

WHAT WINGER PRESENTLY GETS WRONG:

WERE WOMEN APOSTLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

27 February 2023

Our full article takes up Mike Winger's kind invitation to give feedback. We hope you will enjoy reading it. Here's a quick summary in less than a page.

QUICK SUMMARY OF ARTICLE ON WOMEN APOSTLES by Andrew Bartlett and Terran Williams

As Mike agrees, the *Junia* whom Paul commends in Romans 16:7 is a *woman*, not a man named 'Junias'. However, Mike believes that Junia was not an apostle but was merely 'well known to the apostles' (ESV). This interpretation rests mainly on two scholarly articles which are deeply flawed. They are flawed because the reasoning in the articles is misconceived, they ignore the context of Paul's remarks, they downplay the testimony of native Greek speakers concerning Paul's meaning, and they ignore Chrysostom's independent knowledge of Junia as an apostle.

To accept Mike's view, it is necessary to believe in a highly improbable historical scenario, in which Church Fathers blundered into accepting her apostleship despite being firmly opposed to women's leadership and public speaking in their own day. A wide scholarly consensus rightly affirms that Paul commends Junia as *an outstanding apostle*. The ESV and Mike are outliers.

Mike's fallback claim is that, if Junia was an apostle, she probably ministered mainly to women, without exercising authority over men. That claim gives the word 'apostle' a meaning that it does not have in the New Testament. It is textually and historically unjustified.

Junia was not on a par with the Twelve primary apostles, who had a unique function. Rather, she was a *pioneering apostle* like Barnabas and Silas. If we are to be faithful to the relevant sense in which the term 'apostle' is used in Scripture, we must conclude that she exercised spiritual authority over the churches which she was instrumental in establishing.

Mike challenges N.T. Wright's description of Mary Magdalene as 'apostle to the apostles', apparently unaware that it has been in use for more than a thousand years. By commissioning Mary, Jesus authorized women to be heralds of his resurrection, and this was played out in the early church. It is being played out today, wherever women are allowed to follow their God-given callings.

Mike mistakenly believes that Jesus's choice of the Twelve shows that the highest ongoing spiritual leadership in the church is reserved for men. But Jesus's selection of twelve Jewish men served a specific, symbolic purpose at a particular moment in redemptive history. Junia's service as a pioneering apostle is evidence against Mike's belief.

The example of Junia's apostleship can give women confidence to fulfill the ministries to which our gracious Lord calls them.