

1 Cor 9,5: The Women of the Apostles (*)

The women of the apostles that Paul mentions in 1 Cor 9,5 could have played an important role in the growth of earliest Christianity. Although this claim has appeared elsewhere, I will develop an extended argument to strengthen the position. Several old but still present strands in the history of interpretation, Paul's references to missionary couples, his linguistic usage, and some similar marriages in ancient Greco-Roman culture illuminate the probable function of the women as missionary assistants of the apostles.

History of interpretation (or reception) does need an *apologia pro vita sua* for modern scholars. Instead of moving immediately from Paul's text to modern research, a short detour through the past can strengthen and enrich scholarly understanding of both the problems and possibilities of the biblical material⁽¹⁾. In the case of 1 Cor 9,5 four major questions have emerged. (1.) Did the women participate in the mission? (2.) Did they follow the apostles to be instructed? (3.) Or were they just for material support⁽²⁾? (4.) Were the women wives⁽³⁾? The last question is related to the historical issue of Peter's wife and children (if any). Views on the celibacy of clerics have been closely related to the last two questions⁽⁴⁾. With the history of the text's reception as a resource, 1 Cor 9,5 becomes a rich source instead of a text that the commentator glosses quickly.

Below I will briefly consider the question of Cephas' identity, discuss the text-critical evidence, and then look at the major strands in the past understanding of the women and their marriages (or not) to the

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⁽¹⁾ Cf the prolific use of interpretive history made by U. LUZ, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (EKK 1; Zurich 1985-2002). Dates below are primarily from ODCC³.

⁽²⁾ The *New Jerusalem Bible's* note to 9,5 remarks that the wives were "for the purpose of attending to their material welfare".

⁽³⁾ The *New Jerusalem Bible*, *NAB*, and *New Revised Standard Version* all assume they were wives.

⁽⁴⁾ For a convenient history cf P. DELHAYE, "Celibacy, Clerical, History of", *NCE* II, 322-328.

apostles. Paul's discussion of missionary partners in his letters, the semantics of several key terms in the verse, some parallels in antiquity, and a reassessment of ancient households will complete the investigation.

I. Cephas

Paul's defense of his apostleship to the Corinthians includes a rare but intriguing glimpse into the personal lives of the apostles. They have authority to take a "sister woman/wife" (ἀδελφὴν γυναικῶν) with them on their missionary journeys as do the brothers of the Lord and Cephas. Cephas' identity is important for the argument of the essay, because it is clear that Peter was married before his call to discipleship. Bart Ehrman has objected to the identification of Cephas and Peter based on Paul's shift of names between Gal 2,7-8 and the rest of its context and an ancient tradition that Cephas and Peter were different people⁽⁵⁾. Clement of Alexandria believes Cephas is one of the seventy and a homonym of Peter the apostle⁽⁶⁾. *EpAp* 2 (both men were of the eleven) is also an old witness (II C.E.). However, the semantic equivalence (rock) alone makes the identity probable. Gal 2,7.8.9.11 and 14 seem to use both names interchangeably. The Johannine tradition (John 1,42) assumes the equivalence, and Matt 16,18 assumes the pun⁽⁷⁾. Other sources in primitive Christian tradition (Mark 1,30 par) hold that Peter was married, and Paul viewed him as a traveling apostle (Gal 2,7-8).

⁽⁵⁾ B. EHRMAN, "Cephas and Peter", *JBL* 109 (1990) 463-474. Besides "Peter" in Gal 2,7-8, Paul uses "Cephas" (1 Cor 1,12; 3,22; 9,5; 15,5; Gal 1,1.2.9.11.14). See E.G. KRAELING, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri*. New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine (New Haven 1953) 8:10 (227) for an עקב בר כפא. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Aramaic Kepha' and Peter's Name in the New Testament*, *Ibid.*, *To Advance the Gospel*. New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, U.K. 1988) 112-124, esp. 115-118, argues that כפא is a proper name.

⁽⁶⁾ *Hypot.* 5.4 (GCS Clemens Al. III; 196,9-13 STÄHLIN – FRÜCHTEL – TREU = Eus., *Hist. eccl.* 1.12.2).

⁽⁷⁾ John 1,42 inclines or rather forces EHRMAN to believe that there were two people named "Cephas" in ancient Christian tradition ("Cephas", 473, n. 33, 474). Other scholars who reject the identity may be found in H.-D. BETZ, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia 1979) 96-97 (BETZ does not accept the hypothesis that the two are different) and FITZMYER, *Aramaic*, 114, 120 n. 15 (he rejects the hypothesis).

II. The Text

The variations in the textual tradition perhaps indicate some of the interpretive possibilities. There are some interesting alternatives.

γυναικας (women): F, G, ar, b, Tert⁽⁸⁾, Pelagius⁽⁹⁾, Ps. Cyprian⁽¹⁰⁾, Hilary⁽¹¹⁾, Sedulius⁽¹²⁾, Jerome⁽¹³⁾, Helvidius⁽¹⁴⁾, Clement of Alex.^{1/3} (*Paed.* 2.1.9.1 [GCS Clemens Al. I; 159,28-30 Stählin – Treu]), Aphrahaat⁽¹⁵⁾.

mulierem sororem (woman sister): Hubertianus (Brit. Mus. Add. 24142), z* (Harley 1772), and vg^{cl}.

mulierem (woman): Ambrosiaster⁽¹⁶⁾.

sorores mulieres (sisters women): Greek MSS according to Jerome⁽¹⁷⁾.

sorores (sisters): The Greek according to Sedulius⁽¹⁸⁾.

sororem mulierculam (sister little woman): *Biblia Latina*⁽¹⁹⁾

ἀδελφήν γυναικᾶ (sister woman): other witnesses.

