

Apphia: The Addressee of the Letter to Philemon

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The Epistle to Philemon is the shortest work in the entire *Corpus Paulinum* (it contains only 335 words in the Greek), although it is the most personal of St. Paul's epistles. Nonetheless, it provides important insight into the social situation in the first century AD and the resulting problems that the early Church was faced with. Of all the New Testament writings, it most explicitly deals with slavery, as a result of which it is very much consistent with St. Paul's teaching about the baptized as a community whose members are equal, regardless of their national origin, social status, or sex (see: Galatians 3 : 28; 1 Corinthians 12 : 13; Colossians 3 : 11, and Colossians 3 : 22–4 : 1).¹ At the time when the Epistle to Philemon was written, social relations structured as such were not obvious to everyone, as a salient trait of society during Greek and later Roman rule was its patriarchal nature, starting with the level of the family (*familia*). Power was entrusted to men, specifically the fathers of families (*pater familiaris*), while women occupied a subordinate position. The father's authority (*patria potestans, patria manus*) encompassed all the family members. He had power not only over the property, but also the life and death (*ius vitae necisque*) of all, both free persons and slaves, subordinate to him. Thus women who stayed in their parents' houses were subordinate to their fathers, and after their fathers' had died they came into the custody of legal guardians designated in their fathers' will or by their fathers' authority. However, once daughters married, their husbands became their guardians. It should be noted that in those times women spent most of their time at home, devoting themselves to housework and to raising their children. Women lacked civic rights and thus they did not participate in public life.²

1 Cf. A. Patzia, *Filemona, List do*, [in:] *Słownik teologii św. Pawła*, red. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, D. G. Reid, red. nauk. wyd. pol. K. Bardski, Warszawa 2010, p. 227–230.

2 For more on this topic, see: J. Carcopino, *Życie codzienne w Rzymie w okresie rozkwitu cesarstwa*, Warszawa 1960, p. 95–122; *Historia życia prywatnego od Cesarstwa Rzymskiego do*

The situation of women in Jewish communities, where the patriarchal family structure predominated, was similar.³

1. A Woman as the Addressee of the Epistle

What's surprising about the fact that a woman's name is present in the address of some letter? First, this is not any ordinary correspondence, but one of the scriptures that make up the canon of the New Testament. Second, Apphia is the only woman mentioned by name who appears as an addressee in this collection of books: "Paul, a prisoner for Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon, our beloved and our co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church at your house" (Philemon 1–2).⁴

As we can see, in addition to Timothy, the epistle's co-author is St. Paul, whom many feminists throughout the ages have considered to be the father of extreme anti-feminism, and even "the male chauvinist of all times." It should be added that these views continue to be present in various statements and writings up to today; they are especially supported by some representatives of so-called feminist theology.⁵ However, it is worth asking how much truth there is in these opinions about the figure of St. Paul and his teachings, and how much they result from misinterpretation. Thus when pondering these topics, it is worth dealing with such topics as patriarchal culture and, respecting the principles of scientific objectivity, analyzing the Biblical pericopes that programmatically assign women particular roles in family and community life, especially 1 Corinthians 14 : 34 and the so-called "Household Codes" (Ephesians 5 : 22 ff.; Colossians 3 : 18 ff.). Such an approach will undoubtedly lead to the new discovery of the roles and significance of female figures in the Bible.⁶

roku tysięcznego, red. P. Veyne, G. Duby, vol. 1, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 2005, p. 18–228; L. Winniczuk, *Ludzie, zwyczaje i obyczaje starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu*, Warszawa 2006, p. 195–196; M. Erlich, *Instytucje patriarchalne małżeństwa i rodziny biblijnej*, Brzezia Łąka 2013, p. 51–53.

3 Cf. J. Eisenberg, *Kobieta w czasach Biblii*, Gdańsk 1996, p. 78–96; B. Pawlaczyk, *Matka i dziecko w świecie Biblii*, Poznań 2013, p. 90.

