

JESUS AND THE ADULTERESS

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Cover: Pieter Brueghel II
Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery

The Case for John 7:53-8:11

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Preface



In recent years some well-intentioned evangelical scholars have proposed that John 7:53-8:11 should be removed from the text of the Gospel of John. The same scholars who present themselves as experts on the subject have displayed a low (sometimes *very* low) level of familiarity with the evidence that pertains to the question of the genuineness or spuriousness of John 7:53-8:11. Very frequently when I have read commentaries on the Gospel of John it seemed that the comments about John 7:53-8:11 amounted to little more than a creative rephrasing of what the late Bruce Metzger wrote about it over 40 years ago.

Research on the episode about Jesus and the adulteress has advanced significantly since 1975. When the New King James Version was made in 1982, a footnote stated that these verses “are present in over 900 manuscripts.” In light of subsequent research, the NKJV’s note needs to be updated: the account about Jesus and the adulteress is in 1,503 Greek manuscripts.

If you have depended upon commentaries by writers whose work is littered with inaccuracies, or who fail to even correctly identify which verses are in the disputed passage, I encourage you to approach this little book with a determination to be open to the idea that your professors and trusted commentators have fumbled badly regarding this particular subject.

If you have noticed that your favorite commentator has referred you to Bruce Metzger's outdated comments from *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, or slightly rephrased them, I encourage you to be open to the idea that the commentator did not do as much independent research as he should have.

If you have listened to lectures by professors (whether from Dallas, New Orleans, Wheaton, Princeton, or elsewhere) who, after pointing out unusual features in manuscripts involving John 7:53-8:11 have proceeded to misinterpret those features (as Dr. Daniel Wallace has repeatedly done), I implore you to not be swayed by any badly misinformed consensus that is the result of such mistakes.

Please seriously consider the possibility that for decades, textual critics have approached this subject without crucial information which, had they possessed it and understood it, would have compelled them to regard John 7:53-8:11 as

sacred Scripture, and as an integral part of the Gospel of John, instead of dismissing it as a spurious anecdote that floated into different locations in the Gospels.

Many Christians accept John 7:53-8:11 as authoritative Scripture because it has been declared authoritative by their denomination's leadership, or because of longstanding tradition. In this book the genuineness of John 7:53-8:11 will be affirmed for a scientific reason: because it was part of the text of the gospel composed by John the beloved disciple in the first century of Christendom.

I make no appeal to sentiment nor tradition. The authoritative text of holy Scripture did not become the holy text of Scripture merely because a lot of people said, "I like how this passage edifies me," or "I like this passage because my great-grandmother liked it." It is the conviction of the author that its right to be in the Gospel of John stands or falls on whether or not John wrote it.

After sorting through the external and internal evidence, I have concluded that John 7:53-8:11 is genuine – and thus the primary task of this book is to account for the evidence that supports the opposite conclusion.



Chapter One:
Some Background About Larger Issues:
The Early Texts of the Christian Church

Some scholars have attempted to account for the existence of the story of Jesus and the adulteress as if it originated in the Western transmission-stream – a transmission-line which is often described as if it is a haven for all sorts of expansions and embellishments. In the fourth edition of *The Text of the New Testament* – a textbook which enjoys a near-monopoly in American seminaries where New Testament textual criticism is taught – Bruce Manning Metzger and Bart Denton Ehrman tell their readers that “*The chief characteristic of Western readings is fondness for paraphrase,*” and that in the Western Text, “*Words, clauses, and even whole sentences are freely changed, omitted, or inserted.*” (See page 227 of *The Text of the New Testament*, fourth edition.)

When Metzger and Ehrman made that statement, they were recycling material which first appeared in 1881 in Hort’s *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*, on page 122 (section 173): “*The chief and most constant characteristic of the Western reading is a love of paraphrase. Words, clauses, and even whole*

sentences were changed, omitted, and inserted,” etc. This is almost plagiarism. Obviously this description of the Western Text did not begin with Metzger or Ehrman. It originated with Hort as part of his case for almost always adopting the contents of two fourth-century manuscripts (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus) when they agreed. This was one of three ingredients in the foundation of Hort’s approach – the approach that produced a compilation which is almost the same as the base-texts of the ESV, NIV, NLT, and other modern English versions:

(1) Regard the Byzantine Text (which is supported by the vast majority of Greek manuscripts, and which Hort conceded to have existed in the late 300s) as a combination of Western and Alexandrian readings.

(2) Regard the Western Text as a thoroughly embellished text (whenever it is longer than the Alexandrian Text).

(3) Regard the Alexandrian Text – the last man standing, so to speak, after the Byzantine and Western forms are eliminated from contention – as congruent to the original text.

Instead of concluding that the shortest text (found in the fourth-century manuscripts Vaticanus and Sinaiticus) is comparable to a ship that has been through storms and which has lost

portions of its hull, Hort promoted the idea that the Western Text is comparable to a ship's hull that has become encrusted with barnacles. As for the Byzantine Text, Hort regarded it as a recension made sometime in 250-300 with the use of manuscripts that displayed Alexandrian readings and Western readings. Hort decreed that distinctly Byzantine readings, without support from the manuscripts that represent the Alexandrian or Western text-forms, "must be at once rejected."

There is no way that Hort could seriously propose such a transmission-model today. Distinctly Byzantine readings have been found in early papyri, such as Papyrus 45 (several distinct Byzantine readings are in its text of Mark 6 and 7). Even Papyrus 66, which is often described as Alexandrian, has distinctly Byzantine readings in John 10:19 and 10:31. The documentation of dozens of early Byzantine readings accumulated by Harry Sturz, and published in 1984 in *The Byzantine Text-type & New Testament Textual Criticism*, demolished Hort's transmission-model and removed its foundation.

Sturz's data requires that *if* the Byzantine Text is the result of a recension undertaken in the late 200s, its editor had access to manuscripts which displayed not only the Alexandrian Text and the Western Text, but also a third ancient form of

text, which one might call the Proto-Byzantine Text, and the editor frequently preferred readings in the Proto-Byzantine Text which were not in the Alexandrian and Western copies. In which case, Hort's proposal to automatically reject distinctly Byzantine readings completely loses its impetus.

Such a theory would not require that every Byzantine reading must be ancient. Hort isolated eight readings in the Byzantine Text which he regarded as confections – combinations of Alexandrian and Western readings. This demonstrated, he claimed, that the Byzantine Text is derivative of the other two text-forms. However, dismissing the entire Byzantine Text because it contains eight readings which appear to be late is comparable to detecting eight barnacles on a ship's hull and concluding that the ship must have been built when the barnacles became attached. At most – setting aside the questions of whether or not every reading that Hort claimed to be a confection really *is* a confection, and setting aside the question of what to do with the confections we find in Sinaiticus, in Vaticanus, and in early papyri – the confections imply that the Byzantine Text is a stratified text, containing some relatively late embellishments and liturgical adjustments, but essentially echoing a very early form of the text that was widely used by the end of the 200s, albeit not much in Egypt.