⁽⁸⁾ All occurrences: *Cast.* 8.3, *Mon.* 8.4, *Pud.* 14.11 (CChr.SL 2; 1027,21-22; 1239,21-22; 1307,43 KROYMANN – DEKKERS).

⁽⁹⁾ *In I Cor* 9,5 (A. SOUTER, *Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul*. I. Introduction / II. Text and Apparatus Criticus [TextsS 9/1-2; Cambridge 1922-1926] II, 175, 5-7).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Ps. Cyprian, *Sing.* 20 (CSEL 3/3; 196,3-8 HARTEL). G. ZUNTZ (*The Text of the Epistles. A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* [London 1953] 138) refers to both Cypr-appendix (Ps. Cypr.) and Macrobius in his note. Macrobius (the bishop) was once suspected of writing Ps. Cypr., *De sing.* See J.B. BAUER, "Uxores circumducere (1 Kor 9,5)", *BZ* n. s. 3 (1959) 94-103, esp. 95.

⁽¹¹⁾ Hilary, *Psal.* 118, 14.14 (SC 347; 144,12-14 MILHAU).

⁽¹²⁾ See the reading *sorores* below.

⁽¹³⁾ *uxores* in *Ep.* 22,20 (CSEL 54; 171,5 HILBERG).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Jerome, *Helu.* (PL 23; 204A). Helvidius read *uxores* (wives).

⁽¹⁵⁾ *Dem.* 6.5 (PO I/1; 264,22-265,2 PARISOT).

⁽¹⁶⁾ H. J. VOGELS follows the evidence of the MSS for *mulieres* here in *Ad Cor. prima* 9,5 (CSEL 81/2, 98,4-5). The singular appears in five MSS.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Jerome, *Iou.* 1,26 (PL 23; 257A); a reading he adopted in *Ep.* 123.14 (CSEL 56/1; 89,16 HILBERG) and *Matth.* 27,55 (SC 259; 302, 418 BONNARD).

⁽¹⁸⁾ *Collect. in ep. I ad Cor.* (VL.AGLB 32; 406,17 FREDE – STANJEK = PL 103; 145C). Sedulius remarks that the Greek text only mentions "sisters" and not *mulieres* (women), which he finds in the Latin text.

⁽¹⁹⁾ *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria*. Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolf Rusch of Strassburg 1480-1481 (intr. by K. FROELICH and M. T. GIBSON) (Turnhout 1992) IV, 320.

Günther Zuntz chooses “women” as the correct reading because of its geographical dispersion before the main text types emerged: “It is original, the crude expression suits Paul’s polemical fervour and was bound to provoke the various softening substitutes which the other witnesses transmit”⁽²⁰⁾. Clearly some of the old Latin witnesses such as Tertullian indicate that there were old variations. Contra Zuntz, when one carefully analyzes the interpretation of the text in individuals such as Aphrahaat it is not at all clear that “women” was a “crude expression”⁽²¹⁾. Aphrahaat (IV C.E.), the ascetic Persian sage, in a discussion of monks, refers to the celibate example of John the Baptist and Elijah. He then mentions the Apostle (Paul) and Barnabas and quotes 1 Cor 9,5 with the reading “women” instead of “sister woman”. He adds a phrase that apparently ascribes the view to Paul that “it was not righteous” (to take women around)⁽²²⁾. The reading “women” morphed easily into the interpretation “servant women” (in the singular *serviens matrona*). “Sister woman” seems a far more problematic text for the interpreter, and most likely was Paul’s expression.

III. The Women as Assistants in Mission

Clement provided a very specific function for the women whom the apostles took with them. In a passage against those who reject marriage, Clement states that Peter was married and that he (along with the Philip of Acts — an apostle also in Clement’s view) “made children”. After quoting 1 Cor 9,5, he notes of the other apostles that they devoted themselves without distraction to the proclamation and led around their women (τὰς γυναῖκας) not as wives (γαμετάς) but as sisters to be fellow ministers (συνδικόνους) to household managing women (τὰς οἰκουροὺς γυναῖκας). Through these women the teaching of the Lord was introduced into the women’s quarters (τὴν γυναικωνίτιν) without slander⁽²³⁾. That he understands the women to

⁽²⁰⁾ ZUNTZ, *The Text*, 138. BAUER, “Uxores”, 95 agrees with the reading.

⁽²¹⁾ For a similar judgment cf J. KREMER, *Der Erste Brief an die Korinther* (RNT; Regensburg 1997) 185.

⁽²²⁾ Aphrahaat, *Dem.* 6.5 (PO I/1; 264,22–265,2 PARISOT).

⁽²³⁾ Clem. Alex., *Str.* 3.6.52.5–53.3 (GCS Clemens Alexandrinus II; 220,15–24 STÄHLIN – FRÜCHTEL). Cp. οἰκουροὺς in 4.20.128.1 (304,30 ST./FR.) and the trans. in G. BRAY (*1-2 Corinthians* [Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 7; Downers Grove 1999] 80): “wives ... as Christian sisters rather than as spouses” (from FC 85, 289).

be wives is likely given the fact that Peter, whom he views as an apostle, is with his wife to the end of her life. He also has a narrative in which Peter exhorts his wife to remember the Lord as she is led off to martyrdom⁽²⁴⁾. Clement believes the apostles observed celibacy if they were married.