4 All Biblical citations come from: New American Bible, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_INDEX.HTM.

5 Cf. K. Romaniuk, *Święty Paweł o kobietach*, Warszawa 1995, p. 5–7.

6 Cf. R. Bartnicki, *Ewangelie synoptyczne geneza i interpretacja*, Warszawa 2003, p. 331–342.

2. St. Paul: A Man of His Time and a Particular Revolutionary

St. Paul, the Apostle of Nations, was a Hellenized Jew from the Diaspora. He came from Tarsus in Cilicia, a large and wealthy city that had been Greek for centuries, where he received a Greek education, as attested by his use of rhetoric and references to philosophy. Knowing Greek thinking and culture as well as the binding forms of social life, St. Paul probably moved around the territories of the Greek *polis*, making use of his experiences for the purpose of the enculturation of Christian teachings in the Greco-Roman world.⁷ In light of the culture in which the apostle lived and the contemporary dominant views on women, at first glance St. Paul frequently appears to be a figure that belittles the role of women or is an advocate of their subordination.⁸ In this context, the following words of the Apostle of Nations are most frequently cited: “[W]omen should keep silent in the churches, for they are not allowed to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law says. But if they want to learn anything, they should ask their husbands at home. For it is improper for a woman to speak in the church” (1 Corinthians 14 : 34–35).

How, then, should we approach the evident contradiction between the above-mentioned prohibition and the fact that in the early years of Christianity many women actively participated in the life of the Church and, what’s more, were among St. Paul’s close collaborators (for example, Priscilla in Acts 18 : 1 ff., Lidia in Acts 16 : 11–14 ff., and Phoebe in Romans 16 : 1 ff.)? At the same time, it should be noted that the most restrictive interpretation of these words cannot present Paul as a person more conservative than the culture in which he lived. Thus it is worth becoming familiar with the cultural context of that age, which will result in an appropriate illumination of the matters presented by the apostle.

It is worth noting that in antiquity, it was taken for granted that listeners interrupted their teachers and asked them questions. However, if these questions reflected a lack of familiarity with the subject matter, such interruptions were not considered rude. Because women were usually much less educated than men, which was related to their being brought up to be thrifty wives and mothers, St. Paul’s statement contains an improvised solution: they should not

7 More information on this topic can be found in: M. Wojciechowski, *Wpływy greckie w Biblii*, Kraków 2012, p. 255–262.

8 Cf. C. S. Keener, *Mężczyzna i kobieta*, [in:] *Słownik teologii św. Pawła*, op. cit., p. 466–475.

ask questions. The apostle does not limit himself to this solution, because he also presents long-term solutions in which he notes that men should educate women at home. Although, as C. S. Keener writes, most men in that time had little confidence in the intellectual capabilities of their wives, St. Paul is more progressive with regards to this topic. What's more, the long-term solutions proposed by him confirm his confidence in women's abilities in intellectual affairs, not making them solely the domain of men.⁹

St. Paul's above-mentioned recommendation is also considered to be one of the so-called corrective texts, which refer to the specific circumstances of local communities that required improvements. In the case under discussion, they concerned the situation in Corinth, where confusion and perplexity experienced by the faithful during congregations were serious problems. This was also partly due to women who started to come to prayer services without covering their heads, which was seen as a sign of the rejection of cultural and religious mores and thus were a problem for the entire community. Thus Paul says that a woman praying and prophesying in a public place should keep her head covered (see: 1 Corinthians 11 : 5. 13. 16). Another problem was the inappropriate expression of the gift of prophesying and speaking in tongues (see: 1 Corinthians 14 : 26–31). Thus it is very likely that the recommendation for women to remain silent was related to their participation in the inappropriate expression of those gifts. This probably was related to their overenthusiastic and chaotic statements, noise that made it impossible for others to pray and express themselves; rather than encouraging prayer, they discouraged it and caused egotism to grow at the cost of the common good. Paul thus seeks a solution to what confuses the life of the Christian community, and especially public worship and preaching of the Gospel.¹⁰

Another similar sounding prohibition of public teaching related to women's obligation to remain silent and learn can be found in 1 Timothy 2 : 10–15. Likewise, St. Paul's harshness towards women in Ephesus, where Timothy was the bishop, was also related to pastoral issues for which women were responsible. This included the lives of some women who were inclined to debauchery, idleness, gossip, and inquisitiveness (see 1 Timothy 5 : 6. 12 ff.).¹¹

9 Cf. C. S. Keener, *Mężczyzna i kobieta*, op. cit., p. 473.

10 Cf. W. C. Kaiser Jr., P. H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, M. T. Brauch, *Trudne fragmenty Biblii*, konsultacja nauk. wyd. pol. W. Chrostowski, Warszawa 2011, p. 553–556.