Such a scenario would explain why the Byzantine Text – or, at least, a text-form that is far more Byzantine than it is anything else – has such widespread support in the late 300s and early 400s. The more we look – in the Gothic version (c. 350), in the Peshitta (late 300s), in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa (335-395), of Basil of Caesarea (330-379), of Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 320-403), in the text of Matthew in Codex W, and so forth – the more we find an essentially Byzantine Text flourishing in the late 300s, and flourishing in multiple locales. Hort's theory would effectively require that very many bishops, the heirs of a tradition in which their predecessors lost their lives rather than hand over their manuscripts of sacred Scripture to Roman persecutors, must have improbably set aside their own manuscripts, and willingly embraced a newly imported text-form in which novelties met them on every page. The alternative is that they simply kept using the same form of the text that had been handed down to them.

In one particular locale, however, a text-form of the Gospels was perpetuated which resembles the sort of amalgamation that Hort imagined the Byzantine Text to be: the Caesarean Text. Hort did not have the benefit of Kirsopp Lake's research on this text-form; a better grasp of its character would have changed Hort's

transmission-model. Although the primary Greek manuscripts which support the Caesarean Text of the Gospels are relatively late (its flagships are the medieval minuscules 1 and 1582), they appear to descend from an ancestor-manuscript made in the 400s, and in some respects their text aligns with the text used by Origen in the 200s. (Some Armenian manuscripts, echoing the Armenian translation as it existed in the 430s, frequently support Caesarean readings. Hort, unfortunately, knew next to nothing about the Armenian version, and many subsequent researchers have followed his example. In the latest edition of *The Text of the New Testament* its description amounts to less than a full page.)

A few relevant points may be drawn from this review of early forms of the text of the Gospels:

(1) A lack of manuscript-evidence from the 100s and 200s for a text-type does not imply that the text-type did not exist in those centuries. Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian used the Western Text (as Metzger and other textual critics acknowledge), but we have no substantial Greek manuscripts that represent the Western Text of the Gospels until the 400s or 500s, when Codex Bezae was made. The lack of Byzantine manuscripts from the 100s and 200s merely means what the lack of Western manuscripts from

the 100s and 200s means: that the Byzantine and Western texts were not popular in Egypt, the only place where one can reasonably expect that papyrus manuscripts from that period would be preserved (thanks to Egypt's low-humidity climate).

(2) The patristic evidence does not settle the question of the early existence or non-existence of the Byzantine Text. Several patristic authors in several locales in the late 300s used an essentially Byzantine Gospels-text, and at about the same time, the Gothic version and the Peshitta emerged, heavily favoring Byzantine readings. We do not see patristic authors in the 100s and 200s consistently favoring Byzantine readings, but this point cannot be considered to be decisive, considering that no patristic writings from this period have survived from a vast geographical area, including Greece, Turkey, and Syria, where vibrant Christian communities existed.

In addition, in locales where one might expect to see purely Alexandrian citations in this period, we sometimes find instead a text that is heavily mixed. In Clement of Alexandria's quotations from the Gospel of Matthew, for example, at points where the text of Codex Sinaiticus disagrees with the Byzantine Text, Clement's text of Matthew agrees more often

with the Byzantine Text than with Codex Sinaiticus! Although some would look at this and dismiss it as Western-Alexandrian mixture, it is just the sort of thing one would expect if in Egypt in the early 200s copyists were extracting Byzantine readings from imported manuscripts, and blended them into the local text.

(3) The Byzantine Gospels-text, although often described in a misleading way as if it is the same as the *Textus Receptus*, and as if it is based on a *small* number of *medieval* manuscripts, is typically supported by over 80% of the Greek manuscripts (at many points, the percentage is much higher), and has attestation from the 400s or earlier. If an essentially Byzantine text-form was used throughout Greece, Turkey, and Syria, in the 100s-early 300s, then its manuscript-support is as ancient as could fairly be expected considering that the climate in those regions was not as favorable to the preservation of papyrus as the climate in Egypt.

I share these points in the hope that they will undo the effects of what can only be called propaganda that encourages a prejudice against Byzantine and Western readings even when their support is abundant, widespread, and early. The available evidence does not demand a verdict that the Byzantine Text, as a whole, is later than its rival text-forms. Nor does the available evidence

support Hort's foundational premise that the shortest text is the best one. (Research by James Royse has eviscerated the idea that the shorter reading should be favored: in a thorough sample of early papyri, he found that the copyists made omissions more frequently than they made insertions.) The relevance of these points may become clearer as I build the case that regarding the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, a Greek manuscript which does not contain those 12 verses is comparable to a damaged ship which has lost part of its hull.

I now consider the external evidence, organized in eight parts.



EXTERNAL EVIDENCE



[Chapter Two: Early Greek Manuscripts](#)

Officially, there is an axiom in New Testament textual criticism: “Manuscripts must be weighed, not counted.” But there is an unofficial qualification: “Unless you can establish an arbitrary cut-off point before which a majority of manuscripts favors the Alexandrian variant.” Commentator after commentator has emphasized that *most* of the *early* manuscripts of the Gospel of John do not contain the passage about the adulteress. They are referring to nine manuscripts: Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus, and Codices C (04), N (022), T (029), and W (032). The total number of Greek manuscripts that do not in any way contain John 7:53-8:11 is (currently) 268. Only these nine, however, are relatively *early*. And only six – Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Codex Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, T, and W – were produced before the 400s. (I assign a date slightly before 400 to Codex W. Others assign a slightly later production-date.)

If those six manuscripts – Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Vaticanus (B, 03), Sinaiticus ((10 , \aleph , T (029), and W (032) – all included John 7:53-8:11, the passage would be accepted on the grounds that they outweigh all the copies that do not contain the passage. Many commentators seem to have looked no further than these six manuscripts in their investigations of the episode of Jesus and the adulteress. However the following two points should be understood when evaluating the weight of these witnesses.

- The text-type displayed in four of these six manuscripts is primarily Alexandrian. They do not represent a broad area.

- Neither the earlier age nor the general quality of a manuscript is a safeguard against errors at any particular point. A copyist whose work is generally excellent may occasionally accidentally skip a word, a phrase, or an entire segment of text. And even skilled professional copyists were capable of misunderstanding their exemplars when they encountered unusual features therein.

In the case of the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress, I submit the following hypothesis:

The text-segment now known as John 7:53-8:11 was in an exemplar used by a copyist in Egypt in the mid-100s – having descended to it from the autograph. By the mid-100s the churches in Egypt

already possessed a rudimentary lection-cycle for their major annual festivals: Easter, Pentecost, Christmas, Annunciation-day, and Palm Sunday. Regarding the Gospels-selections assigned to be annually read on Sundays, the textual critic C. R. Gregory stated, "It seems to me likely that at an extremely early date the lessons were chosen for the Sundays." John Chrysostom, in the late 300s, referred to the assignment of specific passages for specific Sundays to be something established by previous generations. His contemporaries Epiphanius and Augustine likewise indicate their familiarity with reading-cycles used in their churches. And of course we see in the book of Acts that the Christian church observed the annual feast of Pentecost from its very beginning.

There is no need to imagine that each congregation or each locale observed the same series of feast-days and feast-day-readings that were celebrated elsewhere. And no one would contest the point that the early lection-cycles were subject to gradual expansion and adjustment. My first point here is simply that the celebration of a basic series of annual feast-days, including Pentecost, was an extremely ancient practice. My second point – an easy observation, but one which seems to have been missed by very many commentators unfamiliar with the contents of lectionaries (and almost all American

evangelical commentators) – is that in the ordinary Byzantine lectionary, attested in hundreds of Greek copies, the reading assigned to Pentecost consisted of John 7:37-52 plus John 8:12 (this final verse being included in order to end the lection on a positive note).