One can trace Clement's approach through Byzantium, the Reformation, and the Counter Reformation into the modern era where it has played what can probably be described as the most important role in contemporary exegesis of all the ancient strands of interpretation. Recent literature on the role of women in early Christian mission has emphasized Clement's text⁽²⁵⁾.

IV. The Women Sought Instruction

One of the first who takes the approach that the women sought teaching from the apostles is Severian of Gabala (c. 400 C.E.). He writes that "He, by saying 'woman' and adding 'sister', makes clear what is fitting, decent⁽²⁶⁾, and pure (τὸ πρέπον καὶ σῶφρον καὶ καθαρὸν) for she who travels along, whether she was a wife (σύζυγος) or not. For it is clear that women traveled with Peter and the others yearning for their teaching"⁽²⁷⁾. Chrysostom (d. c. 407) also argues that women went around with the apostles to hear their teaching, in a text to

⁽²⁴⁾ *Str.* 7.11.63.3-64.2 (GCS Clemens Al. III; 46,1-9 STÄHLIN – FRÜCHTEL – TREU).

⁽²⁵⁾ E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York 1990) 201, n. 43 translates: "wives ... not as women with whom they had marriage relations but as sisters". C. OSIEK and D.L. BALCH, *Families in the New Testament World. Households and House Churches* (Louisville, KY 1997) 170. M.Y. MACDONALD, "Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity", *Early Christian Families in Context. An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (eds. D.L. BALCH – C. OSIEK) (Grand Rapids, MI 2003) 168.

⁽²⁶⁾ Used for young Christian wives in Tit 2,5. Cf J. L. KOVACS' translation (*I Corinthians*. Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators [Grand Rapids, MI 2005] 147): "fittingly chaste and pure".

⁽²⁷⁾ K. STAAB, *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche aus Katenenhandschriften gesammelt und herausgegeben* (NTAbh 15; Münster 1933) 256,4-7. Although "yokefellow" can have many senses (see the lexicons), here the context shows that it means "wife". See BAGD s.v. and K. BALDINGER, *Semantic Theory. Towards a Modern Semantics* (Oxford 1980) 15-17, 20-21, on how context usually selects a meaning from those available.

be discussed below in the section on περιόγειν⁽²⁸⁾. This tradition survived into the Reformation and the Counter Reformation and will play a crucial role in the argument to be developed below, although it has played little to no role in recent scholarship on the text of Paul.

V. The Women Provided Material Support

The dominant view for many years in the ancient church (both Latin and Greek) was that the women (not wives) provided material support for the apostles. Tertullian, Jerome, and Augustine developed it⁽²⁹⁾. Until the Reformation this was the usual interpretation, but it has survived well into the modern era with its inclusion in the *New Jerusalem Bible*'s footnote to the verse.

VI. The Women as Wives

This issue still needs to be addressed because it continues to appear in the contemporary exegesis of the verse. The apostles only had wives before the gospel according to Jerome⁽³⁰⁾. Protestant Reformers such as Calvin believed the women were wives⁽³¹⁾. In the era since the Enlightenment the tendency has been to see the women as wives, although there are some dissenters. Scholars who interpret the women as wives (with no further role mentioned) include: J.S. Semler, Johannes Weiss, Hans Lietzmann, Hans Conzelmann, W.F. Orr and J.A. Walter, Gordon Fee, C.K. Barrett and Jacob Kremer⁽³²⁾. Jerome

⁽²⁸⁾ Chrysostom, *Hom. lxxiii in Matt. 3* (PG 58; 677).

⁽²⁹⁾ Tertullian, *Mon. 8.5, 8.6* (CChr.SL 2; 1239,26-28; 1240,38-93 DEKKERS). Only Peter had a wife (*Mon. 8.4* [1239,21-22 DEKKERS]). Jerome, *Matth. 27,55* (302,413-17 BONNARD), Augustine, *Mon. 4.5-5.6* (CChr.SL 41; 538,3-539,24 ZYCHA). KOVACS provides much context for this comment (*1 Corinthians*, 146-147).

⁽³⁰⁾ Jerome, *Iou. 1,26* (PL 23; 256B-D) with reference to Matt 19,27.29 (reading "wives" in the last verse).

⁽³¹⁾ Cf, e.g., J. CALVIN, *Ep. Pauli ad Cor. I, 9,4* (eds. E. REUSS – A. ERICHSON – L. HORST) (CR 77; Braunschweig 1892, ¹1546) 439.

⁽³²⁾ D. IO. SAL. SEMLERI, *Paraphrasis in primam Pauli ad Corinthios epistolam* (Halle an der Saale 1770) 213-214. J. WEISS, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (MeyerK; Göttingen 1910) 234. H. LIETZMANN, *An die Korinther I-II* (HNT 9; expanded by W. G. KÜMMEL; Tübingen ⁵1969) 40-41. H. CONZELMANN, *1 Corinthians* (trans. J.W. LEITCH; ed. G.W. MACRAE) (Philadelphia, PA 1975) 153. W.F. ORR and J.A. WALTHER, *1 Corinthians* (AB 32; Garden City, NY 1976) 238. G. FEE, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI 1987)

Murphy-O'Connor, using the proverb "eat, drink, and be merry", attempts to explain Paul's decision to introduce wives into the discussion⁽³³⁾. The fact that Paul does not name the wives of the apostles probably indicates that they had a subordinate role (if any) in the mission⁽³⁴⁾.

