

DID PAUL CALL ANDRONICUS AN APOSTLE IN ROMANS 16:7?

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I frame the topic in this way in order to bypass the thorny question of whether Andronicus's companion was male or female. That issue can be separated from the significance my question has for a proper understanding of Paul's concept of the extent of apostleship.

Modern scholarship has tended to follow Lightfoot's opinion that Paul's statement about Andronicus (and his partner) does not mean "who are highly esteemed by the Apostles" but that "they are called distinguished members of the apostolate, language which indirectly implies a very considerable extension of the term."¹ Thus, to quote just a few of the modern authorities following Lightfoot, Dunn says, "The full phrase almost certainly means 'prominent among the apostles,' rather than 'outstanding in the eyes of the apostles.'"² Cranfield makes a similar point: "It is much more probable—we might well say, virtually certain—that the words mean 'outstanding among the apostles,' that is, 'outstanding in the group who may be designated apostles.'"³

In spite of this modern consensus, however, when one begins to examine the basis on which this conclusion is drawn, one realizes that the argumentation is not as solid as it is supposed. Therefore I intend to conduct a fresh examination of the question under the following three heads: Lexical-Grammatical, Contextual Considerations, and Interpretive History.

First, however, I should lay out more clearly the framework within which I will conduct the discussion. I will use some such term as *inclusive* to represent the view of the passage that sees the person being discussed as included in the category designated in the following prepositional phrase. In this specific case the inclusive interpretation is that which has Andronicus being thought of as an apostle. I will then use a term like *non-inclusive* to speak of the interpretation that in this case would not see Andronicus called an apostle.⁴

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¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1890) 96.

² James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (Dallas: Word, 1988) 894.

³ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981) 789.

⁴ As cumbersome as it may sound, I use "non-inclusive" rather than "exclusive," in the event that it is desirable to make a distinction between the idea of merely not including and that of actually excluding.

This distinction between inclusive and non-inclusive is related to another difference between the two interpretations. For it is inherent in the non-inclusive view of the passage that the apostles stand in a relationship to Andronicus whereby they are observers or evaluators of Andronicus's position or character. For want of a better expression, I will refer to this relationship as that of "agency," in which the apostles are agents or performers of an action, in this case the act of assessing the status of Andronicus. The inclusive view, on the other hand, by definition understands "apostles" in a partitive sense. That is, they are the whole of which Andronicus is a part. Thus the inclusive view does not in itself imply anything beyond the inclusion of Andronicus in the apostle group. Any further implication comes from the adjective by which Andronicus is described, not from the phrase that designates the apostolic group. The non-inclusive view, however, is not only non-inclusive, but also implies something like agency. Therefore in what follows we will be concerned with both of these ideas: the matter of inclusion and the matter of agency.

I. LEXICAL-GRAMMATICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the phrase in question has four words in Greek (ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις), we will consider only the first two; it is likely that any consideration of the term "apostles" would not be particularly productive in this instance and would in fact be seen as involving a good bit of question-begging.

The linguistic objection to the non-inclusive view is often stated but rarely, if ever, argued for in anything but very general and subjective terms. For example, Lightfoot refers to what I have called the inclusive view as "the more natural interpretation," but his only linguistic evidence for this is the subjective judgment "I do not think the words . . . would have been generally rendered 'who are highly esteemed by the Apostles.'"⁵ In a similar way, Moo refers to my so-called inclusive view as "more natural."⁶ True, he goes on to defend this by saying that, "if Paul had wanted to say that Andronicus and Junia were esteemed 'by' the apostles, we would have expected him to use a simple dative or ὑπό with the genitive."⁷ But, as we shall see, such restrictions on what expression Paul might have been expected to use may not be necessary or desirable.

Even more subjective is the statement of Rengstorf: "If Paul had meant the second [what I have called the non-inclusive interpretation] he could and should have expressed himself more clearly."⁸ Now we may be able to say what an author could have said, but it borders on irresponsibility to declare what an author should have said, unless the evidence for such a statement is abundantly clear. Besides, one can always turn the argument around and

⁵ Lightfoot, *Galatians* 96.

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 923.

⁷ Moo, *Romans* 923.

⁸ Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "σημεῖον," *TDNT* 7.268.

hold, “If Paul had meant that Andronicus was an outstanding apostle, he could and should have expressed it more clearly.” Certainly the adjective in question can legitimately be used attributively, as in “notorious prisoner” (Matt 27:16), “distinguished teacher” (*Mart. Pol.* 19.1), “eminent men” (Josephus, *J. W.* 1.8.12.4). Thus there is no reason why Paul could not have said “outstanding apostle(s),” if that is what he meant. But actually, of course, such argumentation as Rengstorf’s is questionable at the outset.

After some introductory comments on the key word ἐπίσημος, we will cite parallels to test this theory that the non-inclusive view is somehow not natural Greek.

1. *Observations regarding ἐπίσημος.* While the interpretive questions surrounding Rom 16:7 cannot be resolved by reference to this word alone, nevertheless, an examination of the word is still in order.

We begin with the observation that, when one takes into account the various ways the word is defined or treated in lexicons, commentaries, and translations, we discover an amazing variety of meanings associated with the term. In fact, I have counted over two dozen such meanings: *esteemed, eminent, notable, outstanding, prominent, well-known, distinguished, renowned, stamped, remarkable, conspicuous, notorious, significant, inscribed, visible, recognizable, distinctive, superior, powerful, plain, famous, highly-regarded, splendid, illustrious, noble, respected, unmistakable.*

Granted, many of these may be synonymous. Still, there remains a broad spectrum of meaning—or at least of application—that is attached to the word. Naturally, we do not claim that the use of the word in the Romans passage means all of these. In fact, it does not necessarily mean any of them. But the issue still needs to be addressed as to what is the appropriate meaning for the term in the target passage.

In the next place, we should note that the list of meanings given above can roughly be grouped into two categories: one that gives emphasis to a person’s (or thing’s) position, the other category allowing the additional idea of others’ perception of the object’s value. In the first group are definitions such as *eminent, outstanding, illustrious, distinguished, etc.* In the other category we find the expressions *esteemed, well-known, renowned, conspicuous, notorious, visible, recognizable, etc.* If we seek a more or less neutral term, perhaps the translation “prominent” would meet that qualification, since it appears to be capable of expressing either of the above nuances.

Furthermore, it is apparent that some of the expressions cited in the first set of meanings tend to move in the direction of what I have called above the inclusive view. Conversely, some of the expressions in the second group tend to lean more in the direction of the non-inclusive view. So while the issue of Rom 16:7 may not be solved solely by reference to the Greek word used, it is still possible that the particular translation of the term may already move toward an exegetical conclusion. For example, to translate by “outstanding” may be more amenable to the inclusive view, while a translation such as “well-known” is certainly more open to a non-inclusive interpretation. In this regard

it is quite misleading for BDAG to limit the positive meanings to “splendid,” “prominent,” “outstanding,” as if other meanings were not possible.⁹

From this review of the meaning of ἐπίσημος in general, we now turn to examine parallels to the whole phrase, beginning with examples that contain reference to a person, described by ἐπίσημος, and followed by an ἐν phrase.

2. *Person + ἐπίσημος + ἐν phrase.* I have been able to find only two examples of this construction, one from Euripides *Hipp.* 103 in a speech by Hippolytus’s attendant. The Greek is as follows: σεμνός γε μέντοι κἀπίσημος¹⁰ ἐν βροτοῖς. This is a statement about Aphrodite/Cypris and is translated by Grene (1942) as, “yet she’s a holy Goddess, and fair is her renown throughout the world.” More literally, the key phrase could be rendered, “renowned among mortals.” Actually, there is no translation problem here, as all translators seem to have the same sense: “far renowned on earth” (Coleridge, 1891), “famous among men” (Hadas and McLean, 1936), “famous among mortals” (Kovacs, 1995), “honored in the world” (Lucas, 1954), “Men honor her” (Sutherland, 1960).

What is abundantly evident from this passage is that here we have a clear example of what I have called the non-inclusive interpretation. Cypris is a goddess, not a mortal, and therefore she is renowned not *as* a mortal, but *in the eyes of* mortals. Thus it should be obvious that the non-inclusive meaning is a perfectly natural meaning for a phrase that is entirely parallel to the one in Rom 16:7. The idea that such an interpretation is not a natural one is seemingly difficult to sustain in the light of this clear example.

Naturally, this conclusion concerning the non-inclusive sense does not imply that the construction of ἐπίσημος applied to a person or persons and accompanied by an ἐν prepositional phrase could not on occasion be used in the inclusive sense. In fact, it seems to be present in the other example, one from Lucian, *De Mercede Conductis*, 28, which reads ὡς ἐπίσημος ἔσῃ ἐν τοῖς ἐπαινοῦσι. The Loeb edition renders this as “taking pains to be conspicuous among the claque.”¹¹ And this usage may be quite widespread. Take, for example, “the most illustrious (ἐπισημοτάτου) and noble man among you” (Justin, *Apol.* 2 12.5), or “among whom Saul and Antipas were eminent [ἐπίσημοι]” (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.17.4.13). But the clear non-inclusive example given above makes it impossible to maintain that the construction is unnatural in the Greek language.

3. *Thing + ἐπίσημος + ἐν phrase.* Although this construction is not widely different from the previous example, I have separated it from that one for purely methodological reasons. It likewise comes from a Euripidean source—this time *Hec.* 379—but suffers from the fact that it is not as uniformly

⁹ Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 378.

¹⁰ I.e. καὶ ἐπίσημος.

¹¹ A. M. Harmon, *Lucian* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921) 3.461.

translated as is the first example. Here the Chorus (or its leader) says: δεινὸς χαρακτήρ κάπισημος ἐν βροτοῖς ἐσθλῶν γενέσθαι, a wording that in its key elements is strikingly similar to that of the *Hippolytus* example.

A rather literal translation of this citation would be: “to be born of nobles is a feature strange and [yet] esteemed among mortals.” Out of six consulted translations, five are similar to this literal rendering and basically paraphrase it, with the other one being in one way or another problematic and, in my estimation, incorrect.