In order to make this clear, a lector – the individual responsible for the reading of Scripture in the church-services – marked his copy of the Gospel of John with notes and/or marks to remind himself that on Pentecost, when he reached the end of John 7:52, he was supposed to skip to the end of 8:11 and read verse 12.

Picture the puzzle that presented itself to a copyist who used the lector's manuscript as his exemplar: the copyist comes to what we know as the Gospel of John chapter seven, and sees, after the statement at the end of 7:52, instructions in the margin, which say: *Skip ahead*. Unaware that these instructions were meant for the lector, he interprets them as if they were meant for him, the copyist. And so he skips ahead until he finds instructions in the margin which say, *Restart here*. Therefore this dutiful copyist follows these instructions, and accordingly he does not copy John 7:53-8:11, doing exactly as he supposes he was instructed. And the manuscript (or manuscripts, if the same copyist made several copies) which contained this mistake proceeded

to affect both the main Alexandrian transmission-stream and whatever transmission-streams to which it was exported.

Even in the “best” manuscripts, copying-mistakes occurred. A few examples should be sufficient to establish this point.

- In Matthew 27:49, an incorrectly placed scribal note has invaded the text of the “oldest and best” uncials, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, conveying (though disagreeing with John 19:34) that Jesus was pierced with a spear before He died. (Possibly this note was based on the early testimony of the individual known as Saint Longinus, a Roman soldier who was stationed in Jerusalem and who converted to Christianity after seeing Christ crucified.)

- In John 9:38-39, the entire phrase, “*And he said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped Him, and Jesus said*” is missing from three of our “best” manuscripts, namely Papyrus 75, Codex Sinaiticus (as initially written), and Codex W. This is accounted for by the existence of a very early copy of John in which the passage was marked to draw the reader’s attention to the passage when it was used at baptisms and in the confessions of catechumens – and the passage was lost due to the subsequent misunderstanding of those marks by a copyist who, thinking that they meant that

the copyist should not include those words, dutifully skipped them. A phenomenon very similar to the one which led to the early loss of John 7:53-8:11.

- Sinaiticus – allegedly one of our best manuscripts – tells its readers in Matthew 13:35 that Isaiah the prophet is being quoted (although the quotation is from Psalm 78:2).

- In Papyrus 75, the rich man in the parable in Luke 16:19 is given a name – *Neues* – but although Papyrus 75 is our earliest manuscript of this passage, this reading is regarded as an accretion.

- In Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, the reference to *baptism* in Mark 7:4 is replaced by a reference to *pouring*. (This feature, which is not likely to be the result of a scribal accident, should by itself cause researchers to suspect that Sinaiticus and Vaticanus both echo an *edition* of the text of the Gospels.)

- At the end of Mark 1:34 in B, C, L, and W, (and added secondarily in Sinaiticus) the phrase “*to be the Christ*” is added. Notice that B, C, and W are members of the same small group of early manuscripts that do not include John 7:53-8:11. This example of shared error implies a shared origin – which consequently lowers the probability that these manuscripts are typical of the text that was in widespread usage, and increases the

probability that these manuscripts, while early and important, are only showing us one localized form of the text.

Many more examples of quirky and anomalous readings in early Alexandrian manuscripts could be supplied. My point is that we have sufficient evidence that early Alexandrian copyists in the second century were capable of misunderstanding their exemplars, and they were also capable of rigorously producing copies affected by those misunderstandings. As a result, John 7:53-8:11, when marked as a segment of text not to be included in the Pentecost-lection, was vulnerable to accidental deletion at the hands of early Egyptian copyists.

Before moving on to other kinds of evidence, I wish to point out that the inclusion of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress is supported by Codex Bezae, which Dr. Bart Ehrman has acknowledged to be “one our oldest witnesses.” Dr. Andreas Köstenberger’s claim that the passage is “completely absent from all of the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel of John” must be regrettably categorized as an absurd lie or an embarrassing display of ignorance. Codex Bezae is in a distinct minority among the early manuscripts in this regard. On the other hand, of all extant early manuscripts, it is the one which best represents the Western text-form that is attested

in the 100s and early 200s by authors such as Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus.



Chapter Three: Early Versions

The absence of John 7:53-8:11 in some ancient versions – including not only Coptic dialects, but also the Ethiopic, Gothic, and Peshitta versions – is another important piece of evidence against the genuineness of the passage. However, on the premises that the passage was lost in Egypt in the 100s, and that the resultant omission had a large impact on the transmission of the text of the Gospel of John, this is not very surprising.

Granting that some versions of the Gospels produced in the 200s-400s do not include the story about the adulteress, other versions – specifically, three Old Latin transmission-lines, the Vulgate, the Palestinian Aramaic, and copies of the Harklean Syriac – include the story. (See the appendix, *A Tour of the External Evidence*, for further details.)



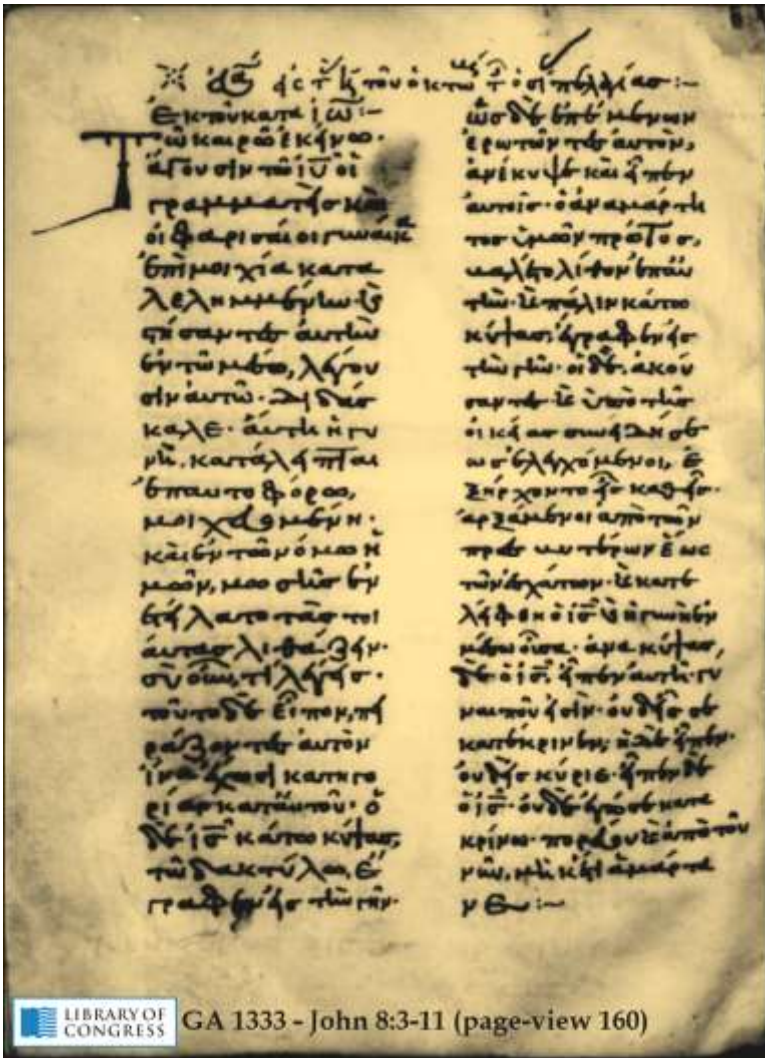
Chapter Four: Lectionaries

The often-echoed claim by Hort to the effect that John 7:53-8:11 is absent in ancient lectionaries is only partly true. The passage is not included in the *Synaxarion* – the movable part of the lectionary, in which the dates are annually reset so that the reading-list begins at Easter, regardless of what day of the year it is. But most of the passage is included in the *Menologion* – the part of the lectionary in which readings are assigned to specific dates of the year, in honor of saints, martyrs, etc.