VII. Partners in Mission in the Pauline Epistles

The literature on the role of women in early Christian mission has drawn a clear focus on missionary couples such Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16, 4; 1 Cor 16,19; Acts 18,2.26). Why has Priscilla, for example, not been defined as "providing material support" to Aquila in his work of mission? Here Paul is explicit. He calls them "my fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom 16,3 τοὺς συνεργούς μου ἐν Χριστῷ - Ἰησοῦ) who have risked their necks for him (Rom 16,4). They have a church in their home (Rom 16,5) and earlier had one in Asia (1 Cor 16,19)⁽³⁵⁾. Although the episode cannot be used to determine Paul's view of the couple, Luke willingly portrays Priscilla (along with Aquila) providing instruction about "the way" to Apollos in Acts 18,26. Both Luke and Paul mention Priscilla first in two texts (Acts 18,26, Rom 16,3). One also cannot assume the specific nature of their marriage. Margaret Y. MacDonald, for example, in a discussion of women as missionary partners in the Pauline churches, argues that it is possible that even those who understood themselves as "husband and wife" had "given up sex for the sake of the gospel"⁽³⁶⁾.

Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16,7; well known among the apostles) were also possibly couples active in the mission. Paul similarly mentions several pairs of women. Tryphaena and Tryphosa have

403. C.K. BARRETT, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC 7; Peabody, MA 1993) 203. KREMER, *Der Erste Brief*, 185.

⁽³³⁾ J. MURPHY – O'CONNOR, "The First Letter to the Corinthians", NJBC 798-815, esp. 806 with reference to BAUER, "Uxores", 99-100.

⁽³⁴⁾ See M. HENGEL, *Der unterschätzte Petrus. Zwei Studien* (Tübingen 2006) 209, n. 441, for the names given Peter's wife and children in Syriac writers. The name WEISS (*Der erste Korintherbrief*, 234) mentions (Concordia) ultimately depends on a forged volume, but here is not the place for such an investigation.

⁽³⁵⁾ Possibly Ephesus as in 1 Cor 16,8 (and Acts 18,26).

⁽³⁶⁾ MACDONALD, "Was Celsus Right?", 157-184, esp. 163 (with reference to 1 Cor 7,5.36-38).

“labored in the Lord” (Rom 16,12)⁽³⁷⁾. Euodia and Syntyche, although they are in need of reconciliation with each other, have “fought at Paul’s side in the gospel”. Clearly they are fellow workers in the mission (Phil 4,2-3). None of this is controversial, but the question certainly arises: “Does the existence of missionary couples and partners in the Pauline epistles illuminate 1 Cor 9,5”? The ambiguity exists because Paul does not explicitly define the role of the women whom he mentions in that verse. That ambiguity has helped create the different interpretive trajectories associated with the verse. Some of the women might have been more involved in the mission than others. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald make a telling comment on the history of interpretation: “The text should probably be taken as an acknowledgment of the importance of missionary partnerships to the success of the movement, rather than simply as a reference to a ‘domestic’ supporter of the husband’s missionary work as has traditionally be assumed from the patristic era to the modern day”⁽³⁸⁾.

VIII. Semantics

1. ἀδελφός and ἀδελφή

For additional illumination one needs to examine the semantics of Paul’s unusual expression, “sister woman” (ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα). First, some negative results. In the *TLG*, I have been unable to find the expression elsewhere in a text in which both words describe the same woman, and I have had the same experience with “brother man/person” (using ἀνὴρ and ἄνθρωπος). The only exception is a formulation in the vocative in Acts that the *NAB* translates as “countrymen” in an occurrence in which Paul addresses fellow Jews (Acts 23,1; ἀνδρες ἀδελφοί)⁽³⁹⁾. Peter uses it for fellow Christians in Acts 1,16. It gives little help since one can simply put a comma between the two words (“men, brothers”) and need not translate with

⁽³⁷⁾ On such missionary partnerships see M.R. D’ANGELO, “Women Partners in the New Testament”, *JFSR* 6 (1990) 65-86.

⁽³⁸⁾ C. OSIEK and M.Y. MACDONALD with J.H. TULLOCH, *A Woman’s Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN 2006) 27.

⁽³⁹⁾ This appears frequently in Acts (1,16; 2,29.37; 7,2.26; 13,15.26.38; 15,7.13; 22,1; 23,1.6; 28,17). C. LAPIDE, *Commentaria in omnes divi Pauli epistola. Comm. in I ep. ad Cor. cap. IX* (Antwerp 1665) 263 noticed this expression. For ἀδελφός used for people from the same country see BAGD s.v. § 3 (as in Rom 9,3).

“brother men”. But it is of some use since “brothers” is being combined with another noun. 4 Macc 8,19 also has the identical expression in the vocative. Classical authors do not combine the two words. A syntactic use in any case other than the vocative would be quite relevant.

Although it is a little far afield, the jurist Paulus (early III C.E.) apparently used *virum fratrum* (“man brother”) in the *Sentences* in an expression in which a woman, while being married, can receive her dowry back to help support a grown brother who is in need or a sister (*ut egentum virum fratrem sororemve sustineat*)⁽⁴⁰⁾. In that text I take *vir* to imply a grown man (i.e. not a young brother who would still be in the care of his family). The example, however, takes the exegete little further in illuminating Paul’s expression, but it does show that in Latin and in Greek the expression is quite rare.