11 Cf. K. Romaniuk, *Święty Paweł o kobietach*, p. 31–37.

Meanwhile, St. Paul's view that "there is not male and female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3 : 28) is considered to be revolutionary with regards to the context of the role of women in ancient society. In the order of *in ordine redemptoris*, there is no difference with regards to one's sex, because only the fact that we are the children of one God in Jesus Christ matters. Without a doubt, this equation influenced the perspective on social matters, especially since the Epistle to the Galatians is St. Paul's response to the polemics between Pagan-Christians and Judeo-Christians. One should be reminded that the latter believed that despite the coming of Christ, in order to achieve justification before God one still had to follow the Mosaic Law, especially with regards to circumcision. Such an approach also shed light on the place and role of women in the early Church. Most likely as a consequence of the professing of the Mosaic Law, their role in the liturgical congregations was limited, and they were completely prohibited from participating in them during menstruation. By claiming that "there is not male and female," St. Paul rejects such a state of affairs and stands in defense of the latter, because such a division is unacceptable in the world of the new creation.¹²

3. The Authors and Addressees of the Epistle to Philemon

A reading of the first sentences of the epistle demonstrates that it was written by two co-authors, Paul and Timothy, and was directed to three addressees mentioned by name and the entire Church that gathered in the house of Philemon (Philemon 1–2). The first of the addressees is Philemon, whom Paul calls a brother and collaborator. In addition to him, he also mentions Aphia and Archippus, who is referred to by the Greek term *systratiōtes*, which literally means the same as "fellow soldier," "fellow warrior," and "comrade in arms."¹³ The number and gender in the list of addressees allows one to presume that despite the fact that "you" is the predominant form of addressing Philemon, it is not a private letter, albeit a public one. One can also notice that the appeal in the opening and closing salutations, which are the framework of the letter, are formulated in the plural form and concern the entire Church congregating in Philemon's house (Philemon 1 : 3. 22. 25).

12 Cf. K. Romaniuk, *Święty Paweł o kobietach*, p. 67–72.

13 R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, Warszawa 1997, p. 588.

Apphia and Archippus were without a doubt distinguished members of the domestic Church whom St. Paul addressed. More detailed questions concerning Apphia's role are dependent on the entire Epistle to Philemon.

As has already been mentioned above, Apphia is the only woman mentioned by name who appears as the addressee of a letter in the New Testament. Her name is of Phrygian origin and means the same as "kind," "sweet," or "beloved." This name is often found in documents from that age originating in western Asia Minor, and even in Palestine.¹⁴ In the letter, she is referred to by one word: "sister" (Gr. *Adelfē*), although this is not a term that necessarily refers to blood relations. Rather, it should be understood that it refers to spiritual relations, to relations of the spirit.¹⁵ Such an interpretation is suggested by analogous wording referring both to Timothy (Philemon 1) and Philemon (Philemon 7), who are referred to by the term "brother" *adelphos*). These words are clearly used by St. Paul to characterize his close collaborators. Also Phoebe from the Letter to the Romans is referred to as a sister (Romans 16 : 1).

The term "sister" does not unambiguously associate Apphia with any of the men mentioned in the Epistle to Philemon, neither as a wife, mother, biological sister, nor daughter.¹⁶ It only emphasizes that she is an important person in her community. It should also be noted that in other places in the New Testament that refer to the Church congregating in the house of specific people, such as Priscilla's and Aquila's husbands, the plural form is used: "their house" (Romans 16 : 5; 1 Corinthians 16 : 19). In the Epistle to Philemon, we do not have such wording, which gives no basis for considering Apphia to be Philemon's relative, his wife, or his sister. The contents of the letter also do not allow one to infer that Archippus and Philemon are relatives. Thus as a result of the above statements one can conclude that Philemon headed the community that gathered in his house, while Apphia and Archippus were its distinguished members, as attested to by their fraternal relations.