In the Menologion, either John 8:2-11 or John 8:3-11 (local usage varied) is arranged as the lection for Saint Pelagia of Antioch, or (with other individuals in mind who experienced notable repentance), more generically, for the Penitents. The feast-day for Saint Pelagia, or for The Penitents, is (barring localized variations) October 8. This accounts for some features in the margins of some manuscripts, and for an unusual treatment of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in some manuscripts, which shall be described later.

There are a couple of things to see here: first, the lectionaries uniformly confirm that the Pentecost-lection consisted of John 7:37-52, combined with 8:12. Second, the early

establishment of this lection for a major annual feast-day raises the question of why, had the text of John never contained the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, anyone would (as those who wish to excise the passage must believe someone did) insert a “floating anecdote” directly into the Pentecost-lection. It would be as startling and provocative as inserting 12 new verses into the middle of the account of the Nativity.



The account of Jesus and the adulteress – the Gospels-lection for Saint Pelagia’s Day

Chapter Five: Writings of the Early Church

D. A. Carson has written, “All the early church Fathers omit this narrative,” and many preachers and students, absorbing this claim from a respected source (albeit a source that misspells “minuscule”), have joined him in this error. Although harsh climates and vicious persecutions have not allowed the testimony of Christians in vast regions of the Roman Empire to survive to our time, there is plenty of early patristic testimony to consider.

● In the seventh chapter of the ***Didascalia Apostolorum***, a Syriac text which is generally assigned to the 200s, we find the following statement:

“If you do not receive the one who repents, because you are without mercy, you shall sin against the Lord God; for you do not obey our Savior and our God, to do as He also did with her that had sinned, whom the elders set before Him, and leaving the judgment in His hands, departed. But He, the searcher of hearts, asked her and said to her, ‘Have the elders condemned thee, my daughter?’ She said to Him, ‘No, Lord.’ And He said unto her, ‘Go your way; neither do I condemn thee.’ In Him therefore, our Savior and King and God, is your pattern, O bishops.”

This is far from an exact quotation of the passage, but inasmuch as the author is appealing to the incident as an authoritative and precedent-setting example of forgiveness, it is just the sort of loose summary that one might make when taking for granted that one's readers know and accept the passage. And where else could they have encountered it, in a context that rendered it authoritative, if not in their copies of the Gospel of John?

- In the Old Latin *breves* – chapter-summaries – the story of the adulteress is mentioned, in the usual place before John 8:12. One of the forms of the Old Latin *breves* is called the Cy form, – due to affinities between it and the text used by Cyprian. The Cy form of the *breves* is generally assigned to the time of Cyprian or shortly thereafter. When one consults Donatien D Bruyne's 1914 book *Sommaires, Divisions et Rubriques de la Bible Latine*, written in French, and turns to page 320, one can encounter the relevant chapter-summary, #30, that is, in Roman numerals, XXX:

“Ubi adulteram dimisit et se dixit lumen saeculi et de testimonio suo et patris; ibi ait : si me nossetis, et patrem meum nossetis, loquens in gazofilatio et quod non eum inuenientes in

peccatis suis morituri essent, et quod illi essent de isto saeculo, ipse non esset et quod quaerentibus quis esset respondit : initium, et de patre locutus est non cognoscentibus quia cum illo est qui eum misit.”

The opening words of this chapter-summary are very significant, because they refer to the dismissal of the adulteress before summarizing the other contents in the thirtieth portion of John. The beginning of this chapter-summary runs something like this in English: “Wherein he dismissed the adulteress, and said that he was the light of the world, and described his testimony and the testimony borne by his Father. He said, If you knew me, you would have known my Father also. And he was saying in the temple-treasury that those who did not find him would die in their sins, and that they were of this world, but he was not.”

The Cy form of the chapter-summaries, though initially created to accompany an ancient Old Latin text, has survived – barely – by being grafted onto a standard Latin text. The Cy chapter-summaries are extant primarily in only two known manuscripts: [Vatican Barberini 637](#), and [Munich BSB Clm. 6212](#). (They are partly preserved in the British Library in [Harley 1775](#).)

Digital images of both of these two manuscripts are accessible online. At the Vatican

Library's website, it is easy to find [Barberini 627](#), and to turn to page 99r, looking for chapter-summary #30 in the left column of the page. To view the full-color page-view of the same chapter-summary at the top of page 131v of the other manuscript (Munich BSB Clm. 6212), visit <https://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/0004/bsb00041862/images/index.html?id=00041862&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=266> . Hugh Houghton has noted that the Munich manuscript was thought by McGurk to have been copied from a much earlier exemplar produced in the 500s.

You may be asking, why is this form of Latin chapter-divisions, extant in just two manuscripts from the 800s and 900s, associated with Cyprian? Basically this is a conclusion drawn from cumulative evidence in the form of special repeated points of correspondence between the text that is used in the chapter-summaries (especially where rare terms are used, and when quotations are included) and Cyprian's Gospels-quotations. [Hugh Houghton](#), in a 2011 article in *Revue Benedictine*, noted that the text embedded in this form of chapter-summaries has affinities "to the citations of both Cyprian and Tertullian."

As [Hugh Houghton](#) has reported, De Bruyne also noted the antiquity of the chapter-summaries

known as Type I; Houghton has placed this form in the 300s. In John, Type I's chapter-summary #16 says, "Adducunt ad eum mulierem 'in adulterio deprehensam,' and in one form of this chapter-summary, found in six manuscripts, the text continues, "in moecheatione ut eam iudicaret."

The form of the chapter-summaries which De Bruyne lists as Type D also has these words, followed by "quod nemo miserit super illam manus." (See page 264 of his book.) An interesting feature of this particular chapter-summary is that it contains the loan-word *moecheatione*, suggesting that this chapter-summary was based on an Old Latin text which someone had translated from Greek rather literally, at least at this point.

Type I of the chapter-summaries tends to accompany a distinct form of the Old Latin text which is basically a form of the Gospels-text which was used by Ambrose of Milan in the 370s-390s. According to Houghton, this was, in general, the form of the Latin text used by Zeno of Verona (c. 300-371).

To sum up: various forms of Old Latin chapter-summaries, the earliest of which has been deduced (via the detection of shared readings) to have been based on a form of the Latin text of the Gospels used by, or at approximately the same time as, Cyprian in the 200s, are a cluster of

significant witnesses for the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. To those who may want to locate where the episode about Jesus and the adulteress is summarized in the forms of chapter-summaries of the Gospel of John which are presented by De Bruyne, here they are:

A: (none)

B: (none; this is a shorter form of Type A.)

B^r: VII: Iesus supra mare ambulat [and after several sentences] De muliere adultera. Iesus lumen mundi se esse non credentibus Iudaeis in gazophilacio docens praedicat.

Ben: XXI: De muliere in adulterio deprehensa.

C: XX: Mulierem in adulterio deprehensam atque ad se adductam nec ab accusatoribus condemnatam ipse sub condicione qua ulterius non peccaret absoluit.