The use of “brother” and “sister” in the Pauline epistles contributes some advance to exegetical research. As in the case of missionary partners, scholars who have investigated the question of women in early Christian mission have provided the greatest insights here. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, interpreting “brothers” in Phil 4,21 as “missionary co-workers”, understands the double accusative in 9,5 to mean that the women were also missionary co-workers⁽⁴¹⁾. Certainly the “brothers” of Phil 4,21 are associates of Paul, but it is difficult to show their exact role in the church (mission workers or just fellow Christians?) since Paul is silent about it. Mary Rose D’Angelo reads the text as “to bring along a sister as a wife, that is, to be accompanied by a wife who is also supported as a missionary”. She proceeds to argue that “sister”, like “brother”, can designate a partner in mission⁽⁴²⁾. Paul, designating himself as “apostle”, pairs himself with a “brother” in 1 Cor 1,1, 2 Cor 1,1, and Phlm 1 who is an assistant — the

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Paulus, *Sent. II apud Justinian, Dig. 23.3.73.1* (MOMMSEN – KRUEGER). T. MOMMSEN emended the expression (*virum*), but P. KRUEGER was willing to keep it. See the apparatus ad loc. This is the only usage I have found on the PHI CD ROM 5.3 (1) Latin texts (Packard Humanities Institute 1991). The *Sententiae* are probably a fourth century compilation.

⁽⁴¹⁾ SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *In Memory*, 172. Paul does, however, appear to place some kind of limit on their participation in the mission (233). Although BAUER (“Uxores”, 97) admitted the role of women in the Pauline mission, he was sceptical of the position that 9,5 is not marriage but a material and spiritual association for ministry.

⁽⁴²⁾ D’ANGELO, “Women Partners”, 73-74. Martha is engaged in ministry (*διακονία* = *διάκονος*) with her “sister” in Luke 10,39-40 (77-81).

equivalent of “sister” in 9,5⁽⁴³⁾. In addition, the “sister-wife/woman” was “not necessarily the conjugal mate of one’s pre-conversion life” according to Margaret MacDonald⁽⁴⁴⁾. She notes that one cannot be certain about the relationship since γυνή can mean “woman” and not “wife”⁽⁴⁵⁾.

In the case of 1 Cor 1,1 Sosthenes is “the brother”. Timothy is “the brother” in 2 Cor 1,1 and Phlm 1,1. It is clear that Timothy was a fellow worker with Paul (Rom 16,21 ὁ συνεργός — to take only one example). Presumably Sosthenes was also. These brothers are “assistants in mission”. The more difficult question is: Can the word itself bear that meaning? It is undisputed that it can mean fellow Christians (as in Rom 1,13 etc.)⁽⁴⁶⁾. In the cases mentioned above it could have the sense “brother” (as a sort of title), but may refer to an individual who is a missionary assistant⁽⁴⁷⁾. Only the larger context makes the reference certain.

The use of “sister” in Rom 16,1 is of equal importance. The context indicates that she is a “*diakonos*” (δίακονον) of the church in Cenchræ and helper or benefactor of Paul (Rom 16,2 προστάτις). Since Paul is willing to use the same word (*diakonos*) for himself (1 Cor 3,5; 2 Cor 3,6; 6,4; 11,23) and even for Christ (Rom 15,8), it seems unnecessary to restrict Phoebe’s role to “material support” of the church in Cenchræ. Again it is the context that shows that the reference of “sister” in Phoebe’s case is to a missionary assistant of Paul. MacDonald notes that Phoebe (Rom 16,1-2) was clearly a benefactor of Paul himself, and that the title “sister” in her case is the same as that used for missionary partners in 1 Cor 9,5⁽⁴⁸⁾. On the other hand, the use of “sister” in Phlm 2 for Apphia may be “sister as fellow Christian”.

⁽⁴³⁾ D’ANGELO, “Women Partners”, 74, 79.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ MACDONALD, “Was Celsus Right?”, 163.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ M.Y. MACDONALD, “Reading Real Women through the Undisputed Letters of Paul”, *Women & Christian Origins* (eds. R.S. KRAEMER and M.R. D’ANGELO) (New York – Oxford 1999) 199-220, esp. 202.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ BAGD s.v. § 2.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ See BALDINGER, *Semantic Theory*, 3-7, 246 for the distinction between sense and reference (using similar terminology). The classic example is: “evening star” and “morning star” have different senses but the same reference. In 1 Thess 3,2 (“brother”) Timothy is “our fellow worker in the gospel of Christ”.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ MACDONALD, “Was Celsus Right?”, 166. She compares the usage to “brother” for Paul’s partner Timothy in 2 Cor 1,1; Phlm 1, and 1 Thess 3,2. See also her discussion of “sister” for a missionary partner in “Reading”, 206 (and the partnership in Rom 16,15).

The conclusion is that one of the senses of ἀδελφή was probably a title — “sister”. Its reference in the case of such a use would be a missionary, a member of a missionary couple, or one of a group of missionaries. One is left with the impression that since the “sister women” of 1 Cor 9,5 accompany the apostles on their missionary journeys, the usage of “sister” to refer to a missionary assistant may be the correct reading of the verse.