Thus Kovacs (1995) has: “How strangely unmistakable is the stamp of noble birth among mortals,” where “unmistakable” translates our word. Hadley’s (1955) rendition is: “A marvelous stamp and of credit among men is it to come of a good stock.” Although this is a little more paraphrasing, it still maintains an equivalence between “of credit among men” and “esteemed among mortals” in my literal translation. The translation of Vellacott (1963) reads: “The stamp of royal birth is an unmistakable Miracle.” Even though the reference to mortals is omitted, it is surely implied as the group in whose eyes the feature is “unmistakable.” And more recently Mitchell-Boyask (2006) translates as follows: “The stamp of noble men is awesome and visible among mortals.” Arrowsmith’s (1958) translation (“Nobility of birth is a stamp and seal, conspicuous and sharp”) shares with Vellacott’s the omission of an explicit mention of men or mortals, but the key word ἐπίσημος is probably reflected in the word “conspicuous.”

What these five translations have in common is the understanding that mortals or men are the ones in whose eyes the stamp of noble birth is “unmistakable,” “visible,” “of credit,” or “conspicuous.” In other words, the ἐν phrase designates something akin to an agency idea, giving the group in whose eyes the mark of nobility is seen.¹²

The most problematic translation, which is also perhaps the most accessible, is that of Coleridge (1891): “A wondrous mark, most clearly stamped, doth noble birth imprint on men.” Here it is not clear specifically how ἐπίσημος is being rendered. But the real defect in Coleridge’s version is that it misunderstands the ἐν phrase, interpreting it to refer to the receiver of a stamp rather than to the stamp’s observer. This confusion undoubtedly comes from the fact that ἐπίσημος may sometimes be used to describe a coin that has been inscribed or stamped. But as far as I can tell, it is always the coin that is described as ἐπίσημος, not the inscription that is stamped on the coin. In any event, Coleridge seems out of line with most other translators in eliminating the idea of something like agency from the ἐν phrase.¹³

¹² It should be noted that in these renderings the *stamp* idea comes in as a translation of the Greek word χαρακτήρ, not as a translation of ἐπίσημος.

¹³ Although it is not essential to my main point here, it may be useful to comment on how it is that the *stamp* (or feature) of noble birth is not only visible among mortals but is also strange. The strangeness of noble birth is probably to be sought in its combination of the privilege and the responsibility that is especially connected with nobility. True, the combination may be to a lesser degree an element in human experience in general. Still, one may see it as particularly evident in those of noble birth. And the emphasis on nobility is certainly part of the *Hecuba* context, since most of the key players (Pelyxena, Hecuba, Odysseus) fit into this category.

The conclusion to this rather technical discussion of the *Hecuba* passage is that it seems to afford another example that is quite parallel to the example from *Hippolytus*. That is, we have here again an instance of the construction, or at least the approximate construction, of our target phrase, thus again supporting the idea that the non-inclusive understanding of this construction is not an unnatural understanding of the Greek. The only difference between this example and the previous one is the fact that this one deals with a thing (χαρακτήρ) rather than a person. But this distinction seems to be negligible.

Another difficult passage that may also belong here is *Pss. Sol.* 2:6, where Wright translates: "The sons and the daughters (were) in harsh captivity, their neck in a seal, a spectacle among the gentiles"¹⁴ (ἐν σφραγίδι ὁ τράχηλος αὐτῶν, ἐν ἐπισήμῳ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). This translation, however, suppresses the word ἐν before ἐπισήμῳ and takes ἐπισήμῳ substantivally ("spectacle"). Perhaps better would be to see the last phrase continuing the first ἐν phrase and take ἐπισήμῳ either in apposition to σφραγίδι or as attributively modifying it. We may then come out with either the translation "in a seal . . . in a thing visible among the gentiles" or "in a seal . . . in one visible among the gentiles." Either way we seem to have a situation where the Gentiles are thought of as seeing agents, a situation quite similar to the one above. It is classified under this section because it is the *neck* of the inhabitants of Jerusalem that is the object of the Gentiles' perception, rather than those inhabitants directly. But again this is a small difference. All in all, the passage appears to fit the pattern of the ἐν phrase expressing agency.

4. *Person + various expressions + ἐν phrase.* The relative paucity of examples in the first two sections is probably due to the relative rarity of ἐπίσημος. But since several of the understandings of ἐπίσημος are passive in nature ("esteemed," "well-known," "renowned," "respected") and thereby lend themselves to a non-inclusive interpretation, this suggests that the same may be true of other passive elements that stand in an otherwise similar relationship to a person and an ἐν phrase, and even to similar elements that are not passive but nonetheless invite consideration of a non-inclusive interpretation. If this extension is legitimate, we begin to appreciate just how relatively abundant the construction understood as non-inclusive may be. Let us turn to a number of examples.

We begin with Mark 6:4, which the NIV, removing some of the convoluted structure, renders as follows: "Only in his home town, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." A prophet is without honor . . . among his relatives. While it is certainly true that a prophet is included in the group of his relatives, it is not true, at least not necessarily true, that his dishonorable state is part of his being in the group. His dishonor

¹⁴ R. B. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985) 2.652.

does not pass over to them. Rather, it is in their eyes that he is dishonored. Thus this seems to be at least a potential example of the non-inclusive interpretation of an ἐν phrase in the context of an expression (ἄτιμος) that is structurally very similar to ἐπίσημος.

Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor 6:4), “Do you appoint as judges men of little account in the church?” Here the inclusive sense is ruled out, because the judges referred to are not actually in the church. They are the ungodly (v. 1), before whom the church should not take its disputes. But although these judges are not in the church, they are of little account in the estimation of the church. Thus we have another non-inclusive use of the ἐν phrase.¹⁵

Luke 1:42 is a little more ambiguous: “Blessed are you among women.” Although the common interpretation of this well-known utterance is probably the inclusive one, the non-inclusive understanding is certainly not out of the question. That is, Elizabeth may be speaking of Mary’s blessedness *in the eyes of women*. After all, a similar idea is clearly Mary’s thought in v. 48: “All generations will call me blessed.” It is possible—maybe we should say probable—that Mary understood the reference to women in Elizabeth’s comment (v. 42) as non-inclusive and reflected that understanding in her own response to Elizabeth (v. 48).

Jeremiah 49:15 (LXX 30:9) may be another example: “Now I will make you small among the nations, despised among men.” The passive “despised” suggests not only Israel’s presence among the nations but the way the nations viewed her. If so, this would be an instance of a non-inclusive ἐν phrase.

In 1 Sam 22:14, Ahimelech relates to Saul that David is “highly respected in your house” (ἔνδοξος ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου). In this case the inherent meaning of “highly respected” suggests that Saul’s household was not only the place of David’s esteem, but also that this group recognized David’s worth. Thus the non-inclusive meaning remains here a distinct likelihood.

In 1 Tim 3:16, it is the passive nature of the verb and the meaning of the word “believe” itself that cause one to think in terms of a non-inclusive interpretation. The key phrase in this creed-like statement that is appropriate to our discussion is “believed on in the world,” that is, “by the world.”

Paul’s quote from Isaiah in Rom 10:20 contains the words: “I was found by (ἐν) those who did not seek me.” It is true that the preposition is omitted in some manuscripts. However, it seems that the omission is more likely to be explained as accommodation to the Isaiah text and that its presence in what Paul wrote is authentic. Furthermore, if ἐν is not original in the Romans version, its inclusion in some manuscripts implies that someone added it, presumably to provide an improved reading conforming to what the scribe considered a better grammatical construction. Either way, this could be another example of a non-inclusive ἐν phrase; although some uncertainty may remain.

¹⁵ Moreover, it does not affect the outcome of this analysis if we translate the verse as a sarcastic statement rather than as a question.

First Corinthians 6:2 (“If the world is judged by you”) appears to be a rather clear instance of an ἐν phrase used with a non-inclusive meaning—even in the sense of agency. In fact, this example is quite generally recognized as a legitimate occurrence of ἐν with this meaning.

In 2 Thess 1:10, we find another case of a passive verb encouraging the interpretation of the ἐν phrase as expressing agency: “to be marveled at among all those who have believed.” It is not merely that the person toward whom the marvel is directed is not included in the group of those marveling; it also has to do with their agency being expressed by ἐν.

One further example of ἐν in this sense is provided by 2 Cor 2:15: “For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.” In this case, however, the appropriation of the item by the agent shifts from the usual form of mediation by means of sight (as when ἐπίσημος is translated by “visible, conspicuous”) to the less common image of an aroma that can be accessed only by the sense of smell. Still, in spite of this shift, the ἐν phrase appears clearly to designate the agent.

I do not claim that all of these examples have equal force in demonstrating either the non-inclusive nature of the ἐν phrase or its expression of agency. There are, however, enough examples here that we ought to be able to conclude that the use of ἐν required by the non-inclusive view is more common in Greek than is sometimes recognized and can be deemed natural Greek.

This is not to say, on the other hand, that the expression cannot also be used with an inclusive interpretation. A good example of the latter is found in Rom 8:29: “that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Moreover, in Acts 15:22 Luke refers to Judas and Silas—two of the delegates sent by the Apostles and elders to the gentile believers in Antioch—as “leading men among the brothers” (ἄνδρας ἡγουμένους ἐν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς). There also seems to be a pattern of this inclusive sense when the key word is *greater, smaller, least, or first*. A good example would be Matt 2:6: “But you, Bethlehem, . . . are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.”

Still, the availability of the ἐν phrase for the inclusive sense does not imply that it cannot also be employed when a non-inclusive idea is desired. And I hope to have shown convincing support for this latter sense.

5. *Thing + various expressions + ἐν phrase.* It is obvious, as we move from category to category, that the parallelism to the target phrase in Romans becomes less and less close. It is also evident that the items taken up in this section cannot, by definition, be considered inclusive. That is, a thing cannot be included in a group of people. Nevertheless, it will be profitable to pursue some of these passages, since they offer examples of the agent sense of ἐν.

One of the clearest of the examples in this category occurs in Luke 16:15: “What is highly valued among men (ἐν ἀνθρώποις) is detestable in God’s sight.” Here the agency of men is quite evident, especially from its parallelism to “in God’s sight,” as well as the earlier phrase ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων. And another fairly good instance is found in Heb 13:4: “Marriage should be honored by (ἐν) all.” In both cases ἐν expresses agency.

Probably we should list Luke 1:25 here as well, where Elizabeth says: “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.” What is presumably meant is her disgrace as it so appeared to her people. In fact, this instance can be used to make more probable, if not confirm, our interpretation above of Luke 1:42.