D: XVIII: De muliere in adulterio depraehensa. [in moechatione u team iudicaret, quod nemo miserit super illam manus].

I: XVI: Adducunt ad eum mulierem in adulterio deprehensam. (See above for expanded form.)

W: XVI: De muliere in adulterio deprehensa.

Cat: XVI: Adducunt ad Iesum mulierem deprehensam [in adulterio], et ego sum lux mundi, et uos secundum carnem iudicatis, et neque me scitis neque patrem meum, et si non credideritis quia ego sum moriemini.

I^{for}: (none)

Pⁱ: XVI: De muliere in adulterio deprehensa.

Cy: XXX: Ubi adulteram dimisit et se dixit lumen saeculi . . . (See above)

In: No mention of the adulteress, but XVI: Iesus autem ascendit in montem Oliueti.

Vich: VII: (at the end of the summary) Mulierem adulteram liberans lucem mundi se dicit.

Z: XVIII: De muliere in adulterio deprehensa.

The episode about Jesus and the adulteress is not supported by forms A and B (which are the same in John), or by form I^{for}. However, this is conceivably an effect of the conciseness of these summaries rather than evidence that the passage was absent in the texts accompanied by the chapter-summaries. In any event, we have here twelve witnesses (less if we were to group together four similar forms) for the inclusion of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress.

None of them show any signs of deviation regarding the sequence in which the episode occurs in the text of the Gospel of John. This is quite strong evidence that the passage was included in the Gospel of John in its usual location in Latin copies made in the 200s. This, in turn, should motivate those who treat the dislocations of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress as anything other than the effects of lection-cycles

and special formatting of the Pentecost-lection to reconsider their position.

● Far from Syria, in southern Spain, **Pacian of Barcelona** (who became a bishop in 365, at about the same time Codex Sinaiticus was being made) mentioned the passage about the adulteress in his ***Third Epistle to Sympronian – Against the Treatise of the Novatians***. In paragraph 39, bishop Pacian writes with heavy sarcasm: *“O Novatians, why do you delay to ask an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and to demand life for life? Why do you wait to renew once more the practice of circumcision and the sabbath? Kill the thief. Stone the petulant. Choose not to read in the Gospel that the Lord spared even the adulteress who confessed, when none had condemned her; that He absolved the sinner who washed His feet with her tears; that He delivered Rahab at Jericho”*

We see here that Pacian specifically describes the story as something people could read “in the Gospel,” and thus the only reasonable conclusion is that Pacian expected his readers to be able to find and read this story in their copies of Scripture, like the two other accounts to which he alludes.

● **Ambrose**, who was bishop of Milan from 374-397, cites John 7:53-8:11 repeatedly and extensively. In **Epistle 26**, in which Ambrose comments on the passage at length, he states that *“The acquittal of the woman who, in the Gospel of John, was brought to Christ accused of adultery, is very famous.”* This indicates that the passage was not introduced by Ambrose. It was already well-known to his congregation in the illustrious city of Milan. In **Epistle 74**, paragraph 4, Ambrose utilizes John 8:11 again, and shows plainly that it was in his manuscripts of the Gospel of John in its usual place, before 8:12. If we do not pretend that Pacian (in Spain) and Ambrose (in Milan) were passing around the same manuscripts of John, then the deduction stands that these two patristic writers, by themselves, imply a line of ancestry for the Latin text of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress that goes back at least to the production-date of Codex Vaticanus.

● **Ambrosiaster**, yet another writer of the mid/late 300s, also refers to the story.

● The testimony of **Jerome** must be examined in detail in order to compensate for the neglect it has endured at the hands of commentators such as the team from Dallas Theological Seminary who made the NET. The NET’s text-critical note about

the episode about Jesus and the adulteress never mentions Jerome's important testimony. For all those who have been misled by the NET's editors' inexcusable evidence-manipulating, here is what Jerome said in ***Against the Pelagians, 2:17***: *"In the Gospel according to John, there is found, in many of the Greek, as well as the Latin, copies, the story of the adulteress who was accused before the Lord."* In Latin: *"In evangelio secundum Iohannem in multis et Graecis et Latinis codicibus invenitur de adultera muliere, quae accusata est apud Dominum."*

In the same composition, Jerome offers an interpretation of John 8:6 and 8:8's record of Jesus writing on the ground, explaining that Jesus, when he wrote in the earth, wrote down the names of the woman's accusers, using a phrase from Jeremiah 17:13 ("Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth") as the lens through which to perceive this.

Thirty-three years earlier, in 383, Jerome had included John 7:53-8:11 in the Gospel of John in the Vulgate Gospels. On two occasions, he describes how he went about his translation-project. In the ***Preface to the Gospels***, addressed to Damasus, Jerome wrote that he had revised the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John "by a comparison of the Greek manuscripts. Only early

ones have been used. To avoid any great divergences from the Latin which we are accustomed to read, I have used my pen with some restraint, and while I have corrected only such passages as seemed to convey a different meaning, I have allowed the rest to remain as they are.”

The presence or absence of 12 verses obviously conveys a different meaning. This implies that Jerome, in 383, found John 7:53-8:11 in ancient Greek manuscripts – that is, Greek manuscripts which he considered ancient in 383. It also implies that the church in Rome in 383 was accustomed to read the passage.

In Epistle 27, To Marcella, Jerome wrote, “The Latin manuscripts of the Scriptures are demonstrated to be faulty by the variations which they all exhibit, and my objective has been to restore them to the form of the original Greek.”

So: Jerome depended upon Greek manuscripts when he assembled the Vulgate text of the Gospels – including John 7:53-8:11 – and at the time this was done, John 7:53-8:11 was already being customarily read in the churches in Rome. And, by 417, Jerome had encountered **John 7:53-8:11 in many Greek manuscripts and many Latin manuscripts.** Considering that Jerome visited a variety of locales, and considering that he specifically consulted ancient Greek Gospels-

manuscripts (I emphasize: ***they were considered ancient in 383***) his testimony goes a long way toward outweighing the Egyptian manuscripts which do not include the passage.

- Next we come to **Augustine**, and again there is a need to draw special attention to his testimony, since some of those who reject the episode about Jesus and the adulteress have successfully kept their readers unaware of most of what Augustine says about it. Augustine makes it clear that some manuscripts had the passage, and some did not, and he asserts that the passage had been removed in some copies by men who thought that their wives would use it as a pretense to be excused of adultery. That is probably just Augustine's calculated guess – regarding which more shall be said shortly.

In addition, Augustine's writings contain excerpts from, and references to, claims made by his Manichaean opponent **Faustus** and show that Faustus, too, utilized the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. Augustine also mentions that some other opponents of Christianity used the statement that Jesus wrote in the ground with his finger as an excuse to accuse Christ of childishness.