It should be added that the domestic Churches gave the early Christians fairly safe and calm spaces for undertaking their religious practices in communion, that is celebrating the liturgy (Acts 16 : 15), saying prayers (Acts 12 : 12), preaching God's Word (Acts 16 : 32; 20 : 20), or reading Sacred Scripture and the letters of the apostles (1 Thessalonians 5 : 27; Colossians 4 : 16). Thanks to

14 Cf. J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, M. W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, red. nauk. wyd. pol. W. Chrostowski, Warszawa 2005, p. 499.

15 R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 9.

16 Cf. A. Patzia, *Filemona, List do*, op. cit., p. 227.

this they became centers of Christian life, centers of missionary activity and evangelization as well as places where the faithful were integrated into one family of believers in Christ. And although the social and economic structures at the time were maintained, changes in interpersonal relations occurred thanks to the domestic Churches, because they began to make principles of equality before God and brotherhood binding.¹⁷

4. The Social Situation of Women in Rome's Southern Asian Provinces

It is worth noting that although during the period under discussion women in the cities of Roman Asia and Macedonia enjoyed more freedom than anywhere else, they did not enjoy the social liberty that the law guarantees them today.¹⁸ Biblical evidence for such a situation of women in the area under discussion includes St. Paul's meeting with Lydia in Philippi, one of the most important cities in Macedonia: "One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth,¹⁹ from the city of Thyatira,²⁰ a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. After she and her household had been baptized, she offered us an invitation, 'If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my home,' and she prevailed on us. As we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl with an oracular spirit, who used to bring a large profit to her owners through her fortune-telling" (Acts 16 : 14–15).

17 Cf. J. M. Czerski, *Literatura epistolarna Nowego Testamentu*, part 1: *Listy protopawłowe*, Opole 2013, p. 245–246.

18 It should be emphasized that one cannot speak about the Greek woman or about the woman of the Greco-Roman world in general terms because the status of the woman during the eighth century BC differed from that during the fifth century BC, and was completely different from that at the turn of the ages. This resulted from the fact that life was different during each of these epochs, which was influenced by distinct socio-political and economic circumstances, changing traditions, and foreign influences - cf. L. Winniczuk, *Kobiety świata antycznego*, Warszawa 1973, p. 5–6.

19 For more on purple cloth, see: A. M. Wajda, *Szkarłat i purpura w Biblii*, „Studia Leopoliensia” 5 (2012), p. 123–130.

20 In that time, Thyatira was an important center for the textile and dyeing industries located near an important road that connected Pergamon with Sardis - cf. *Słownik tła Biblii*, red. J. I. Packer, M. C. Tenney, red. nauk. wyd. pol. W. Chrostowski, Warszawa 2007, p. 581.

Macedonia was one of the regions in which women were given a more significant role in religious matters, which undoubtedly helped St. Paul's collaborators to occupy important positions in their communities, which can be seen in the example of Lydia, who along "with her household had been baptized" by the apostle. This provokes several questions. First, what does the expression "she and her household had been baptized" mean? Whom did this household encompass? Lydia's husband, children, and slaves? What role did Lydia's household play in the lives of the Christians of Philippi?

In Acts 16 : 13, we read that, having left the local jail, Paul and Silas visited Lydia, saw her brothers, comforted them, and left. In particular, the reference to these brothers makes one think that this house served as a place for meeting of the local community and was one of many early Christian domestic Churches.²¹ As has already been mentioned, Philemon's house in Colossae²² served an analogous function. According to Joachim Gnilka, this is supported by the dominant position of the household's suzerain, as well as by the solidarity of its inhabitants. Others also joined the household that had been baptized. Such a household gave a feeling of security in a hostile environment representing divergent socio-religious views. It also created the possibility for getting to know each other, breaking down social barriers, showing each other mutual concern, and giving courage. On numerous occasions, the suzerain of the household also headed the domestic Church. It turns out that even a woman could be such a suzerain, as seen in the example of Colossians 4 : 15, in which this function was performed by a Nympha (in the translation of the Polish Millennium Bible, "Nympha" is a man).²³ Thanks to this reference and taking into consideration the relationship between the Letter to the Colossians and Epistle to Philemon that exegetes try to see, Apphia's "privileged" position as the addressee of the latter appears in a completely different light.