Paul’s statement in 2 Cor 4:3, to the effect that our gospel “is veiled to (ἐν) those who are perishing” is reminiscent of 2 Cor 2:15 treated above. The two passages are mutually supportive of the fact that ἐν has a force roughly equivalent to agency.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from Paul’s remark in Rom 2:24 in quoting from the OT: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles,” where the Gentiles are not only the sphere but also the agents of the blasphemy.

Most of these are rather clear examples of the kind of meaning for ἐν I have been trying to demonstrate as appropriate also in Rom 16:7 in regard to the ἐν phrase found there. And in the light of the relative abundance of evidence presented above, it is somewhat surprising that scholars have been so ready to write off the construction with ἐν as a legitimate way of expressing agency in Greek. It seems that there is enough evidence here to support this meaning for ἐν that it is somewhat weak to use the lack of another expression as evidence against the agency meaning for ἐν in the Romans passage.

6. Conceptual parallels. The final category of parallels to the key words in Rom 16:7 consists in examples that contain neither the key word ἐπίσημος nor the key word ἐν but are nevertheless relevant in that they offer parallel concepts. In asserting an agency sense for ἐν I do not mean to deny that there are other methods in Greek for conveying the thought of agency. In fact, the ways of doing this are quite manifold. Most of the examples we will now give focus on alternative ways to express the agency idea.

Such an example is found in *1 Clem.* 47.4, which reads: “For you inclined to approved apostles and to a man certified by them” (προσεκλίθητε γὰρ ἀποστόλοις μεμαρτυρημένοις καὶ ἀνδρὶ δεδοκιμασμένῳ παρ’ αὐτοῖς). Although the actual vocabulary of Rom 16:7 is not present, the overall concept is quite similar to the non-inclusive interpretation of that passage. In this case the thought of agency is clearly present but expressed by παρά rather than by ἐν.

Actually, the range of prepositions expressing this kind of agency is rather broad. We might list, for example, Acts 2:47, “enjoying the favor of (πρός) all the people.” Or Acts 10:22, “who is respected by (ὑπό) all the Jewish people”; or 1 Tim 3:7, “He must also have a good reputation with (ἀπό) outsiders”; or Rom 2:13, “righteous in God’s sight” (παρά + dat.); or Just., *Apol.* 1 26, “honored by you” (παρά + gen.);¹⁶ or 1 Tim 2:3, “acceptable in the sight of (ἐνώπιον) God.” The thought may be conveyed even by the simple dative, as in Acts 5:34, “honored by all the people” (τίμιος παντὶ τῷ λαῷ), or Rom 14:18, “approved by men” (δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις). Even the simple genitive may be used, as in Ps 22:6 (LXX 21:7): “scorned by men and despised by the people” (ὄνειδος ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἐξουδένημα λαοῦ).

¹⁶ ANF 171; παρ’ ὑμῶν ὡς θεὸς τετίμηται.

With all this variety of expression, it should be no wonder that $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ on occasion takes on this meaning. Again we must wonder what is the reluctance to accepting the agency force of an $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ phrase.

II. CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

No study of this sort can afford to ignore considerations of context. On the other hand, we may legitimately wonder whether there is enough evidence in the context of Rom 16:7 to assist us in arriving at a solution to the exegetical dilemma. Still, I would like briefly to discuss certain issues that should be considered in the event that contextual matters can be more profitably pursued at some future point. Specifically, there are at least five such considerations: (1) Paul's purpose in asking the Roman Christians to greet certain individuals; (2) his purpose in the way he describes those individuals with what we might call "accolades" or, to use the patristic term, encomiums; (3) the order in which the individuals are mentioned; (4) the other phrases used to describe Andronicus; and (5) parallels in the description of other individuals in Romans 16.

1. Paul's purpose in the greetings. Although the pursuit of authorial intention has come under attack in modern times, partially due to the difficulty in ascertaining such intention and the consequent subjective and speculative nature of the pursuit, nevertheless, these difficulties do not, in the final analysis, render analysis of authorial intent unnecessary or impossible. It may be difficult, but it is not thereby invalid. Still, in seeking to determine intent we must proceed with due caution.

In the present case there are at least three dimensions to Paul's intent in requesting that his greetings be conveyed, relating respectively to Paul himself, to the Roman church, and to the individuals that are mentioned.

The value these greetings have for Paul is that they serve to introduce him to a community of believers, most of whom he has not personally met. We find similar greetings in his letters to the Colossians, Philemon, and Timothy. In the case of Romans, this intent to pave the way for a visit to Rome is consistent with evidence that the epistle as a whole is partially directed toward that end. At the same time, the greetings allow Paul to give expression to his sincere thankfulness for these acquaintances of his.

The Roman church itself gains something from these greetings, and this, too, is part of Paul's intention. He wants Christians in Rome to hold these believers in honor, to give them the respect they so greatly deserve.

Moreover, Paul's desire that greetings be given to these persons includes an intention that they themselves be strengthened by his expressions of appreciation for their service in the cause of Christ. There is a risk, of course, in Paul taking this step, since the omission of others could be taken as a sign that he did not value them as highly as he did those that are mentioned. It may be, however, that Paul includes only the names of those with whom he is familiar. If so, the omission of some names does not have any great significance.

2. *Paul's purpose in the descriptions.* In addition to the bare conveyance of greetings there is in many cases an accompanying description of the individual to be greeted. Since this information was in many instances already known to the Roman community, its function must go beyond the merely informative to embrace emotional factors as well. They express Paul's feelings towards his friends and are intended to evoke the church's praise and admiration for them, as well as to build up the individuals themselves.

The fullness of these comments varies from those that are rather extensive to cases in which there is no additional comment at all. Moreover, this dimension of the greetings has some sort of correlation to the three purposes of the greetings alluded to above. That is, the more information is added, the more the purpose of the information is directed toward the Roman church and the individual and the less toward the needs of Paul to express appreciation. Conversely, in those cases where there is no comment, we may suspect that the emphasis falls on Paul's desire to express praise of the individual more for his (Paul's) own sake, rather than on a purpose directed to their encouragement and edification, although the latter may not be completely absent.

In addition to the descriptions varying in quantity from one individual to another, they also may be said in a sense to vary in quality. That is, there seems to be a difference between a description that consists in an appositional noun or attributive adjective and one that embodies a full clause, usually a relative clause. The latter probably conveys an idea of greater importance than the former. Generally speaking, such relative clause descriptions occur early in the list: Priscilla and Aquila (v. 4), Epenetus (v. 5), Mary (v. 6), Andronicus and Junia (v. 7), but also Persis (v. 12), and possibly Tryphena and Tryphosa (v. 12, where the modifier is a participle). Because these longer descriptions seem to call attention to important information, this probably implies a greater importance of the people they describe.

What application of these considerations can be made to the issue at hand? Does anything here contribute to understanding the sense we are to give to the target phrase? It seems that the designation of Andronicus as an apostle, that is, invoking the inclusive view, does not fit very well with any of the three potential purposes outlined above.

Does it encourage the church to honor him? Presumably, if he is a prominent apostle, the church already knows this and already gives him his due honor. Does it encourage Andronicus? Again, if he is a prominent apostle, how much encouragement would it add to him to hear Paul acknowledging that fact?

Perhaps—but just perhaps—it is helpful to Paul to be able to present himself as a friend of a prominent apostle, in his attempt to introduce himself to the Roman congregation. However, it is not likely that Paul would seek to ingratiate himself to a community of believers by aligning himself with a prominent apostle, or indeed any apostle. He is much more apt to appeal to “the grace of God given to me,” as he does in Rom 1:5; 12:3; 15:15. Furthermore, interpreting the target phrase in a non-inclusive way is just as consistent with the intention of preparing a way for himself as he plans to visit

Rome. Thus, if there is any merit at all to these reflections on the context, they seem not to move us any closer to the inclusive interpretation.

3. *Order of the greetings.* It is probable that various factors are at work in the order in which the people are mentioned. One factor is undoubtedly the extent to which Paul is familiar with the details of the person's experience. Thus the people near the beginning of the list are generally more fully described than those near the end. Further, there may be a tendency to group together names that are in some way associated, whether by location, or by ethnic background, or by some other principle.

For our purpose, the important question to ask is whether there is a tendency to order the individuals in terms of their importance, either in relation to the church or in relation to Paul. If this is a valid consideration, it may be significant that Andronicus appears fourth in the list—after Priscilla and Aquila, Epenetus, and Mary.

But whether this has any impact on the problem at hand is dubious. One could argue that if Andronicus was an outstanding apostle, why was he not mentioned earlier in the list—say, third, or second, or even first? And his being mentioned fourth is certainly consistent with the non-inclusive view, whereby he is held in esteem by the apostles. Still, the whole matter of the order of the greetings and its potential significance for the interpretation of the target phrase is too speculative to be of decisive value.

4. *Phrases within verse 7.* Can the three other phrases in the immediate context shed any light on how we should understand the target phrase? This, too, is rather doubtful. It is difficult to see how Andronicus's designation as Paul's kinsman or Paul's statement that Andronicus had become a believer before him could resolve the issue of whether Andronicus was himself an apostle or merely whether he was held in honor by the apostles.¹⁷

The only phrase that could possibly be relevant is the point about Andronicus being imprisoned for the cause of Christ in the way Paul was. In fact, this dimension of the verse draws considerable patristic attention. But again, how it resolves the issue posed by the target phrase remains elusive.

On the other hand, the fact that the target phrase comes third in the verse rather than first or second may suggest that it was not attributing to Andronicus the importance of being a prominent apostle, but merely a prominence in the estimation of the apostles.

5. *Parallels in Romans 16.* While there are clear parallels in the chapter to the matter of kinship to Paul (vv. 11, 21), since this is itself not a decisive factor, it offers little help to point out these parallels. And we receive even less guidance from a failed attempt to find parallels in the chapter to im-

¹⁷ Andreas J. Köstenberger's chapter, "Women in the Pauline Mission" in *Studies in John and Gender* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001) 337, holds that "kinsmen" more likely means "friends" than either "fellow-countrymen" or "relatives." But under any interpretation it is still hard to see how the term has a bearing on the target phrase.

prisonment similar to Paul's and to Andronicus coming to the faith before Paul. Is it any different with respect to the target phrase?