- **Prosper of Aquitaine** (c. 440), in *Call of All Nations*, Book 1, chapter 8, devotes a paragraph to the passage.
- **Peter Chrysologus**, preaching at Ravenna c. 450, uses the contents of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress.
- **Sedulius** (c. 450, in *Carmen Paschale*, Book 4) clearly alludes to the passage.
- The author of the composition known as *Apologia David* (probably not Ambrose, but someone else in the late 300s) refers to the passage about the adulteress as a lection from the Gospels which was read at the church where he preached.
- To these witnesses, we must add **Cassiodorus** (c. 570), and the **Nordenfalk Eusebian Canon-tables** (from the early 600s), as witnesses supporting the inclusion of John 7:53-8:11. (Again, for details, see the appendix, *A Tour of the External Evidence*.)
- It would not be surprising if a fourth-century writer situated in Egypt did not use the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, inasmuch as it had already been removed from the text of John in the

dominant transmission-stream there. Yet consider the testimony of the Egyptian writer **Didymus the Blind** (c. 380) in his **Commentary on Ecclesiastes**: *“We find in certain gospels: A woman, it says, was condemned by the Jews for a sin, and was being sent to be stoned in the place that was for that. The Savior, it says, when he saw her and observed that they were ready to stone her, said to those that were about to cast stones, ‘He who has not sinned, let him take a stone and throw it. If anyone is conscious in himself not to have sinned, let him take a stone and smite her.’ And no one dared; because they knew in themselves and perceived that they, too, were guilty in some things, they did not dare to strike her.”*

Now, on one hand, Didymus’ phrase “in certain Gospels” (εν τισιν ευαγγελιοις) does not specify that the passage was found in the Gospel of John. On the other hand, if Didymus had intended to refer to a non-canonical gospel (such as the Gospel of the Hebrews), rather than to the four Gospels, the natural thing to do would be to use specific language to denote such a work. The default understanding of the phrase “in certain Gospels” ought to be that the reference is to copies of the four canonical Gospels. (It should be noted, by the way, that Didymus was blind from his childhood, and while this did not make it

impossible for him to quote substantial passages of Scripture, it may explain why he loosely summarizes some episodes, as he does in this case.)

Didymus' compositions are in Greek, and his comment was discovered decades ago, but some commentators, such as Larry Hurtado, still recommend that their readers and students rely on Bruce Metzger's *Textual Commentary* for information about John 7:53-8:11, thus ensuring that they will be misled by Metzger's statement, "No Greek Church Father prior to Euthymius Zigabenus (twelfth century) comments on the passage."

- In Book Eight of the ***Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah of Mitylene*** in the British Library's Add. MS 17202 (produced in the late 500s or 600s), the author mentions that in the Gospels-volume used by Mara of Amid (who lived in exile in Alexandria from 517 (or 519) until 527, "*in the 89th canon, a chapter which is related only by John in his Gospel, and is not found in other manuscripts, a section running thus: 'It happened one day, while Jesus was teaching, they brought him a woman who had been found to be with child of adultery, and told him about her. And Jesus said to them, since as God he knew their shameful passions and also their deeds, 'What does He command in the law?'*

and they said to him: 'That at the mouth of two or three witnesses she should be stoned.'

"But he answered and said to them: 'In accordance with the law, whoever is pure and free from these sinful passions, and can bear witness with confidence and authority, as being under no blame in respect of this sin, let him bear witness against her, and let him first throw a stone at her, and then those that are after him, and she shall be stoned.' But because they were subject to condemnation and blameworthy in respect of this sinful passion, they went out one by one from before him and left the woman. And when they had gone, Jesus looked upon the ground and, writing in the dust there, said to the woman: 'They who brought you here and wished to bear witness against you, having understood what I said to them, which you have heard, have left you and departed. Do you also, therefore, go your way, and commit not this sin again.'"

Later I will refer again to this loose and embellished form of the story about the adulteress. Here it is sufficient to show that in the early 500s, an account in which Jesus prevented the stoning of an adulteress was in a manuscript of the Gospel of John used by Mara of Amid.

● Finally we come to the **Chapter-Titles of Codex Fuldensis**. Codex Fuldensis is a Latin New

Testament produced in 546 under the supervision of Victor of Capua (in south-central Italy). Its arrangement of the text of the Gospels was based on a harmony of the Gospels which Victor suspected might be a rendering of Tatian's *Diatessaron* (a composition made c. 172, combining the contents of all four Gospels into one continuous non-repeating narrative). Since Tatian, by the 500s, was widely regarded as a heretic, Victor of Capua was reluctant to reproduce the harmony-text exactly. Instead, he attempted to preserve the sequence of the Gospels-text so as to imitate the sequence in his source-document (but with the genealogies of Christ added), using the theologically uncontroversial Vulgate text instead of the text in his source-document. Victor also preserved the chapter-titles which he found in his source-document. The story of the adulteress is listed therein as chapter #120: *De muliere a Iudaeis in adulterio deprehensa* (that is, "About the woman whom the Jews caught in adultery").

The Arabic Diatessaron does not contain the story about the adulteress, but this is almost certainly because the Arabic text was based on a Syriac text in which the text was conformed to the Peshitta, which does not contain the passage. If Codex Fuldensis' Old Latin exemplar's chapter-titles echo the work of Tatian then we have here

the echo of a second-century composition, produced within two generations of the apostle John himself, that included the story of the adulteress. If the case is otherwise, then at the very least, the chapter-titles preserved in Codex Fuldensis attest to the presence of the story of the adulteress in another Old Latin Gospels-text.

For information about additional external evidence, see the appendix, *A Tour of the External Evidence*.



Chapter Six: Marks that Accompany John 7:53-8:11 (or 8:3-11) in Some Copies

Various commentators state that John 7:53-8:11 “is found marked in multiple witnesses as suspicious,” or that it “is found with marks of suspicion,” and accompanied by asterisks or other symbols which designate the accompanying text as “spurious or doubtful,” and so forth. The intention of such statements was to convey that the marks always signify scribal doubt about the legitimacy of the passage.

However, in 130 of the approximately 270 manuscripts in which asterisks or other marks are present on the pages where John 7:53-8:11 appears, **they do not accompany the entire passage**. They only accompany John 8:3-11. In these cases, the asterisks were not intended to convey doubt. They were, instead, intended to point out the location of the lection for Saint Pelagia’s Day, within the section of text that was to be skipped on Pentecost.

An example of this phenomenon may be seen in MS 685, to which Dallas Theological Seminary professor Daniel B. Wallace drew his readers’ attention in a blog-post in 2010. Doctor Wallace stated that the episode about Jesus and the adulteress “is marked as dubious with vertical lines in the outside margin.” When one consults

MS 685, however, one can see the following features:

(1) The squiggly lines are horizontal, not vertical.

(2) The squiggly lines do not accompany the entire passage. They begin at 8:3 and the start of the sentence is plainly indicated in the text by an αρχη symbol, designating the beginning of a lection. To emphasize: *no squiggly lines accompany John 7:53-8:2*; they only accompany John 8:3ff.

(3) At the end of John 7:52, there is a “jump” symbol, instructing the lector to skip to John 8:12. This was an means of telling the lector which text was to be read on Pentecost.

(4) At the top of the page, the rubric for the lection for the Penitent Women is written, along with the incipit, or introductory phrase, which the lector was to use when reading that lection, beginning at 8:3.

Considering that in MS 685, the lection-title “For the [Feast-Day of the] Penitents” is written at the top of the page, and considering that the squiggly lines begin and end where that lection begins and ends, it is extremely unlikely that the squiggly lines were added as “indications of doubt.” The purpose of these lines was to show the lector where that particular lection started

and stopped. The normal symbols were not used because they were liable to be confused with the symbols for the Pentecost-lection.

