, et nobiles in apostolis* [*Patrologia Graeca* 14:1280]). It is true that Piper and Grudem find in the same work a passage where Origen/Rufinus refers to the person as Junias (*Patrologia Graeca* 14:1289): “Andronicus and Junias and Herodion, all of whom he calls relatives and fellow prisoners” (80). This discrepancy in the same author was probably introduced by later copyists. In the light of medieval tendencies to change Junia to Junias, we may apply the textual critical rule that the more difficult reading is to be preferred and conclude that the version which was more offensive to the sensibilities of later copyists is probably the original one.

The other ancient interpreters who commented on the verse understood the reference to be to a woman named Junia. Thus Chrysostom exclaimed: “Oh! how great is the devotion (*philosophia*) of this woman, that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle” (*Homily 31 on Romans*, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, first series, 11:555). A footnote in the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers by George B. Stevens, the translator and editor, disagrees with Chrysostom’s interpretation on the grounds “that a woman should have been an apostle is out of the question!” This sort of circular reasoning lies behind many modern commentaries and translations.

14. The fact that women prophesied in the public service must be placed alongside Paul’s injunction against their speaking in church (1 Cor. 14:33b, 36). Since their prophesying was obviously a speaking in church, the prohibition was clearly not absolute. Paul’s reasoning at several points in 1 Corinthians 14 is rather convoluted and calls for sophisticated exegesis.

15. Paul’s language in 1 Cor. 11:7 seems to suggest that the Spirit’s distribution of the gifts is not limited to any special class of believers.

16. “They” were presumably the apostles, but the Greek also permits the interpretation that the people, or everyone present, laid hands on the seven.

17. This is the first of the references in the book of Acts commonly taken to refer to “ordination.” The actual expression is “laying on of hands” (here and in 13:3; in 14:23 the compound verb *cheirotoneo* is used, usually meaning to elect by raising hands). Elsewhere in the New Testament laying on of hands is performed also for various other purposes, such as bestowal of the Holy Spirit on new believers (Acts 8:17), blessing on children (Matt. 19:13, 15), and healing (Mark 6:5; 8:23, 25; Luke 13:13; Acts 28:8). In Acts 9:17 it seems to effect two purposes simultaneously.

18. Kevin Giles, *What on Earth Is the Church? An Exploration in New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995), 95. The laying on of hands in these situations has been traditionally designated “ordination,” but that term is not used in the New Testament. Rather we find the expressions “laying on hands” and “appoint.” The

problem with "ordination" is that it carries some medieval baggage that gets retrojected anachronistically into the New Testament. Giles's understanding comes close to the meaning of "credentialing," which is probably the right concept.

19. Thus chapter 9 in Ellen White's *The Acts of the Apostles* is entitled, "The Seven Deacons" (87-96). In places Mrs. White uses the word "deacon," but otherwise she simply calls them "officers" (89). If the proposal set forth in this article is valid, that in the earliest stage the terms elder and deacon were interchangeable, all problems are resolved.

20. Thus, for example, Giles, 95.

21. Various denominations use these two terms quite differently. Among Baptists, for example, a deacon is equivalent to what Seventh-day Adventists call an elder.

22. In considering the role and function of the seven it is also necessary to consider that Acts goes to some length in reporting the activities of two of them—Stephen and Phillip—and their ministry in chapters 6-8 is the preaching of the word, the very work that the apostles assigned to themselves while shifting the administration of relief to the seven!

23. There was a somewhat analogous office and term in Judaism. The New Testament reports elders of local synagogues and elders who were dignitaries of national stature (e.g., Acts 4:5).

24. Gordon Fee approaches my conclusion when he says, "It is altogether likely that both overseers' and 'deacons' come under the larger category presbyteroi ('elders')" (G. D. Fee, "1 and 2 Timothy, Titus," *New International Bible Commentary* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988], 22). Schreiner argues against this that "the New Testament nowhere identifies 'elders' and 'deacons' so that the latter could be construed as a subcategory of the former" (Thomas R. Schreiner, in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 505, n. 15). Here Schreiner at best makes an overstatement, for we have shown that the book of Acts makes such an identification when the only title it uses for those who did the work of the seven was elder (Acts 11:30) and never uses the term "deacon."

25. "Bishop" comes from the Greek *episkopos*, which means literally overseer or supervisor. Thus originally "bishop" described function and "elder" described dignity. In secular usage *episkopos* meant a financial officer.

26. Ignatius, writing about A.D. 108, promoted the threefold ministry with such vehemence that we must infer that it was a relatively new development. Typical statements from his seven authentic epistles are *Smyrnaeans* 8:1, "See that you all follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery as if it were the Apostles. And reverence the deacons as the command of God"; *Trallians* 3:1, "Likewise let all respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as the bishop is also a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and the college of the Apostles"; and *Magisians* 6:1, "Be zealous to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the Council of the Apostles, and the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ." The twofold ministry, however, was still the pattern when Clement of Rome wrote to the church of Corinth about A.D. 95 (1 *Clement* 42.4) and for the communities represented by the early church manual called the *Didache* (15:1, 2).

27. It has been pointed out that there is no definite article in the Greek of this verse, so that while two classes of people are referred to, they are not exactly clear-cut groups.

28. The term "elder" (*presbyteros*) probably came from the synagogue, while "bishop" was borrowed from secular Greek usage. Hermann Beyer notes, "There is no closely defined office bearing the title *episkopos* in the LXX," and the term was not used technically in Judaism (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2:608-22). The Christian usage of *episkopos*, at first as a synonym for elder or pastor, was apparently unique.

29. The qualifications of a deacon here are quite different from the qualifications of the ministers in Acts 6. Cf. Giles, 263, n. 51.

30. Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Hermencia Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 50.

31. A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, TNCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 77, 78. Hanson provides a brief but useful excursus on the clause. Dibelius and Conzelmann show that in the Greco-Roman world "special esteem is accorded the person who was married only once," whether man or woman, and point out that "in either case we are not dealing with a special instruction for bishops" (Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 52).

32. Such a reading of the verse would also rule out unmarried men.

33. A modern illustration can be drawn from Spanish. *Padre* is father, and *madre* is mother; but the word for both parents together is *padres*. As will be seen, the modern feminist move to reform the English language into a "gender-inclusive" language (e.g., "Each person must bring their own spoon") undercuts correct understanding of biblical passages such as the one we here deal with.

34. The English distinction suggests not only difference but also inferiority. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church it has been the practice to ordain deacons, but not deaconesses.

35. *Epistles* 10.96.7, 8.

36. *Ministra* is the plural of the Latin word *ministra*, feminine form of *minister*. It is the exact equivalent of the Greek *diakonos* and the origin of the English word "minister."

37. Barry L. Blackburn finds compelling evidence for reading "female deacons" ("The Identity of the 'Women' in 1 Tim 3:11," *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 1:302-19).

38. The word used here is *time*; which can mean either pay or honor (cf. English "honorarium"). Most translations read "honor," but the citation of Deut. 25:4, as well as the Lord's saying in Matt. 10:10 ("The laborer deserves his wages") would indicate that pay is meant.

39. At some point the bishops came to be regarded as successors to the apostles.

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