There are in the chapter two theoretically possible parallels to "notable in the apostles." Apelles is "approved in Christ" (v. 10) and Rufus is called "chosen in the Lord" (v. 13). Neither of these expressions could be thought to convey an inclusive sense of the $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ phrase. But the question can be raised as to whether these are truly parallel, since the phrases "in Christ" and "in the Lord" are generally thought to possess more technical meaning than the phrase "in the apostles." In addition, both "Christ" and "Lord" are singular, whereas the term "apostles" is plural. On the other hand, the similarity to the target phrase is found in the presence of an $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ phrase and a functional equivalent of "notable." What should we conclude with regard to the force of these arguments?

The technical nature of "in Christ" and "in the Lord" can be overplayed. It is easy to miss different nuances in the use of these phrases. Even in this chapter, of the eleven occurrences of the phrases there seem to be several different senses. To say that someone is in Christ/the Lord (7, 11) is to say that they belong to him, are embraced by his saving grace—in short, are Christians. To say that someone works or labors in the Lord/Christ (4, 9, 12) seems to point more to their working or laboring in his cause. Then there is the exhortation that Phoebe be received in the Lord, to which the closest verbal parallel appears to be Phil 2:29 but the closest conceptual parallel may be Rom 15:7. Making this an exhortation to welcome her because both she and the Roman believers are Christians appears to be too anemic a reading. It is better to understand "in the Lord" as amounting to receiving her as the Lord himself would receive her. And although using slightly different wording, this seems also to be the import of the Synoptic passages referring to receiving a child in Christ's name (Matt 18:5; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48).

On the other hand, the fact that "Christ" and "Lord" are singular may be decisive in ruling against an agency meaning for $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$. I have found no clear example of agency $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ with a singular object where the singular is not in a sense collective. Still, the fact that the "in the Lord/Christ" terminology may not be as unified an expression as is sometimes assumed suggests that there is no reason in principle why the phrase in the context of a passive adjective such as "approved" or "chosen" could not carry the idea of agency.

There is one final element in the chapter that also seems to point in the same direction. Clearly Paul and the Gentile churches are agents in the evaluation of Priscilla and Aquila (4), although once again the verbal structure differs from that employed in an agency $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ phrase. Accordingly, similar expressions of agency respecting the evaluation of Andronicus, Junia, Apelles, and Rufus would certainly not be out of place in the context of the chapter.

6. *Ranking of apostles.* There is actually one other aspect of the broader context of Paul's thinking that might be brought to bear on our question. If Andronicus is called a prominent apostle, this seems to imply a certain sense in which apostles can be ranked. But such a suggestion seems to stand in contrast to Paul's attitudes expressed in other passages.

For example, Paul's at least partially disparaging reference in 2 Cor 11:5 and 12:11 to "super-apostles"—whether sarcastic or not, and whether in reference to true or false apostles—certainly appears to be an attempt to distance himself from such a concept. And the same is true of his indifference to, if not disparagement of, the Jerusalem pillar apostles in Gal 2:2, 6, where Paul indicates that such distinctions were of little importance to him. Furthermore, the fact that Paul on occasion could employ the language of distinctions in the apostolate, as when he calls himself least of the apostles (1 Cor 15:9), has more to do with an expression of humility than with the recognition of actual distinctions in rank. He regularly claims equality with the others.

On the other hand, while this type of distinction may not be made with respect to apostles, it appears to have been more appropriate when speaking of believers in general, as when Luke speaks of the Berean believers as more noble than those in Thessalonica (Acts 17:11).

Thus, while these considerations are far removed contextually from the Romans passage, the thoughts they embrace tend to move us away from the inclusive interpretation of that passage rather than toward it. On the whole, however, we must admit that the evidence from the context, such as it is, does not very firmly lead to a solution to the problem.

III. INTERPRETIVE HISTORY

I suspect that many find Lightfoot's claims about the patristic interpretation of Rom 16:7 to be the decisive factor in arriving at the inclusive interpretation. But before I cite the statements of Lightfoot and his followers, I must give a brief comment on the fact that we are apparently restricted to patristic commentators to establish the interpretive history; we receive no great help from the other potential source—early translations. For example, the translation of the Vulgate appears simply to perpetuate the ambiguity present in the Greek. Here we read: *qui sunt nobiles in apostolis*. This rendering seems to be a literal translation of the Greek, offering no particular hint regarding its solution to the interpretive question before us.

Lightfoot held that, "the Greek fathers took the more natural interpretation."¹⁸ By this, of course, he meant the view that includes Andronicus in the apostle group. Lightfoot went on to cite Origen and Chrysostom as supporting this view and concluded with "and similarly Theodoret." Thus Lightfoot's conclusion is based on the testimony of three fathers.

Other commentators appear to have followed Lightfoot's lead. Thus Sanday and Headlam even extend the statement and write, "The passage was apparently so taken by all patristic commentators."¹⁹ And Cranfield follows with: ". . . which is the way in which it was understood by the patristic commentators (it would seem without exception)."²⁰

¹⁸ Lightfoot, *Galatians* 96.

¹⁹ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902) 423.

²⁰ Cranfield, *Romans* 789.

Lightfoot was correct in citing Origen, Chrysostom, and Theodoret as contributing to the interpretive history. However, his statement is misleading, if not simply erroneous. His main error was in a misreading of the evidence of Origen, that is, neglecting the context of Origen's comment. But he also omits entirely the evidence of Ambrosiaster and Pelagius.

As far as I have been able to determine, there are these five main patristic commentators on the Romans passage: Origen, Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Pelagius. There are a few minor writers, such as Sedulius Scotus, but these simply repeat the words of one of the above (Sedulius copies Origen). Other patristic commentators on Romans²¹ did not apparently leave any extant remark on 16:7, or at least not on the part of the verse that concerns us. It is also possible that there are passages scattered here and there in patristic literature that are not easily identified. And there are a few patristic passages that, while not commenting directly on Rom 16:7, may be peripherally relevant. But our focus will be on the five main authors, to see whether Lightfoot's position can be sustained.

1. *Chrysostom and Theodoret.* Actually, there is no need to review extensively the evidence of Chrysostom and Theodoret, since Lightfoot has correctly represented their position as supporting the inclusive view. For example, Chrysostom in his *Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans* writes:

And indeed to be apostles at all is a great thing. But to be amongst these of note, just consider what a great encomium this is! But they were of note owing to their works, to their achievements. Oh! How great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle.²²

In a similar vein Theodoret: "Then he says they are notable, not just among the disciples, but among the teachers, and not even among the common teachers, but among the apostles."²³

2. *Ambrosiaster.* If interpreting Chrysostom and Theodoret is fairly straightforward, that is not the case with Ambrosiaster. This name has been used since Erasmus to refer to a Latin commentator of the fourth century, whose works became associated with those of Ambrose but who is now commonly thought of as distinct from him.

Salutate Andronicum et Juliam²⁴ cognatos et concaptivos meos, qui sunt insignes in apostolis, qui ante me fuerunt in Christo Jesu. Hos cognatos et juxta carnem et secundum spiritum, quomodo et angelus dixit ad Mariam "Ecce Elizabeth cognata tua," quos etiam apostolis prioribus obsecutos cum testimonio

²¹ Augustine, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Didymus the Blind of Alexandria, Diodore of Tarsus, Eusebius of Amesa, Gennadius, Cyril of Alexandria, Severian, and probably Ephraem Syrus.

²² NPNF 1st ser., 11.555.

²³ PG 82.220.

²⁴ This reading is also found in some Vulgate MSS, including Codex Amiatinus, and, among Greek MSS, in p46. Metzger (*TCGNT* 539) calls it a "clerical error."

sui declarat, et secum parem captivitatem passos fidei causa; ideoque istos plenius honorandos.²⁵

Greet Andronicus and Ju[n]ia, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners, who are notable among the apostles, who were in Christ before me. [He calls] them kinsmen, both according to the flesh and according to the Spirit, just as also the angel said to Mary, "Behold your kinswoman Elizabeth." Also with his own testimony he declares them obedient to the earlier apostles, and as having suffered imprisonment equal to his because of the faith; and therefore [he declares] them to be honored more fully.

Part of the difficulty in understanding these comments is doubtless due to Ambrosiaster's tendency to express his thoughts tersely, and the reader may therefore more easily be misled. In this case, the first impression may be that Ambrosiaster holds to the inclusive interpretation, since he appears to include Andronicus as an apostle, distinguished from the earlier apostles mainly by his later position in the course of Christian history.

However, this reading appears to make the assumption that "earlier" refers to the fact that the apostleship of the main group of apostles was earlier than Andronicus's apostleship. While that sequence of events may be true under the antecedent assumption of the inclusive interpretation, there is a prior question whether that is what the word *earlier* is intended to point out in this context. The alternative to this reading is to assume that Ambrosiaster may have been drawing a contrast between the apostleship of the main group of apostles and the apostleship of Paul. In this reading there is no need to assume the apostleship of Andronicus. Which reading is better?

The place to begin an analysis of this issue is with the phrase "with his own testimony." This phrase makes sense only if there is something in Rom 16:7 that could be interpreted as Paul declaring Andronicus and Junia to be obedient to the earlier apostles. And the only part of Rom 16:7 that fulfills that requirement is the clause "who were in Christ before me." Apparently, in Ambrosiaster's thinking, Andronicus's being obedient to the earlier apostles is somehow equivalent to, or deducible from, his being in Christ before Paul was.

This equivalence should not be too difficult to understand. Being in Christ is not all that different from being obedient to the apostles, especially if we expand this idea slightly to that of being obedient to the *teaching* of the apostles. Thus, being in Christ before Paul is not very different from submitting to the doctrine of apostles earlier than Paul.

So the second reading of Ambrosiaster seems to be the better reading, since it takes into account the details of Ambrosiaster's wording. Thus there is no reason to hold that Ambrosiaster was thinking of Andronicus as an apostle. But again we note that the terseness of expression makes it difficult to be absolutely certain.

²⁵ PL 17.188. A variant textual tradition adds *Iudaei enim incitabant gentiles ad persequendum illos aut ad claudendum* before the last four words *ideoque istos plenius honorandos*. See H. J. Vogels, *Ambrosiastri Qui Dicitur Commentarius in Epistulas Paulina* (CSEL 81/1; Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky) 480.