Now let's consult Codex M (021, Campianus, from the 800s). In Codex M, an asterisk appears at the beginning of John 7:52 – and it is accompanied by a *jump* symbol. At the same line, in the outer margin, there is a faint small red “+” symbol. Another red “+” appears beside the beginning of John 8:3. On the next page, an αῤου symbol (meaning, “restart” or “resume”) and an asterisk appear at the beginning of John 8:12, while in the outer margin there is a lectionary-related note, which means, “For the fifth day [i.e., Thursday] of the fourth week,” followed by the incipit-phrase with which, on the fourth Thursday after Easter, the lector was to begin reading John 8:12-20. John 8:12-20 is, you see, the lection in the Synaxarion assigned to that day. Meanwhile, in the last line of the first column, in a space between 8:12 and 8:13, there is a red cross (one of many which separate sentences in this manuscript), accompanied in the lower margin by a note which means, “*The end of the lection for the Feast*” (that is, the end of the Pentecost lection).

Thus the reasonable interpretation of the two asterisks in Codex M is not that they convey scribal doubt; it is that these asterisks were added

to help the lector navigate the lection for Pentecost. These asterisks' purpose was to draw the lector's attention to the instructions to skip from the end of John 7:52 to the beginning of John 8:12 when reading the lection for Pentecost.

Let's consult Codex E (07, Basiliensis, from the 700s). In Codex E, at the end of John 7:52, a *jump* symbol instructs the lector to skip ahead to the *arxou* (*restart*) symbol, which is located immediately before John 8:12. Red asterisks appear in a column to the left of the text of John 8:2-11, and a red "+" appears beside the beginning of John 8:3. A *telos* (*stop*) symbol appears at the end of John 8:12, and in the margin at the top of the page on which John 8:12 appears are the heading and incipit for the lection for the fourth Thursday after Easter, and in the margin alongside 8:12 is the $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ symbol to show the lector where that lection begins.

The asterisks alongside John 8:2-11 were added to indicate the extent of the lection for the Feast-Day of the Penitents. (If a copyist were to add marks to convey scribal doubt about the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, he would be more likely to begin the asterisks at 7:53, rather than at 8:2 or 8:3.)

We should also consider the treatment given to the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in GA 1439. Select images of pages of

this manuscript, also known Eikosiphonissa Manuscript 220, can be viewed online at <https://collections.museumofthebible.org/artifacts/12785-greek-gospel-manuscript-eikosiphonissa-ms-220-ga-1429?&tab=description> . The story of MS 1439's abduction and eventual return can also be read online, at <https://www.museumofthebible.org/eikosiphonissa-manuscript-220>.

MS 1429 has red asterisks alongside John 7:53-8:11 to the left of the text. In addition, the symbol for “Jump ahead” (υ below π) is written in red before at the beginning of 7:53. The text continues for a little more than two columns, all accompanied by asterisks. At the end of 8:11, near the top of the third column (the second column on the next page), the reader is instructed to resume reading (the symbol $\alpha\xi$ is in the upper margin) at 8:12. The symbol $\alpha\rho\chi$ ($\alpha\rho$ below χ) also appears before the beginning of 8:12.

The asterisks in 1439 were intended to inform the lector that he was to skip 7:53-8:11 when reading the lection for Pentecost, not to imply that a scribe had doubts about the right of John 7:53-8:11 to be in the text of the Gospel of John.



Chapter Seven: Notes about John 7:53-8:11 in Some Copies

Numerous commentators intent on promoting the Alexandrian Text resort to misrepresenting the lectionary-related asterisks or other marks that accompany the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, or part of it, as if the marks were made to convey scribal doubt, without mentioning the lectionary-related *jump*-symbols at all. (Have you seen a commentary that mentions the *jump*-symbols?) They also frequently misrepresent the notes about the passage which appear in a relatively small number of manuscripts.

Hort, in his 1881 *Introduction*, pointed out that an annotation (which we shall look at in more detail when we examine the testimony of the family-1 group of manuscripts) says that the episode about Jesus and the adulteress was not mentioned by the divine fathers (i.e., patristic writers) who made interpretations, that is to say, by Chrysostom and Cyril; nor by Theodore of Mopsuestia and the rest. He also mentions that another note states that the passage was not in “the copies of (used by) Apollinaris.” Here Hort was citing part of a note found in Codex Lambda; however, there is more to that note: **it proceeds to state that the whole passage is in the ancient**

copies (Εν δε τοις αρχαιοις όλα κειται). This sort of evidence-manipulation did not stop in the 1800s. It continues (and has increased) to the present day. Let's look at some of the details of annotations which commentators such as Carson, Hurtado, Keener, etc., did not tell you about.

- Manuscript 135 (from the 900s), in which John 7:53-8:11 appears at the end of John, has an interesting note, stating that the story was added because it was discovered “in ancient copies” (εν αρχαίοις αντιγράφοις).
- Manuscript 34 (produced in the 900s or 1000s), in which the passage is accompanied by asterisks, has a note stating that although the portion with asterisks is not present in a multitude of copies, it is found in the old ones.
- MS 565 (a purple minuscule from the 800s or 900s, affiliated with the f^1 group) does not contain John 7:53-8:11 before John 8:12. Instead, after John 21, 565 contains a note: Το περι της μοιχαλιδος κεφάλαιον εν τω παρα Ιωάννου ευαγγελίω ως εν τοις νυν αντιγραφοις μη κείμενον παρέλειψα: κατα τον τόπον δε κειται ουτως εξης του ουκ εγηγερται.” That is: “*The chapter about the adulteress, not being present in*

the current copies, was omitted; it was located right after 'does not arise.'"

When this manuscript was in pristine condition, this note – a shortened form of the notice which precedes the passage at the end of John in the chief representatives of family-1 – was almost certainly followed by the entire passage, but the page has undergone extensive damage. However, the note itself sufficiently shows that either in the exemplar of 565, or in an earlier ancestor-copy which was meticulously replicated (notes and all), John 7:53-8:11 was found immediately following John 7:52, and the copyist moved it to the end of John in the copy he was making so as to conform the text to other copies in circulation.

Now let's clarify some of the claims that commentators have made about the marks and notes that sometimes accompany John 7:53-8:11. Contrary to what you may read elsewhere, we do not have 270 manuscripts with asterisks alongside John 7:53-8:11. We have something like 98 manuscripts with asterisks or marks of some sort beginning at John 7:53, and something like 131 manuscripts with asterisks or marks of some sort beginning at John 8:2 or 8:3, and something like 41 in which the marks don't fit either of those two descriptions. The marks in the second group were

not intended to convey scribal doubt (does anyone imagine that copyists thought that John 7:53-8:2 was genuine, but 8:3-11 was questionable?); they designate the lection for the feast-day of the Penitents.

Even in the manuscripts in which all of John 7:53-8:11 is accompanied by marks, it is not necessary to conclude that the copyist who added the marks considered the passage spurious (although in some manuscripts this may be the case). Some of these manuscripts simply echo a slightly different division of early lections. In the main form of the lection-divisions, the lection for Pentecost consisted of John 7:37-52 plus 8:12. In another form, the lection for Pentecost consisted of John 7:37-**8:2** plus 8:12. This form is attested in Codex Lambda (039), which has a “*jump*” symbol at the end of John 8:2, and asterisks alongside 8:3-11, plus the previously mentioned margin-note. The Palestinian Aramaic lectionary also has the break between 8:2 and 8:3.