2. περιάγειν or περιάγεσθαι

“Lead around” (περιάγειν or περιάγεσθαι) is also important for understanding the interpretive situation⁽⁴⁹⁾. Demosthenes uses the verb for leading around three slaves, and Diodorus Siculus uses it for Dionysus’ practice of taking a crowd of women with his army⁽⁵⁰⁾. Plutarch’s Marius took a Syrian prophetess named Martha around in a litter reverently⁽⁵¹⁾. None of these examples involves sexuality. For Greek texts, Bauer only appealed to an example where a sexual relationship was implied and erroneously concluded that the verb in 1 Cor 9,5 necessarily implies a marriage⁽⁵²⁾. One can certainly find such usages. According to Athenaeus, Philip of Macedon did not bring women with him to war, but Darius “led around” three hundred and sixty concubines⁽⁵³⁾. The most telling usage comes from several centuries after Paul. Chrysostom, in a homily on Genesis, describes Abraham’s statement to Sarah that if the Egyptians see him and know that he leads her around as wife, then they will probably take possession of her, thus fulfilling their almost maniacal lust, and will then kill him⁽⁵⁴⁾. Since Cephas/Peter was married and given

⁽⁴⁹⁾ This was seen by BAUER, “Uxores”, 101. He, for example, cites Juv. 1.122 (*praegnans et circumducitur uxor* “followed by a pregnant wife”) against Augustine’s argument that includes this phrase, “Nor did Paul say ‘take’ (*ducendi*) but ‘lead around’ (*circumducendi*)” in *Mon.* 4.5-5.6 (538,3-539,24 ZYCHA).

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Demosthenes, *Pro Phorm.* 45 καὶ τρεῖς παῖδας ἀκολούθους περιάγει. Diod. Sic. 2.38.6 ἱστοροῦσι δ’ αὐτὸν καὶ γυναικῶν πλήθος μετὰ τοῦ στρατοπέδου περιάγεσθαι.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Plutarch, *Marius* 17.2 καὶ γὰρ τινα Σύραν γυναικάκα, Μάρθαν ὄνομα, μαντεύεσθαι λεγομένην ἐν φορείῳ κατακειμένην σεμνῶς περιήγετο.

⁽⁵²⁾ BAUER, “Uxores”, 101. In Xen., *Cyr.* 2.2.28 Cyrus asks a captain if it is good that “you take this youth around with you?” (LSJ 1367b “have always by one” περιάγει τοῦτο τὸ μειράκιον).

⁽⁵³⁾ Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 13.5 ὅς περὶ τῶν ὄλων πολεμῶν τριακοσίας ἐξήκοντα περιήγετο παλλακάς.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Chrysostom, *Hom. xxxvi in Gen. 2* (PG 53; 334): Ἐὰν οὖν ἰδῶσί σε, καὶ γνῶσιν ὅτι καθάπερ γυναικάκα περιάγω σε ...

Chrysostom's casual use of the verb for Abraham's relationship to Sarah, it is not difficult to believe that the women were wives. The conclusion cannot be forced, however, given the diversity of uses of the verb. What the verb does imply is that the relationship of the apostles and the women was very close — creating the educational opportunity that Chrysostom noticed.

3. *Chrysostom and περιάγειν — The Women as Learners*

Chrysostom supplies an additional building block for the argument of this essay. In a homily on Matthew he describes the full inclusion of women in the Christian community by quoting Gal 3,28. He then mentions the upper room where both men and women were gathered together in an assembly that was of heaven (Acts 1,13-14; 2). After a reference to the purple goods dealer, he quotes Lydia's words in Acts 16,15 and adds: "Listen to the women who went around with the apostles, receiving male thought, Priscilla, Persis, and the others" (55). His choice of words is unfortunate (male!), but the principle seems nearly undeniable, unless the apostles kept the women away from them when they preached or taught, and I am aware of no such absurd claim in the history of interpretation of this text. Even some interpreters who do not see a role in the mission for the women have been willing to claim that they had a thirst for the apostolic teaching (56). Although it is fictional, the story of Thecla is an interesting comparison. After hearing Paul's teaching she ends up teaching the word herself as Paul had commanded her to do (57). The women of 9,5 would have heard, on frequent occasions, the apostles' proclamation and teaching.

IX. Greek Women:

The Relevance of Hipparchia and Other Philosophers

A famous example from the history of Greek philosophy confirms the principle that hearing a teacher can give one the ability to teach

(55) Chrysostom, *Hom. lxxiii in Matt. 3* (PG 58; 677): Ἀκούσατε τῶν γυναικῶν, αἱ περιῆγον μετὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων, ἀνδρεῖον ἀναλαβοῦσαι φρόνημα, τῆς Πρισκίλλης, τῆς Περσίδος, τῶν ἄλλων·

(56) Cf the section on Instruction and LAPIDE, *Commentaria*, 263 (disciples of a teacher who also provided material support) dependent upon Ambrosiaster, *Ad Cor. prima* 9,5 (CSEL 71/2, 98,7-11 VOGELS).

(57) *ActPI* 7, 41-42 (240-41; 267-68 LIPSIVS/BONNET).

others. The education of a convert to Cynic philosophy proceeded in this fashion. Hipparchia (III B.C.E.) “fell in love with the teachings and life of Crates” (ἦρα τοῦ Κράτητος καὶ τῶν λόγων καὶ τοῦ βίου)⁽⁵⁸⁾. She refutes the moral philosophy of an atheist who then mocks her by quoting a famous tragedian and by asking if she is the one who has left shuttles and loom. An epigram from the *Greek Anthology* describes her as one who did not want the “works of deep-robed women”. Instead, “My wallet is my staff’s traveling companion, and the double cloak that goes with them, the cover for my bed on the ground”⁽⁵⁹⁾. She must have done some “mission” traveling herself⁽⁶⁰⁾. Centuries later (II-III C.E.) in Mysia there is an inscription that mentions a philosopher named Magnilla, the daughter of a philosopher and wife of a philosopher (Μάγνιλλα[ν φιλό]/σοφον Μάγν[ου] / φιλοσόφου θυ[γα]/τέρα, Μηνίο[ν φιλο]/σ[όφ]ου γυ[ναῖκα])⁽⁶¹⁾. Surely she learned from her father and possibly from her husband, or possibly she taught him. These intimate relationships and the learning and teaching environment that they could imply for certain women call for a reevaluation of Clement’s tradition.