There is another aspect of Ambrosiaster's comment that should receive some attention. His "therefore" implies that he is drawing a conclusion concerning the appropriateness of Paul's designation of Andronicus as notable from something in his discussion that has gone before. Is the reason for drawing this conclusion the clause about Andronicus having suffered in a way similar to Paul, or the clause about him being in Christ before Paul, or both? It can hardly have been the fact that he was Paul's kinsman, however we are to understand that term.

The answer to this question is far from clear. It makes sense to think that Andronicus is a notable believer because of his presumably extensive suffering. But it also makes sense to think that his honor consists in his being in Christ for a longer period than some others in the Roman church and even than Paul himself. Whatever Ambrosiaster might have concluded—and we cannot be sure exactly what he meant—either way his thought concerning the reason for Andronicus being notable does not necessarily involve his being an apostle.

One final ambiguity in the commentary of Ambrosiaster involves the words "more fully." More fully than whom or what? In the light of what we have already discussed, it is probably better to understand Ambrosiaster to be making a comparison between Andronicus and other Christians, rather than between him and other apostles, as seems to be implied in the comments of Chrysostom and Theodoret. It is only if the inclusive interpretation is established first that the comparison with the apostles is appropriate. It is certainly not required, given the other elements of Ambrosiaster's discussion.

It seems best to conclude, then, that the comments of Ambrosiaster are, on balance, more supportive of the non-inclusive interpretation than of the inclusive interpretation.

3. *Origen.* It is when we come to Lightfoot's handling of the Origen evidence that we must extend the discussion more fully, not only because Origen's comments are more extensive than those of any of the Fathers already treated, but because the flow of his thought is at least as complicated as that of Ambrosiaster.

Although Origen wrote his work in Greek, the original form has in most instances been lost to us and we are dependent upon Rufinus's Latin translation. And since Origen comments on the key phrase both at the beginning and at the end of his discussion, and since Lightfoot's mistake consists in taking Origen's remarks out of context, it is appropriate to cite the passage rather extensively in order fully to appreciate the flow of Origen's thinking.²⁶

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners, who are notable among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. It can certainly be said

²⁶ The translation is my own, since there is apparently no translation in English, at least none that is easily accessible. There is a German translation by Theresia Heither in *Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos* (Freiburg: Herder, 1990–1999) 5.249–50. Her translation does not differ materially from mine, except that her inclusive translation (*sie sind angesehene Apostel*) assumes the very point that is to be demonstrated.

both that they were kinsmen of Paul according to the flesh, and had believed before him, and were held as notable among the apostles of Christ; about whom *it is also possible that it should be understood in this way, that perhaps they were from those seventy-two who are also themselves named apostles,* and therefore he calls them notable among the apostles, even those apostles who were before him.

But that which says “my fellow prisoners” also concerns me. For what was Paul’s imprisonment, in which he testifies that Andronicus and Junia were fellow prisoners with himself? Unless, perhaps, by means of a deeper hidden meaning we should think of that captivity which Christ came to dissolve, of which it is written that “he came also to give release to the prisoners, sight to the blind.” They are seen to be in such an imprisonment for one and the same reason as also Paul was. For example, if we should say: when the people of Israel were prisoners under the Assyrians or the Babylonians, all indeed were seen to be prisoners. But there was one reason of imprisonment in the rest, and another in Daniel and Hananiah and Azariah or Mishael. For the former were prisoners for their own sins, but the latter were also themselves prisoners for the consolation of the [other] prisoners. And therefore if Daniel were to say of any one from the people “my fellow prisoner,” it would not thereby be seen to have been spoken aptly, as [it would have been] if he had said of Hananiah and Azariah and Mishael “my fellow prisoners.” For in these there is one reason for imprisonment, which is quite different from the reason for the rest of the people. So therefore, Paul, reckoning some such thing about himself and Andronicus and Junia according to the reasoning of a hidden secret meaning, also calls them fellow prisoners with himself in [the eyes of] this world, and notable in [the eyes of] the apostles.²⁷

a. *Origen’s first comment.* Origen’s first comment is found in the first paragraph of my translation and offers two possible interpretations of the phrase “notable among the apostles.” The first interpretation, introduced by

²⁷ PG 14.1280. *Salutate Andronicum et Junian, cognatos meos et conceptivos meos, qui sunt nobiles in apostolis, qui et ante me fuerunt in Christo. Potest quidem fieri ut et secundum carnem isti cognati fuerint Pauli, et ante ipsum crediderint, et nobiles habiti sint in apostolis Christi, de quibus possibile est et illud intellegi, quod fortassis ex illis septuaginta duobus qui et ipsi apostoli nominati sunt, fuerint, et ideo nobiles eos in apostolis dicat, et his apostolis qui ante eum fuerunt. Sed et illud me movet quod ait, conceptivos meos. Quae enim erat Pauli captivitas, in qua sibi etiam Andronicum et Juniam conceptivos esse testatur? Nisi forte profundiore mysterio ad illam respiciamus captivitatem, quam Christus venit absolvere, de qua scriptum est, venire et dare eum captivis remissionem, caecis visum. In qua captivitate videntur una atque eadem ratione isti esse, qua et Paulus erat. Verbi enim gratia si dicamus cum captivus esset populus Israel apud Assyrios vel Babylonios, omnes quidem videbantur esse captivi; sed alia ratio in caeteris captivitatis, alia in Daniele, et Anania, atque Azaria, vel Misael. Illi enim captivi erant pro peccatis suis; isti vero pro consolatione captivorum erant etiam ipsi captivi; et ideo si diceret Daniel de aliquo uno ex plebe: conceptivus meus, non ita convenienter dici videbatur, ut si diceret de Ananias, et Azaria, et Misael, conceptivi mei. In istis enim una captivitatis est ratio, quae longe a reliqui populi ratione diversa est. Ita ergo et Paulus tale aliquid de se et Andronico et Junia, secundum occultioris sacramenti intuens rationem, conceptivos eos sibi in hoc mundi nominat, et nobiles in apostolis.*

the words “it can certainly be said,” says that Andronicus and Junia were *held* to be notable, while the second, introduced by the words “it is also possible” derives their notability from the fact that they were part of a group of seventy-two apostles. Since Lightfoot quotes only the Latin corresponding to the English words between the asterisks in my translation, he represents Origen as giving only one interpretation of the phrase in question. As a matter of fact, however, Origen seems to have given two interpretations of the phrase: note especially the word “also” in “it is also possible.” Thus at the very least we can say that Lightfoot distorts the evidence by not allowing two interpretations into consideration at all. He certainly does not sufficiently appreciate the complexity of Origen’s comments. If Origen, then, actually gave two alternative interpretations, what precisely was the difference between them? This is not an easy question to answer, but eventually I will maintain that his first interpretation is non-inclusive and the second inclusive.

Since Origen’s second interpretation is easier to understand, we begin with that one, where it seems clear that Andronicus is (perhaps) considered as one of a group of seventy-two apostles and that these apostles were apostles before Paul was; that is, this second interpretation is clearly inclusive. But it is not clear how the first interpretation differs from this one. Let us consider several possible alternatives regarding the relationship Origen intends between his first and second interpretations.

(1) *Apostle/apostle*. The first alternative way of relating the two interpretations is to think that the difference between them is simply that in the first interpretation Origen is thinking of Andronicus as one of the smaller group of authoritative Apostles, whereas in the second he is one of a group of seventy-two apostles of a lesser rank. Was he an Apostle or just an apostle? Naturally, in this way of distinguishing between the two interpretations both of them are inclusive interpretations: Andronicus is either an Apostle or an apostle, the only difference being the kind of apostle.

(a) But it is hardly likely that Origen would have considered such a relatively obscure individual as Andronicus, mentioned only here in the NT, an Apostle in the technical sense of the term as indicating one of Christ’s authoritative representatives in the establishment of the gospel.

(b) In addition to the argument that Origen would not have included a relatively obscure individual like Andronicus in a select group of authoritative apostles, there is also the consideration that Origen generally thought of this group as relatively small. Because of Origen’s literary interests and because most of what he wrote is no longer extant in any form, it may not be possible to identify a direct discussion on the matter of the apostolate’s limited extent. However, there are a few passages that suggest such a conclusion.

Perhaps the most direct comment along this line is that which is found in *De Principiis* 4.1.2, where we read:

And we may see, moreover, how that [Christian] religion itself grew up in a short time, making progress by the punishment and death of its worshippers, by the plundering of their goods, and by the tortures of every kind which they endured; and the result is the more surprising, that even the teachers of it

themselves neither were men of skill, nor very numerous; and yet these words are preached throughout the whole world, so the Greeks and Barbarians, wise and foolish, adopt the doctrines of the Christian religion.²⁸

Although the phrase “nor very numerous” is a relative description, it seems to apply better to a smaller group than to the seventy. True, he here refers to *teachers*, not apostles, but the parallelism of this passage to others that talk about *apostles* makes this objection rather insignificant. For example, from the same work (2.6.1) we have:

[Christ] made His holy apostles, men ignorant and unlearned, taken from the ranks of tax-gatherers or fishermen, but who were filled with the power of His divinity, to itinerate throughout the world, that they might gather together out of every race and every nation a multitude of devout believers in Himself.²⁹

Similarly, in *Contra Celsis* 3.68:

But the demonstration which followed the words of the apostles of Jesus was given from God, and was accredited by the Spirit and by power. And therefore *their* words run swiftly and speedily, or rather the word of *God* through their instrumentality, transformed numbers of persons who had been sinners both by nature and habit.³⁰

And on a more general level, Origen’s thinking about the apostles having authority, and not just the missionary ministry connected with the seventy, is conveyed in his *Commentary on John* 2.8:

[Heracleon] is asking us to trust him as we do the prophets, or the Apostles, who had authority and were not responsible to men for the writings belonging to man’s salvation.³¹

Moreover, this authoritative role of the apostles is put succinctly in the preface to *De Principiis*, when he refers to “the teaching of the Church, transmitted in orderly succession from the apostles, and remaining in the Churches to the present day.”³² Actually, this way of viewing the apostles is quite common in the patristic literature. Justin, for example, in *Apol. 1* 39 says something similar: “For from Jerusalem there went out into the world, men, twelve in number, and these illiterate, of no ability in speaking: but by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God.”³³

From these passages and others, it seems that, at least generally, Origen thought of the apostles belonging to a small, select group of individuals who had authority from Christ to disseminate his teaching both in preaching and in writing. On the other hand, there is one passage where Origen may be taken to imply that the term could also be applied to the seventy. This is in *De Principiis* 4.18, where he uses the injunction “Salute no man in the

²⁸ ANF 4.350.

