

## II. Biblical Studies

*Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, by Eldon Jay Epp. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. vii + 138 pp. \$17.00. ISBN 0-8006-3771-2.

Eldon Jay Epp, New Testament scholar and textual critic, has written a well-researched account of the textual issue associated with Rom 16:7. The main issue revolves around whether the name of Andronicus's companion in verse 7, *Ἰουνία*, is Junia (a woman) or Junias (a man). Since the name is spelled the same in Greek, only an accent mark determines the gender.

The book is brief; pages 3-81 constitute its heart, with the rest being abbreviations, endnotes, bibliography, and indices. Epp's thesis is simple: the best evidence supports Rom 16:7 as a reference to a woman who was an early Jesus follower, a coworker of Paul, who was also an apostle. While the thesis is simple, the evidence to arrive at the result is complex and interconnected. Epp skillfully examines textual, linguistic, grammatical, and historical data to support his

contention. For those interested in textual criticism and an example of careful research, Epp's approach is a model of scholarly methodology. The evidence he marshals in his research is impressive and probably definitive for supporting Junia as the correct reading in Romans. No one should approach this passage without consulting his conclusions.

His work is also a reminder that often the ancients had it right, but we moderns muck it up. For example, when accents began to be added to Greek manuscripts (after the seventh century), they added the accent for the feminine, Junia. Also early Church leaders, such as Chrysostom, who were much closer to the Greek language of that day than moderns, supported the reading of Junia (p. 32). Epp also creates a helpful chart (pp. 62-63) on the use of *Ἰουνία* in various editions of the Greek New Testament. He illustrates that Junia was the preferred reading from Erasmus (1516) until the 1913 edition by Eberhard Nestle. Only one lone exception exists within these various editions.

With the post-1913 editions of the Greek New Testament, Epp charts the sudden and surprising historical shift from understanding *ῥουνιαν* as being the woman Junia to the man Junias. As he clearly illustrates, nearly one hundred years of interpretation has perpetuated “a pervasive sociocultural bias” (p. 20) that silenced the role of Junia. The male-dominated academy of this era could not posit a woman being prominent among the apostles. Thus, even in the face of historical and textual evidence, they transformed her into a him. In doing so, they created a myth that *ῥουνιαν* was a contracted male name. Epp deconstructs this linguistic fallacy.

As Epp notes, today more individuals (and Greek New Testaments—Nestle-Aland 28<sup>th</sup> and United Bible Society 4<sup>th</sup> [2001]) acknowledge Junia as the correct reading of Romans 16:7, and for this correction he is thankful. Now, however, some scholars suggest that Junia was only “well known to the apostles” and not an apostle herself. Junia recovers her womanhood but loses her apostleship. By way of his own previous work and the work of others (Richard Bauckham and Linda Belleville), Epp demonstrates that Andronicus and Junia were “outstanding apostles” (p. 78).

Epp’s careful and methodical approach on this subject is more than an arcane study on an obscure verse.



He reminds all interpreters not to rest so securely on the “assured” results of previous scholarship. Interpreters need to explore and see for themselves the truth of given propositions and assumptions. By careful and methodical work, they may reinforce assured results, destruct and reconstruct something new, or rediscover what had been buried either by time or bias.

David M. May  
Central Baptist Theological  
Seminary  
Shawnee, KS

---

*Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible: A Subversive Collaboration*, by Melissa A. Jackson. Oxford Theological Monographs. Oxford: Oxford, 2012. 285 pp. \$125.00. ISBN 978-0-19-965677-6.

Acknowledging that, since—at least in popular perception—feminism pursues a serious agenda and comedy represents almost the antithesis, Jackson argues that these perceptions constitute superficial stereotypes. Indeed, as the title of her