X. Clement, Ancient Households, and the Mission to Women

Carolyn Osiek and David Balch, in an illuminating discussion of Clement’s treatment of 1 Cor 9,5 (the apostles taking wives with them as sisters), argue that his view of the structure of a household does not reflect the situation of Asia Minor and Greece in Paul’s own day but

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Cf Diog. Laert. 6.96-8 and M. R. LEFKOWITZ and M. B. FANT, *Women’s Life in Greece & Rome. A Source Book in Translation* (Baltimore 1992) § 217. Crates tries to discourage marriage by showing her his old body, but she insists.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ *Anth. Graec.* 7.413 οὐλάς δὲ σκίπωνι συνέμπορος ἅ τε συνωδός / δίπλαξ καὶ κοίτας βλήμα χαμαιλεχέος. Trans. from LEFKOWITZ – FANT, *Women’s Life*, § 218. On Hipparchia see J.M. GARCIA GONZALEZ and P. P. FUENTES GONZALEZ, “Hipparchia (H 138)”, *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* (ed. R. GOULET) (Paris 2000) III, 742-750.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Two other pagan couples taught, but were not “missionaries”: Hypatia (IV-V C.E.) and Isidorus in Alexandria (Suidas, *Lexicon* Y § 166 [644,1-647,5 ADLER — the Suda believes she remained a virgin]), and Sosipatra (IV C.E.) and Eustathius in Asia (Eunapius, *Vita Soph.* 6.6.5-9.15 [28,4-35,24 GIANGRANDE]). Sosipatra had three children.

⁽⁶¹⁾ *IMT (IK Miletropolis)* LApollon/Milet § 2365 in the PHI CD ROM #7 Greek Documentary Texts (Packard Humanities Institute 1991-1996). Cf <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/>. For bibliography and a translation see LEFKOWITZ – FANT, *Women’s Life* § 221.

that of the late second century in Alexandria. Clement's picture also reflects Vitruvius' distinction between the structure of Greek and Roman houses⁽⁶²⁾. The situation may not be so clear. Vitruvius wrote in I B.C.E., so the distinction, at least for aristocratic Greeks who could afford such large homes, might be of some relevance for Paul's time⁽⁶³⁾. Cornelius Nepos (also of I B.C.E.) writes that

No Roman would hesitate to take his wife to a dinner party, or to allow the mother of his family to occupy the first rooms in his house and to walk about in public. The custom in Greece is completely different; a woman cannot appear at a party unless it is among her relatives; she can only sit in the interior of the house, which is called the women's quarters (*gynaecoonitis*); this no male can enter unless he is a close relation⁽⁶⁴⁾.

The wide-ranging use of *gynaecoonitis* (women's quarters) in Greek literature of all periods is another argument against limiting Clement's vision to "second century Alexandria"⁽⁶⁵⁾. Philo uses it of Gaius' survey of homes in Rome⁽⁶⁶⁾. Plutarch places Caesar's wife in the women's quarters⁽⁶⁷⁾. In that text a scandal occurred when a young man was found there with bad intentions.

⁽⁶²⁾ OSIEK – BALCH, *Families in the New Testament World*, 170, 6-10, 27-34 with reference to Vitruvius, *De arch.* 6.7.1-5 and Clement, *Str.* 3.6.52. MACDONALD, "Was Celsus Right?", 168) refers to the marriages in Clement (3.6.53.3) as "spiritual" and points out that Clement's view that women only ministered to other women was an acceptable division of labor for the end of the second century (cp. *ConstAp* 3.16.1-2 [SC 329; 154,1-156,13 METZGER] for a similar ministry of deaconesses).

⁽⁶³⁾ R. ALSTON, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (London – New York 2002) 82, however, includes four plans of Greek houses (from various periods), and none of them conforms to Vitruvius' idealized picture, nor does the plan of the house from Kellis illustrated in *Ibid.*, 106. He notes that "there was no 'standard Greek house plan'" (*Ibid.*, 81).

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Cornelius Nepos, *Vitae praef.* 6. *quem enim Romanorum pudet uxorem ducere in conuiuium? aut cuius non mater familias primum locum tenet aedium atque in celebritate uersatur? quod multo fit aliter in Graecia. nam neque in conuiuium adhibetur nisi propinquorum, neque sedet nisi in interiore parte aedium, quae gynaecoonitis appellatur, quo nemo accedit nisi propinqua cognatione coniunctus.* Trans. of LEFKOWITZ – FANT, *Women's Life*, § 209.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ 247 uses of the γυναικωνίτις in the *TLG*. It also appears in inscriptions from Delos (e.g. IG XI/2 § 204.32 [268 B.C.E.], a lease of the women's quarters of a house owned by a temple). Another synonym is ἡ γυναικεία (*gynaceum* in Latin).

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Philo, *Leg.* 358.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Plutarch, *Caes.* 9.3.