²⁹ ANF 4.281.

³⁰ ANF 4.491.

³¹ ANF 10.331.

³² ANF 4.239.

³³ ANF 1.175.

way” to show that the commands of Scripture are not always to be taken literally.³⁴ Since that command occurs in the account of the sending of the seventy but not in that account recording the Twelve’s commission, it seems to be a case of the term “apostle” applied to a group much larger than the smaller select group of apostles, since Origen says that: “there are simple individuals, who think that our Saviour gave this command to His apostles.”

However, the force of this last argument is open to question. Clearly, Origen’s focus in this passage is not on the size of the apostolic group, but rather on how we should not always interpret biblical language literally. And although Origen often pays attention to the smallest of details, it is understandable how he could have conflated in his thinking the two accounts of sending, without meaning really to attribute the term *apostle* to the seventy.³⁵ On the whole, therefore, it is better to see the weight of Origen’s perspective to be on the apostolate as a small group, thus making it more improbable that he was including Andronicus in that group.

Moreover, if Origen regularly considered the seventy as a valid apostolic group, we might have expected him to have included Clement as one of its members. But that is precisely what Origen does not do. In *De Principiis* 2.3.6 he calls him a disciple of the apostles.³⁶ And a similar question could be raised in respect to Lebbeaus, of whom Origen says in *Contra Celsum* 1.62: “The Lebes also, who was a follower of Jesus, may have been a tax-gatherer; but he was not of the number of apostles, except according to a statement in one of the copies of Mark’s Gospel.”³⁷

(c) Furthermore, if in regard to his first alternative it was Origen’s thinking that Andronicus *was* one of the select Apostles in the technical sense, the word “held” seems superfluous, to say the least. If Andronicus actually *was* an authoritative Apostle, which this way of looking at Origen’s first alternative requires, it seems strange to say that he was *held* to be a notable Apostle when he in fact *was* one. True, it would not be entirely inconsistent to say that he was held to be what he actually was. Still, it seems strange that Origen would have introduced an element (“held”) into the presentation of his first alternative when it did not really contribute to the understanding of that alternative. Thus the presence of the word “held” seems to be less compatible with the theory that Andronicus was an Apostle than with the view that he was not.

(2) *No reason/reason.* A second possible way of relating the two interpretations Origen is dealing with would be to say that in the second a reason is given (*ideo*) for Andronicus being called notable, whereas no reason is given in the first interpretation. Furthermore, if this is the only difference between the two interpretations, and since the second interpretation is clearly inclusive, the first interpretation must under this alternative also be inclusive as

³⁴ ANF 4.367.

³⁵ A similar confusion of the two sending accounts occurs in Irenaeus in the preface to Book 3 of *Against Heresies*. Here Irenaeus says that the Lord gave to the apostles the command that is recorded only in the sending of the seventy in Luke 10:16.

³⁶ ANF 4.273.

³⁷ ANF 4.423–24.

well. However, such an approach, true as it is, seems to involve too superficial an observation to be very convincing.

(3) *Genus/species*. A third way of construing the relationship between the first and second interpretations might hold that the first is general and the second specific. In the first Andronicus is an apostle; in the second it is made clear more specifically what kind of apostle he was. This alternative also involves seeing both of the interpretations as inclusive. The only difference from the first alternative is that here the seventy-two are a subset of apostles in general, whereas in the first alternative Apostle and apostle represent separate and not overlapping groups. But again this whole approach seems to involve a subtlety that would perhaps be missed by the reader. Moreover, it seems to be refuted by the presence of the word *et* in *qui et ipsi apostoli nominati sunt*. To say that the seventy-two were *also* called apostles, presumably in addition to the ones mentioned previously, does not make much sense if the seventy two are simply a subset of the first mentioned apostolic group.

(4) *Non-inclusive/inclusive*. But there is another possible way of seeing a difference between the two interpretations. And that is that, in contrast to the first three alternatives, where both interpretations are inclusive, here the two interpretations correlate, at least approximately, to our non-inclusive and inclusive views respectively. That is, in Origen's first interpretation Andronicus is *held as notable* by the apostles of Christ. On the other hand, according to the second interpretation Andronicus is explicitly said to be an apostle in the broader sense of being one of the seventy-two who were called apostles. It is obvious that the second interpretation is inclusive; and I submit that the first can best be seen as non-inclusive. The crux is what Origen means by "held."

Respecting this question, there are only two possibilities: (1) Andronicus is held to be notable as an apostle; and (2) he is held to be notable as a non-apostle. If the first alternative is the correct one, we would then have the difference between Origen's first and second interpretations hinge on a very subtle distinction. The first interpretation would be saying that Andronicus was *held* to be notable as an apostle, while the second would say that he actually *was* notable as an apostle. This distinction is not only subtle; it is also a comparatively insignificant one. It is quite unlikely that this is the distinction Origen is drawing attention to. Therefore, it is the other alternative that must be in Origen's mind: Andronicus was held to be notable as a non-apostle.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Origen uses the word "held" in giving the first interpretation but not in relation to the second. This suggests that the word "held" is the factor that distinguishes between the two interpretations. In the second interpretation Andronicus is an apostle—notable among the seventy-two. Of course he is also probably *held* to be notable, but that does not have to be said, nor is it said; the important thing according to this second interpretation is that he was a notable member of the seventy-two apostles. Although it is not stated, he was probably also held to be such.

In the first interpretation, however, Origen does use the word "held," a word that does not occur in the biblical text but is added by Origen in his

exposition. The reason Origen puts the word into his explanation of the first interpretation is probably because Andronicus was not an apostle, but was *held* to be notable by the Apostles. He may, of course, have been held to be notable by the church at large, but that does not have to be stated, since the biblical text does not make that point, but only relates Andronicus's notability to the apostles and not to the church as a whole.

We conclude that this way of drawing the distinction between the two interpretations represents Origen's thinking. It is the difference between the non-inclusive and the inclusive views. It is also the way most modern commentators have seen the exegetical options.

Moreover, although Origen does not explicitly indicate a preference for one interpretation over the other, are there hints of such a preference? We receive no help from the fact that he offers the non-inclusive interpretation first and the inclusive interpretation second. For Origen can order alternative interpretations in either way.³⁸ On the other hand, a preference for the first interpretation in this context may be indicated in the fact that he qualifies the second view more than he does the first. That is, he adds the word "perhaps" (*fortassis*) in describing the second interpretation, thus seemingly making it more tentative and therefore less probable in his eyes. After all, this "perhaps" is in addition to the already stated "possible." Thus the doubling of these expressions of tentativeness seems to imply that the second interpretation less likely than the first.

b. *Origen's second comment.* The second place where Origen discusses the application of "notable" to Andronicus is near the end of the citation. This, in turn, is a conclusion to the lengthy discussion of the meaning of imprisonment as applied to Andronicus (and to Paul) that is embraced in the second paragraph of my translation. What does it mean to say that these men were prisoners? That is the problem Origen introduces. His answer to this question is not entirely consistent. Or perhaps we should say he gives several answers that may be different but yet complementary.

One answer seems to be that they might have been prisoners in a spiritual sense, presumably imprisoned by sin, although Origen does not make this idea very explicit. However, his citation of the passage from Luke (ultimately from Isaiah) appears to move in this direction. Moreover, in spite of Origen's description of the interpreting process as involving *mysterium*, it is probably not wise to call this allegory. Rather, he simply seems to be digging below the surface meaning of "prisoner" to clarify what is certainly a biblical theme regarding imprisonment to sin. Whether the Isaiah or Luke passages contain this element, or whether they think only in terms of literal imprisonment,

³⁸ Examples of listing the preferred interpretation first are found at ANF 10.334 (What was made in Him was life/What was made was life in Him); ANF 10.370 (Bethabara/Bethany); ANF 10.421 (question or affirmation). An example of putting the preferred interpretation second is ANF 10.307 where Origen dismisses possible meanings for "In the beginning was the Word" before he adopts the preferred meaning.

is highly debated. It is also irrelevant to Origen's meaning. In any case, we may note that Origen is grappling with the meaning of imprisonment, not that of release from imprisonment, as he would be if he were stressing the literal meaning of the Luke passage.

Another way Origen goes about dealing with the perceived problem of Andronicus being called a prisoner is to distinguish between different reasons for a person becoming a prisoner. To do this he appeals to the OT accounts of Israel being captives, or prisoners, under the Assyrians and Babylonians. Whereas the reason for this imprisonment as regards the people as a whole is, in Origen's perspective, their sinfulness, this reason is not applied in the same way to certain righteous individuals within the nation: Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael. It is one thing, says Origen, for Daniel to apply the word "fellow-prisoners" to people in the nation at large, but another thing entirely when he uses the term to refer to his three friends. Apparently Origen is thinking that the difference lies in the fact that the one group is imprisoned as a punishment for sin, while the other is in an outwardly similar circumstance, but for the purpose of being in a position of a ministry of comfort to the masses.

However, when this distinction is applied to Andronicus, it is not clear that the two situations are entirely parallel. Specifically, it is not clear that Origen is saying that Andronicus was in prison for some sort of ministry to anyone around him, to the church, or to any other group or individual. The parallel between the two situations is general (*some such, tale aliquid*) rather than close. Instead of a close parallelism, Origen's conclusion ("therefore") from this illustration consists in his second reference to Andronicus being called "notable among the apostles."

The question before us, then, is to connect this conclusion with the supposedly supportive discussion that precedes it. Origen must acknowledge that Andronicus was a prisoner, because that is what Paul has said. And he has just built the case that the reason for his imprisonment must be at least as significant as the fact of the imprisonment, even though it must be admitted that we have no independent information concerning this reason. Origen must realize that the answer to his conundrum is speculative. But once again this kind of interpretation cannot be said to be allegorical. Rather, it seeks to go beneath the surface of Paul's words and, so to speak, read between the lines. And what Origen finds there is that Andronicus's imprisonment is "in this world." What sense should be given to this expression that best fits the overall context of Origen's argument?