Meanwhile, in Romans 16 : 1–2, St. Paul recommends the deliverer of his letter, Phoebe, a diaconissa of the Church in Kechries, who was a "benefactor"

21 Cf. K. Romaniuk, *Święty Paweł o kobietach*, p. 56–60.

22 Most exegetes reference the concurrence of the names in Philemon and Colossians (Archippus in Philemon 1 : 2 and Colossians 4 : 17; Onesimus and Philemon 1 : 10 and Colossians 4 : 9), traditionally giving the location of the Christian community of the addressees of the Epistle to Philemon in Colossae, but they have also proposed other locations, such as Lycos on the road from Pergamon to Sardis or Pergamon - cf. W. Rakocy, *Paweł Apostoł. Chronologia życia i pism*, Częstochowa 2008, p. 306–328; A. Patzia, *Filemona, List do*, op. cit., p. 228; J. M. Czerski, *Literatura epistolarna Nowego Testamentu*, part 1: *Listy protopawłowe*, op. cit., 340–341.

23 Cf. J. Gnilka, *Paweł z Tarsu. Apostoł i świadek*, Kraków 2001, p. 235–236.

(Gk. *Prostatis*)²⁴ to many. In antiquity, this term referred to patrons, including women. This is suggested by the fact that she owned a house in which the Church community gathered and performed the service of the Word of God. Priscilla, known as Prisca, was among St. Paul's most important female collaborators; she was mentioned alongside her husband Aquila, which may have been the cause of her higher social status (Romans 16 : 3–4).²⁵

Extra-Biblical sources also confirm the significant role of woman at the altar under discussion. One of them speaks of Ruffina of Smyrna, who in the second century AD held the title of archisynagogue and possessed real power in that community. The inscription that mentions her also says that she built a lavish tomb for her freedmen and for the children she had brought up. This confirms that she was a wealthy woman and certainly belonged to one of the most important families in Smyrna, while her wealth and social status caused her to act completely independently. It should be added that the *archisynagogos* stood at the head of the Jewish community and played the role of the superior of the synagogue. This term also appears in the New Testament, in the Gospel according to St. Mark 5 : 22 to describe Jairus, as well as in Luke 13 : 14, where the archisynagogue who is not mentioned by name is offended that Jesus healed on the Sabbath. There are also references in Acts of the Apostles to archisynagogues as people performing religious duties in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13 : 15; 42) and in Corinth (Acts 18 : 8; 17). The duties of the archisynagogues included reading the Torah in the synagogue, dealing with the law, summoning to read Sacred Scriptures, heading the synagogal liturgy, and celebrating holidays. They not only held religious functions, but administrative ones as well: summoning forth and heading congregations of the community. Furthermore, they were expected to give a financial contribution to the life of the local community; it was no coincidence that this function was performed by wealthy people who belonged to the social and financial elites.²⁶

24 Cf. R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 533.

25 Cf. C. S. Keener, *Mężczyzna i kobieta*, op. cit., p. 472.

26 Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w europejskiej części Cesarstwa Rzymskiego*, Kraków–Mogilany 2013, p. 98–103.

5. The Treatment of Women in Households in Antiquity

The very structure of society in antiquity opposed men's perception of women as their potential equals. In households, men always were the ones with power. Roman law gave the male head of the family (*pater familiaris*) complete power over his wife, children, and slaves. Throughout the entire Greco-Roman era, an attitude of quiet subordination was considered to be one of the most important virtues of women (see: Sirach 26 : 14–16; 30 : 19; Greek marital contracts)²⁷.

In relation to this, the question of what the basis for precisely that division of roles and duties in the family in antiquity and, using the terminology of today's feminists, lack of equality, arises. Without a doubt, one of the causes of this was the practice of marriages between older men and adolescent girls, which was quite popular in those times. It should be added that, theoretically, the minimum age for getting married in those times was very young. Men were required to be fourteen, and women – twelve. As has been already mentioned, in the case of men this minimum age was shifted, especially since they had before them their education and military service. Meanwhile, the fact that girls were married at a very young age is verified by Pliny the Younger in Letter V 16, in which he laments the death of the fourteen-year-old daughter of Fundanus, for whom the wedding dress and expenses were being prepared. The mentioned disproportions in the age of the newlyweds frequently caused men to consider their wives, who frequently had just reached puberty, to be unintelligent and thus obliged to become subordinate to them. It should also be added that in that era family life was regulated by the so-called “household codes,” which advised their male readers on how to properly exercise their authority over their wives and other household members.²⁸