W. den Boer has done one of the most perceptive analyses of the use of this word (*gynaecoonitis*) in antiquity with relation to the famous text in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.55 where the term is apparently used with the meaning “wool-working shop”⁽⁶⁸⁾. The text of Celsus has been crucial in MacDonald’s recent investigation of the role of women in Christian mission⁽⁶⁹⁾. Celsus mentions the evangelistic efforts of woolworkers, cobblers and fullers (ἐριουργούς καὶ σκυτοτόμους καὶ κναφεῖς) and other uneducated crude individuals who in their own homes will say nothing in front of their older and more intelligent masters. Whenever they, however, “get ahold” (λάβωνται) of children and certain unintelligent women (γυναικῶν τινῶν σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀνοήτων) they try to teach them how to live. If they see the children’s teacher or the father approaching, they retreat to the wool-working shop, the cobbler’s shop, and the fuller’s shop (τὴν γυναικωνίτιν ἢ τὸ σκυτεῖον ἢ τὸ κναφεῖον) along with the women and children.

Although Celsus is probably thinking of the evangelistic efforts of men, lower class women (especially freedwomen) worked in numerous trades, including those that he mentioned⁽⁷⁰⁾. There were many shops where women worked, and some houses in many parts of the Mediterranean world included shops⁽⁷¹⁾. In late Hellenistic Delos

⁽⁶⁸⁾ W. DEN BOER, “Gynaecoonitis. A Centre of Christian Propaganda”, *VigChr* 4 (1950) 61-64. For the text see Origen, *C. Cels.* 3.55 (SVigChr 54; 196,16-197,7 MARCOVICH).

⁽⁶⁹⁾ MACDONALD, “Was Celsus Right?”, 157-184. For Celsus’ belief that Christians can only persuade the foolish see the discussion in J.G. COOK, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco Roman Paganism* (Tübingen 2000) 82-88.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ LEFKOWITZ – FANT, *Women’s Life*, §322-37 list many papyri and inscriptions. The trades include woolworker (§ 329). Cf IG II/2 § 1554 Face A Col. I.32 Φιλίστη ταλασι (Philiste “the spinner” in a manumission inscription). On the text see D.M. LEWIS, “Attic Manumissions”, *Hesperia* 28 (1959) 208-238. One could add the cobbler from IG III App. § 12 (Θέα ἡ σκυτοτόμος) or the fuller in P.Cair. Mich. 359 32.1393 (γνάφισ[σ]α). For other women who were fullers cf LSJ s.v. κνάφισσα. Vitruvius 6.7.2 describes the *gynaecoonitis* as the place where the *materfamilias* (mother of the family) sits with the women who work in wool (*in quibus matres familiarum cum lanificis habent sessionem*).

⁽⁷¹⁾ For Egypt cf R. ALSTON, *The City*, 62 (an *exedra* in a house in Egypt that might have been for a shop), 275 (many Oxyrynchus texts listing merchants). In Greece some houses also served as places of business. N. CAHILL, “Household Industry in Greece and Anatolia”, *Ancient Greek Houses and Households. Chronological, Regional and Social Diversity* (eds. B.A. AULT – L.C. NEVETT) (Philadelphia, PA 2005) 54-66 investigates (Classical era) domestic production at

there are hundreds of small structures called *tabernae* by archaeologists (possibly used for shops, workshops, production of food, storerooms or taverns), which have separate entrances from the street⁽⁷²⁾. They include housing (with its own entrance) on a mezzanine or upper level. Ancient Greek workshops such as those in Athens or Delos might have employed “extended family, hired labor or slaves”⁽⁷³⁾. Literary evidence from classical Greece indicates the presence of slaves in such workshops attached to houses⁽⁷⁴⁾. Presumably the apostles or their wives (if they were married) would have been able to easily do mission work in those contexts. Celsus confirms that later Christians indeed did head to the shops and workplaces for mission.

With regard to the *gynaeconitis*, one can only appeal to historical probability, but Clement’s tradition and the evidence from Vitruvius, Nepos, and other texts mentioned above are good support for the thesis that the women of 9,5 would have had certain mission opportunities denied the apostles themselves. This could include the areas in some homes construed as “off limits” to males. The existence of such areas is not dependent on the idealized house plan of Vitruvius.

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The force of the various steps in the argument outlined above strengthens the claim that the “sister women” contributed to the early Christian mission. Since Cephas/Peter was married and given the usage of “lead around”, many of the women were probably wives, but not necessarily all. Some of them might have chosen primarily to give material or domestic support to the apostles. All of the women, however, became well trained in apostolic teaching and, if they so

Olynthos (54: weaving) and Sardis (VI C.E.). B. TSAKIRGIS, “Living and Working Around the Athenian Agora: A Preliminary Case Study of Three Houses”, *Ancient Greek Houses*, 67-82 discusses three houses next to the Athenian Agora where a smith, sculptor, and cobbler lived and worked (Classical era).

⁽⁷²⁾ M. TRÜMPER, “Modest Housing in Late Hellenistic Delos”, *Ancient Greek Houses*, 119-139, esp. 120-122.

⁽⁷³⁾ CAHILL, “Household Industry,” 59-60.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ TSAKIRGIS, “Living and Working”, 69 with reference to Demosthenes 27.19, 26 (*In Aphob. I*) and Lysias 12.19 (*In Eratosth.*; 120 slaves who made shields).

chose, could have taught other people in the workplaces, “women’s quarters”, or other settings in the Mediterranean world.

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SUMMARY

The women of the apostles in 1 Cor 9,5 have posed a riddle in the history of interpretation. With few exceptions commentators over the last one hundred years have identified them as wives and dismissed the text in a few lines. Recent research on the role of women in early Christian mission has brought a fresh assessment, concluding that the women were missionary assistants to the apostles. This essay develops an extended argument to solidify the thesis using the history of interpretation, the nature of missionary partnerships in the Pauline epistles, semantics, some important parallels from the Greco-Roman world, and the nature of ancient households.