To take the phrase literally—that Andronicus was a prisoner in this world—is of course true. But at the same time it is difficult to relate this idea to the context. It seems to make better sense if we understand it to mean that he was a prisoner *in the eyes* of this world. His imprisonment is not to be attributed specifically to his own sin; like Daniel and his friends, he was free from anything like the kind of transgression that was the cause of Israel's captivity in Assyria and Babylon. Nor was his imprisonment for any crime in the sight of God. It was, however, apparently an imprisonment due to the way the world viewed his activities. In Origen's view, he was a

prisoner because of the perspective with which the world approached the Christian teaching and the actions associated with its proclamation and implementation. He was a prisoner *in the eyes of* this world. Or so, it appears, was Origen's thinking.

Furthermore, the phrase "in this world" does not here seem to be employed with its customary contrast to *the world to come*. Rather, what we apparently have is a balancing of "prisoners in [the eyes of] this world" with "notable among the apostles." Accordingly, if we are correct in understanding "in this world" to mean "in the eyes of this world," the corresponding understanding of "in/among the apostles" ought to be "in the eyes of the apostles."

Thus we have here a second indication that Origen probably held to what we have called the non-inclusive interpretation. In view of these considerations, it is difficult to see how we can continue to enlist Origen, as Lightfoot did, in support of the currently prevailing opinion on the interpretation of Rom 16:7 that sees Paul calling Andronicus an apostle.

4. *Pelagius*. The comment of Pelagius is brief and has points of contact with those of Ambrosiaster and Origen. Although Andronicus is not mentioned by name, it seems obvious that the reference is to him and Junia.

These came from the Jews and, because together with Paul they had suffered tribulation but had not been intimidated, they are here deservedly held in esteem. They among others, had been sent to further the progress of the Romans, and according to the testimony of Paul himself are reported to have believed before him.³⁹

The reference to these individuals as deservedly *held* in esteem is reminiscent of Origen, and the mention of Paul's own testimony is also found in Ambrosiaster. Unique to Pelagius are the fact that Andronicus was not intimidated by his imprisonment and the fact that he had been sent to Rome for ministry. But apart from these additions, Pelagius does not bring much of anything that we have not seen before. It is also apparent that his comments are not decisive in resolving the problem posed by the target phrase. He does not even mention the word "apostle." But if his remarks lean in any particular direction, it seems they are more conducive to the non-inclusive interpretation. That is, Andronicus and Junia are to be *held* in esteem *because* of their having suffered tribulation without having been intimidated, not because they were apostles.

5. *Pseudo-Hippolytus*. There is another source from the patristic period that is somewhat pertinent to our topic, although only tangentially so. This is a document associated with Hippolytus but in modern times considered not authentically his.⁴⁰ The document is a list of names purportedly of the seventy apostles, in which is included the name Andronicus (number 20). The fact that

³⁹ A. Souter, *Pelagius's Exposition of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul* (TextsS 9/3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922–1931) 152.

⁴⁰ "On the Seventy Apostles," ANF 5.255.

Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 1.12.1)⁴¹ did not know of any such list may indicate that it was composed after his time. Indeed, it is even a plausible conjecture that the list was compiled precisely because of Eusebius's comment, in order to supply what was seen to be a deficiency in the historical record. Actually, for our purposes it does not matter who is the author of this document; it is sufficient that it represents an opinion that comes from the patristic period. It is included here separately from the patristic comments already cited, since it is not directly a commentary on Rom 16:7.

The list probably has little historical value in giving correct information about the names and status of the individuals listed. It gives every appearance of being made up from various lists of names mentioned in the NT. For example, the names contained in the list numbered 6–12 are from the list in Acts 6 of the seven men selected for the ministry of mercy to the widows among the Jerusalem Hellenistic Jews. Likewise, those numbered 19–38 and 41–42 are taken from the first part of Romans 16 to whom Paul sends greetings, while numbers 40 and 45–49 are copied from the latter part of the same chapter, whose greetings Paul conveys to the Roman church. It almost seems that any significant male named in the NT was declared to be one of these seventy apostles.

But in spite of the apparently fictitious character of the list, its importance for us is that it gives ancient testimony to the fact that someone thought of Andronicus as an apostle. On the other hand, this conclusion about Andronicus may be taken with a grain of salt. It is hardly derived from an exegesis of Rom 16:7, since many other names from Romans 16 are in this list of apostles, even though they are not called that in Romans 16, as Andronicus is according to the inclusive interpretation.

6. *Other patristic passages on the seventy.* There are also some other patristic references to the seventy, but without any mention of Andronicus or any decisive designation of them as apostles, as they are in Pseudo-Hippolytus. Thus Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* 2.21.1 says: "after the twelve apostles, our Lord is found to have sent seventy others before Him."⁴² The word "others" is probably derived from Luke 10:1 and is not intended to mean "other apostles."

Some sources seem to make a clear distinction between the twelve, who are apostles, and the seventy, who are disciples. For example, Eusebius appears to make this distinction in several places, as in *Hist. eccl.* 1.12.1: "The names of the apostles of our Savior are known to every one from the Gospels. But there exists no catalogue of the seventy disciples."⁴³ Similarly, in *Hist. eccl.* 1.10.5 Eusebius records: "Our Savior and Lord, not long after the beginning of his ministry, called the twelve apostles, and these alone of all his disciples he named apostles, as an especial honor. And again he

⁴¹ NPNF 2d ser., 1.98.

⁴² ANF 1.389.

⁴³ NPNF 2d ser., 1.98. See also *Hist. eccl.* 2.1.1; 2.1.4; 3.24.5.

appointed seventy others.”⁴⁴ “Alone,” of course, implies that the seventy were not apostles. Furthermore, the distinction between the apostles and the seventy(-two) also appears in *Recognitions of Clement* 1.40: “Therefore He chose us twelve, the first who believed in Him, whom He named apostles; and afterwards other seventy-two most approved disciples.”⁴⁵

Other patristic sources, on the other hand, give the appearance of giving the name *apostles* to the seventy. One of these is found in Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 1.13.4, 10 but is ultimately claimed to derive from a Syrian document: “To these epistles there was added the following account in the Syriac language. ‘After the ascension of Jesus, Judas, who was also called Thomas, sent to him Thaddeus, an apostle, one of the Seventy.’”⁴⁶ But the attribution of the title “apostle” to Thaddeus may be questioned. It may have occurred as a mistranslation from the Syriac or as a misunderstanding on the part of the author of the Syriac document that Eusebius claimed to be dependent on. Thus this passage is not very substantial in supplying an example of the seventy being apostles.

Tertullian in *Contra Marcion* 4.24 says: “He chose seventy other missionaries [*apostolos*] besides the twelve.”⁴⁷ However, this passage is far from a focused discussion on the extent of the apostolate. Tertullian’s concern is to marshal every possible argument against Marcion’s claim that Christ’s work was unrelated to the Creator-God. At this point in the argument Tertullian is going through the Gospel of Luke, gleaning every scrap of evidence he can find to make this point. Thus he argues that the difference between the Israelites coming out of Egypt with plenty and the seventy being sent out with virtually nothing does not indicate the commands of two different deities. The difference is superficial rather than substantive. If in the course of making this argument Tertullian is careless about the detail that the seventy are not actually called apostles in Luke 10, we ought not build very much on the passage.

Moreover, the apparently expansive concept of the apostolate in this passage is at variance with Tertullian’s normal approach. In *Prescription Against Heretics* he adopts a much narrower view. For example, in chapter 32 he distinguishes between apostles and apostolic men, presumably thinking of Mark and Luke.⁴⁸ And in the same place he indicates that the apostles existed during a particular time and, by implication, not at another time, thus implying a limited group. An attempt might be made to harmonize the two perspectives by saying that the *Prescription* represents his thinking during his pre-Montanist phase and *Contra Marcion*, in which is found the apparent application of *apostles* to the seventy, belongs to that period during which he had adopted a Montanist outlook. But some of the perspective of

⁴⁴ NPNF 2d ser., 1.97.

⁴⁵ ANF 8.88.

⁴⁶ NPNF 2d ser., 1.13.10. See also 1.13.4.

⁴⁷ ANF 3.387.

⁴⁸ ANF 3.258.

the earlier period shows up as well in the later composition. For example, in *Contra Marcion* 1.21 we read: "After the time of the apostles, the truth respecting the belief of God suffered corruption, but it is equally certain that during the life of the apostles their teaching on this great article did not suffer at all."⁴⁹ Thus he restricts the apostles to a limited period of time.

7. *Other patristic passages on apostles.* These passages give the appearance of a broad apostolate but in reality provide a weak foundation for such a conclusion. Another Eusebian passage (*Hist. eccl.* 1.12.4) seems to be even clearer on the concept of a more extensive apostolate, although not specifically in terms of the seventy. But on reflection it may fare no better than the above. Commenting on 1 Cor 15:5–7, Eusebius writes: "Next, he says, He was seen by James—one of the reputed brothers of the Lord; then, as if in addition to these there had been, on the pattern of the Twelve, a large number of apostles such as Paul himself, he adds: 'Later He was seen by all the apostles.'⁵⁰

Once again, we should exercise caution about this testimony as well. If it even claimed to represent some authentic tradition, it could be valuable in giving evidence for a broad apostolate. As it is, however, Eusebius's reference to many apostles is based, not on tradition, but on a very idiosyncratic and hardly plausible exegesis of 1 Cor 15:7.

Nor can Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.31.2–3 provide evidence of an expansive apostolate.⁵¹ This would be true only if he were thinking of Philip the evangelist, whom he calls an apostle, as clearly distinct from Philip the apostle. But since Eusebius explicitly calls him one of the twelve, he is either thinking directly of Philip the apostle or is conflating the two Philips. Either way this cannot support the broad apostolate idea. Tertullian's similar application of the term "apostle" to Philip the evangelist in *On Baptism* 18 is probably also due to the confusion of this Philip with the apostle of the same name.⁵²

Yet another supposed example of the broad apostolate concept is found in Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* 3.3.4, where according to the translation in ANF 1.416 Polycarp is said to have been appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna by apostles in Asia. The same position is assumed by Shepherd, that "'apostles in Asia' had appointed him to his bishopric."⁵³

However, Hardy's translation removes this impression: Polycarp "was installed by apostles for Asia, as bishop in the church in Smyrna."⁵⁴ Williamson agrees: "appointed by apostles to serve in Asia as Bishop of Smyrna."⁵⁵ That is, Polycarp was made a bishop for the Asian churches, specifically for the

⁴⁹ ANF 3.286.