St. Paul also writes about the subordination of wives: “Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord” (Colossians 3 : 18). However, right after directing this summons to women, he directs the following words to their husbands: “Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them” (Colossians 3 : 19). Kazimierz Romaniuk explains that the instruction to husbands is more binding than that directed towards wives. He says that to love is certainly something more than simply being subordinate, while to

27 Cf. C. S. Keener, *Mężczyzna i kobieta*, op. cit., p. 470.

28 Cf. L. Winniczuk, *Ludzie, zwyczaje i obyczaje starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu*, op. cit., p. 198; C. S. Keener, *Mężczyzna i kobieta*, op. cit., p. 470.

avoid bitterness means to be tactful, gentle, and tender. Romaniuk considers this instruction to be clear evidence of the equality that Paul demanded of spouses.²⁹

The above citations and their continuation: “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged. Slaves, obey your human masters in everything, not only when being watched, as currying favor, but in simplicity of heart, fearing the Lord” (Colossians 3 : 20–22) make up St. Paul’s “family code.” He presents in three known, basic categories: the relationship between husbands and wives, that between children and fathers, and that between slaves and their masters. Wives, children, and slaves are to be subordinate. Thanks to such an expression, the Apostle of Nations tones down the cultural and social objections to the message of the Gospel, which somehow would have violated the contemporary rules of the functioning of the family. At the same time, they indicate a completely different dimension of that subordination, which from that point is to be voluntary because of the Lord. What’s more, St. Paul also requires subordination on the part of the *pater familiaris*, in which he indicates the clear difference between his views and the conviction commonplace in antiquity that the man of the house was the lord of the house and was not subordinate to anyone. At the same time, in his polemic with the family codes, the apostle is far from admonishing the *pater familiaris* on how to govern his wife, children, and slaves; he avoids all demands for how to govern, instead asking men to love their wives and be mild in punishing their children. Yet St. Paul remained a man of the culture in which he lived, because he also asked wives and slaves to be subordinate. At the same time, it is difficult to consider his word as the language of the “household code” of the time, because in his way he changed the approach to patriarchal marriage or slavery, which were fundamentals of the authority of *pater familiaris* and clearly were part of his teaching.³⁰ The aftermath of this approach is that we can plainly say that European culture and the social roles of women in it grow out of two roots, one of which is the tradition of Greco-Roman antiquity, and the other the Judeo-Christian perception of the world.³¹

29 Cf. K. Romaniuk, *Święty Paweł o kobietach*, p. 26.

30 Cf. C. S. Keener, *Mężczyzna i kobieta*, op. cit., p. 471–472.

31 For more on this topic, see: M. Bogucka, *Gorsza pleć. Kobieta w dziejach Europy od antyku po wiek XXI*, Warszawa 2005, p. 13–28.

Conclusion

Although at first glance mentioning Apphia as among the addressees of the Epistle to Philemon may be surprising, as it is unique amongst all the epistolary literature of the New Testament, referring to this fact in the context of other New Testament references to the role of women in the first Christian communities makes it more comprehensible. The letter is an example of the continuation and realization of the thinking of St. Paul expressed in Galatians 3 : 28, among others, which describes the equality of all, not only slaves, but also women, in Christ.

Abstract

Apphia: The Addressee of the Letter to Philemon

Mentioning Apphia as an addressee of the Letter to Philemon is an important part of considering women's duties in the early Christian communities. It turns out, that in spite of the role as housewives and mothers frequently assigned to them, some of them became also close and important co-workers of St. Paul. Therefore, contrary to certain opinions of feminist theologians, the Apostle of Nations seems to be the least chauvinist writer of his age. In addition to Apphia, who undoubtedly played an important role in the life of community gathering at Philemon's home, it is also necessary to mention Priscilla (Acts 18 : 1 ff.), Lydia (Acts 16 : 11–14 ff.) and Phoebe (Romans 16 : 1 ff.). They were St. Paul's closest collaborators. The service of these women shows that thanks to Christianity, contemporary social divisions had been overcome. The divisions have completely lost their significance or have changed their character, due to overworking them in the spirit of Gospel.

Keywords: Apphia; addressee; Letter to Philemon; equal rights

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