⁵⁰ G. A. Williamson, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (New York: Penguin, 1965) 65. See also NPNF 2d ser., 1.99.

⁵¹ NPNF 2d ser. 1.162.

⁵² ANF 3. 678.

⁵³ Massey Hamilton Shepherd, "The Letter of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, to the Philippian," in *Early Christian Fathers* (ed. Cyril C. Richardson; New York: Macmillan, 1970) 125.

⁵⁴ Edward Rochie Hardy, "Selections from the Work Against Heresies by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons," in *Early Christian Fathers* 373.

⁵⁵ Williamson, *History of the Church* 167.

church in Smyrna. And this understanding is supported by the Greek.⁵⁶ Both the meaning of εἰς and its detachment from ἀποστόλων show that the phrase indicates the place to which Polycarp was appointed rather than the place where the apostles were. The lack of an article with “apostles” is not significant, since there can hardly be any difference between his being taught by apostles—as occurs at the beginning of the citation—and his being taught by *the* apostles, as expressed at the end.

Thus there is no need to hypothesize any apostles other than the group designated by that name in the restrictive fashion. Besides, the restrictive sense is the usual manner in which Irenaeus thinks of the apostles in this very work.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the version of this matter found in Tertullian *Prescription* 32 links Polycarp’s installation specifically to the apostle John, not to some indefinite group of “apostles in Asia.”⁵⁸

At the same time, while one strand of Christian thought viewed the apostolate in a restrictive manner, there exists another strand, represented by the *Didache*, that is well known for its more expansive view. The relevant portions of this document are in a sense a mirror image of the sending accounts in the Gospels. Whereas there we find the Lord’s injunctions to his *ambassadors* to carry out his mission in a guarded way, here in *Did.* 11.3–6 and 15.1–2 the focus is on the obligations of the *community* toward Christian ministers of various kinds, including teachers, apostles, prophets, bishops, and deacons.

However, the evidence of *Didache* is not easy to put together. At one point (11.3) apostles and prophets appear to be separate categories, while in the next section (11.4–5) the relationship between these two terms is not clear, whether they are still distinct or overlapping or identical.

But concerning the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, thus do. Let every apostle that cometh to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain *except* one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remains three days, he is a false prophet.⁵⁹

In this passage, the apostle apparently becomes a prophet. But to further complicate the picture, in 15:1–2 there is no mention of apostles at all.

Appoint, therefore for yourselves, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proved; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers. Despise them not therefore, for they are your honored ones, together with the prophets and teachers.⁶⁰

While it certainly does not seem possible to understand *Didache’s* reference to apostles in a restricted sense, it is far from clear just what role the group

⁵⁶ Πολύκαρπος δὲ οὐ μόνον ὑπὸ ἀποστόλων μαθητευθεὶς . . . ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὸ ἀποστόλων κατασταθεὶς εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐν τῇ ἐν Σμύρνῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐπίσκοπος . . . ταῦτα διδάξας ἀεὶ καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἔμαθεν.

⁵⁷ ANF 1.414–418.

⁵⁸ ANF 3.258. The same is true of Jerome in *De Viris Illustribus* (PL, 23, 635).

⁵⁹ ANF 7.380.

⁶⁰ ANF 7.381.

played in the thinking of this document. There does seem to be a division between a settled ministry (bishops and deacons) and an itinerant ministry (teachers, apostles, prophets). But the relationships involved in these last three classes remain elusive. In any case, the evidence of this document is quite far removed from the specific concerns reflected above: there is no mention of the Twelve, or the Seventy, or Andronicus.

8. *Evaluation of the patristic evidence.* It might seem that on the basis of the available patristic evidence we should conclude that the inclusive interpretation has the better case with two commentators (Chrysostom and Theodoret) and one non-commentator (Pseudo-Hippolytus) supporting it, and another source (*Didache*) allowing it. On the other hand, there are two advocating the non-inclusive view (Origen⁶¹ and Ambrosiaster), with one authority (Pelagius) perhaps too indecisive to affect the outcome. But the discipline of textual criticism should have taught us that we must weigh authorities as well as count them.

In the first place, even though Chrysostom and Theodoret are two separate writers, they may embody only one interpretive voice. That is, a case can be made that Theodoret was dependent on Chrysostom.⁶² Indeed Theodoret's comments are briefer than Chrysostom's and do give an appearance of dependency.

Furthermore, for all Chrysostom's skill as a preacher, his value as a commentator may be less. A statement by Schaff is instructive: "Theodore [of Mopsuestia] was the exegete, Chrysostom the homilist, Theodoret the annotator."⁶³ Since we have no direct way of knowing what Theodore had to say on this question, except by inference from what his Antiochene colleagues wrote, Chrysostom is our main representative of the Antiochene exposition of Rom 16:7. But Chrysostom's comment is merely the statement of a position, not a defense of it. Moreover, Schaff's comment may suggest that caution is in order when it comes to evaluating the weight of Chrysostom's authority.

As to the evidence of Pseudo-Hippolytus, we have even less reason to take this tradition as serious scholarship. In the case of the *Didache*, we must weigh its more-or-less idiosyncratic evidence against the much more common approach seeing a restricted apostolate such as is found in Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, *Barnabas*, *Diognetus*, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, *Apostolic Constitutions*, and other writers and writings of the early church.⁶⁴ Even *Herm. Sim.* 9.15 and 9.25 do not provide clear parallels

⁶¹ Köstenberger ("Women in the Pauline Mission" 337, n. 50) says, "Fàbrega concludes that it is likely that Origen himself did not comment at all on the list of names in Rom. 18." If this is true, we would have to remove the consideration of Origen completely from the discussion and instead think of the testimony of Rufinus."

⁶² Blomfield Jackson says that the comments of Theodoret "have little claim to originality, and he who has read Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia will find scarcely anything in Theodoret which he has not seen before." NPNF 2d ser., 3.16.

⁶³ Philip Schaff, NCPF 1st ser., 9.18.

⁶⁴ 1 *Clem.* 42-44; *Ign. Eph.* 11.2; *Mgn.* 7.1, 13.1-2; *Trall.* 2.2, 7.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1; *Pol. Phil.* 6.3, 9.1; *Barn* 5.9, 8.3; *Diogn.* 11.1; *Clem. Strom.* 1.1; *Lact. Deaths of Persecutors* 2; *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.12.

to *Didache*. True, *Hermas* speaks of forty apostles and teachers, but it is not at all clear how many of this number are apostles.⁶⁵ Thus in one way or another, the value of the evidence of the supporters of the inclusive interpretation can be mitigated.

The case is quite different, however, with those ancient writers who favor the non-inclusive interpretation. As far as Origen is concerned, his reputation for textual and linguistic analysis is high, and with Greek as his native tongue, his credentials for understanding it correctly are as good as any of the Greek Fathers. Moreover, his well-known tendency to allegorical interpretation does not seem to have affected the way he treated the Romans passage in question. We have tried to show that his interpretation of that passage has more to do with digging beneath the surface to raise questions that the text itself does not specifically treat. But this is a far cry from true allegorizing. It has more in common with the practice of application of a text, which likewise goes beyond what the text explicitly says, than it does with the use of the allegorical method. So Origen's value as a commentator on our passage is not negated by the reputation he often has for allegorical interpretation in other contexts.

An attempt to minimize the value of Origen's support for the non-inclusive interpretation is the claim that his opinion should be discounted as being distorted by a cultural bias against the idea of a woman apostle (of any sort), which the inclusive view would imply. According to this criticism, Origen's commitment to the non-inclusive position is the result of this supposed cultural bias and not to objective exegesis.

However, this claim runs counter to Origen's comment on Rom 16:1 in reference to Phoebe.

This passage teaches that there were women ordained in the church's ministry by the apostle's authority. . . . Not only that—they ought to be ordained into the ministry, because they helped in many ways and by their good services deserved the praise even of the apostle.⁶⁶

On the basis of this passage, there does not seem to have been for Origen such a cultural bias against women in ministry as would have prevented him on that score from seeing Junia as an apostle. His non-inclusive interpretation does appear to have been so motivated.

As for Ambrosiaster, in spite of the fact that he worked in Latin, his acclaim as a commentator among the ancients is almost unrivaled. He was "by common consent the greatest of them all. . . . Ambrosiaster wrote a literal commentary, and he was fully aware of the problems posed by historical and textual criticism. His work can easily stand comparison with modern writings on the subject, so close were his methods to those generally employed today."⁶⁷

Finally, in terms of the evidence from Pelagius, although I have above assumed this to be relatively neutral, in reality it leans more in the direction of the non-inclusive interpretation than of the inclusive one. Thus the

⁶⁵ ANF 2.49.

⁶⁶ Gerald Bray, *Romans* (ACCS; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998) 369.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* xxiii.

patristic evidence may be more accurately said to be two commentators and one non-commentator in favor of the inclusive view, where neither of the commentators presents a very full and scholarly discussion. On the other hand, the non-inclusive view is supported by three commentators, two of whom have the highest credentials in terms of their competency.

At the very least, then, we must retreat from the over-confident conclusion of some modern commentators to the effect that the patristic testimony is monolithic in support of the inclusive interpretation. Conservatively, it may be safe to say that, because of our examination and weighing of the authorities, the two interpretations have relatively equal support among the Fathers. We may even cautiously suggest, because of the stature of Origen and Ambrosiaster as exegetes, that the non-inclusive view is slightly favored by the patristic evidence.

CONCLUSION

In trying to demonstrate the weakness of the main arguments for the inclusive interpretation of Rom 16:7, I do not claim to have established the non-inclusive view of the verse. A safer conclusion is that the three lines of evidence examined here do not present us with a definitive answer to our initial question. Nonetheless, we hope at least to have shown that the playing field on which the two interpretations compete is much more even than modern scholarship has allowed. In fact, it may now be possible to say that the probability has shifted in favor of the non-inclusive interpretation. The lexical-grammatical evidence makes it possible, the evidence from the context is inconclusive, and the historical evidence makes the non-inclusive interpretation more probable than heretofore commonly acknowledged.