In this second form of the lection-divisions, margin-markings were added to tell the lector to skip 8:3-11, and a misunderstanding of these marks has caused those nine verses to be omitted in 18 manuscripts. This resembles the same sort of mistake which, centuries earlier, caused the omission of John 7:53-8:11 in an early ancestor of

manuscripts such as Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Marks intended to mean “Skip this when reading” were misinterpreted to mean “Excise this when copying.”



Chapter Eight: Variations in the Location of the Passage

Many commentators in favor of the removal of John 7:53-8:11 have pointed out that in some copies, the passage is found in locations other than immediately following John 7:52. In some copies, it is at the end of the Gospel of John. In other copies, it is not in the Gospel of John but can be found at the end of Luke 21. And in some other copies, it is near John 7:52, but is not immediately after it. These instances in which the passage has been transplanted, so to speak, are routinely claimed as evidence that the episode about Jesus and the adulteress was not part of the original text.

James R. White's comment is typical: "Such moving about by a body of text is plain evidence of its later origin." Dan Wallace's comment, in the course of a 2008 essay in which he challenged translators to remove John 7:53-8:11 from the text and place it in a footnote, is similar: "The *pericope adulterae* has all the earmarks of a pericope that was looking for a home. It took up permanent residence, in the ninth century, in the middle of the fourth gospel."

Such comments demonstrate their authors' failure to recognize the effects of the influence of the early lection-cycle. Some readers may find it

hard to believe that a scholar as well-known as Wallace could be unaware of the real explanation for the textual transplantation of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. But consider this excerpt from a lecture that Dr. Wallace gave in 2015, describing features found in MS 115: about 20 minutes into the lecture, Dr. Wallace stated, in reference to minuscule 115, in which the segment about Jesus and the adulteress appears after John 8:12, “Here’s what I think happened: the scribe who’s copying this manuscript out believed that the *pericope adulterae* was authentic. And as he’s copying the manuscript in front of him, he copies John 7:52, and then John 8:12, and he goes, ‘Wait a minute! What happened to the story of the woman caught in adultery?’ So he probably put that manuscript down, and found another manuscript in the monastery that had the story, and that’s what he then copied. And so at the end of the *pericope adulterae* we have John 8:12 again, and then the rest of John’s Gospel continues.” What entertaining fiction. The real reason for the format in GA 115 (a format shared by MSS 1050, 1349, and 2620) is that the copyist formatted the text in order to make the lector’s task a little easier, by arranging the entire Pentecost-lection as a single block of uninterrupted text.

James R. White has mentioned that in minuscule 225, the episode about Jesus and the adulteress is found after John 7:36, and he submitted this as “plain evidence of its later origin.” What is plain, however, is that White did not realize that this is another way in which copyists simplified the lector’s job. By placing the episode about Jesus and the adulteress immediately *before* the entire text of the lection for Pentecost, the Pentecost-lection became one uninterrupted block of text.

It is serendipitous that White happened to mention GA 225, because in this manuscript, John 7:53-8:11 is not the only passage that has been moved around as a lectionary-related adjustment. In GA 225 (and in GA 1128), John 13:3-17 is found not only in the Gospel of John, but also in the text of Matthew, after Matthew 26:20. This adaptation conforms to a lection-cycle that was annually read at Easter-time. The claims that the movement of John 7:53-8:11 to before, or after, the text of the Pentecost-lection imply that it was a “floating” passage have no more merit than the notion that John 13:3-17 was a “floating” passage.

When we observe manuscripts in which the episode about Jesus and the adulteress has been moved to a location before the beginning of the Pentecost-lection (that is, before John 7:37), or after the end of the Pentecost-lection (that is,

after John 8:12), we are looking at are lectionary-related adjustments, not evidence that the passage was ever floating around in search of a home. Dr. Wallace's assertion that John 7:53-8:11's place in the text of the Gospel of John was not secure until the 800s is ridiculous.

But what about the small group of manuscripts (mainly consisting of members of family-13) in which the episode about Jesus and the adulteress appears at the end of Luke 21? This too is an adaptation to a lection-cycle. After John 7:53-8:11 was removed from the text of John in order to format the Pentecost-lection as one continuous block of text, the excised passage was transferred to a location where it would conveniently follow the previous day's lection in the Menologion. Earlier in Luke 21, verses 12-19 serve as the lection for October 7, the feast-day of Saints Sergius and Bacchus. The next convenient insertion-point after Luke 21:19 is at the end of the chapter – and the contents of Luke 21:38 (“Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear him”) naturally invite the insertion of the lection for the next day: October 8 – the feast-day of the Penitents.

As shown in Ferrar & Abbott's 1887 *A Collation of Four Important Manuscripts*, the text of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in the family-13 manuscripts was adjusted in order

to interlock with the end of Luke 21. In the main members of family-13, John 8:2b-3a has been excised, in order to avoid repeating some things which are related in Luke 21:37-38: after “And early in the morning he came into the temple,” the text of family-13 is και προσήνεγκαν αυτω οι γραμματεις” (“And the scribes presented to him . . .”), where the typical Byzantine text of John 8:2 is significantly longer: και πας ο λαος ηρχετο και καθίσας εδίδασκεν αυτους· Αγουσιν δε οι γραμματεις (“and all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then brought the scribes . . .”).

I now consider the family-1 group of manuscripts (and 23 other manuscripts) in which John 7:53-8:11 (or portions of the text-segment) is located after John 21. The annotation that is found in the best representatives of this group of manuscripts is rarely mentioned by commentators who still maintain the implausible theory that the passage was a “floating” text until the 800s. There is a reason for this: it turns their theory into a pile of ashes. In manuscripts 1 and 1582 we find the following annotation:

“The chapter about the adulteress: in the Gospel according to John, this does not appear in the majority of copies; nor is it commented upon by the divine fathers whose interpretations have been preserved – specifically, by John Chrysostom

and Cyril of Alexandria; nor is it taken up by Theodore of Mopsuestia and the others. For this reason, it was not kept in the place where it is found in a few copies, at the beginning of the 86th chapter [that is, the 86th Eusebian section], following, 'Search and see that a prophet does not arise out of Galilee.'"

The manuscripts in which John 7:53-8:11 is found at the end of the Gospel of John (not only the Caesarean Greek manuscripts in family-1, but also various Armenian manuscripts) thus appear to echo an early attempt to make a textual compromise: the note claims that when it was noticed that most exemplars did not have the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, but a few of them did, a decision was made to move the passage to the end of the Gospel.

The first thing to see here is that the annotation makes it clear that this step was taken **after** the episode about Jesus and the adulteress had already been found in its usual location, after John 7:52. In addition, it must be emphasized that this transfer of the passage *from* John 7 and 8 *to* the end of the Gospel was not initiated in medieval times; it was done early enough to affect the Armenian version, before the 430s. I suspect that the instigator of this text-transplantation was none other than Eusebius of Caesarea.

The second thing to see – which may become clearer as we investigate some more manuscripts – is that the note in the family-1 manuscripts may be a copyist’s guess about how the passage ended up after John 21, rather than a clear-cut observation. In some witnesses, most of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress has been transferred to the end of the Gospel of John, but 7:53-8:2 has been kept in the text after 7:52. In these cases, the transfer cannot have been a simple case of finding the passage in some copies but absent in others. It was motivated by the same factor that caused some copyists to move the episode about Jesus and the adulteress to precede 7:37 or to follow 8:12: a desire to simplify the text’s format for lection-reading.

The effect of this factor is evident in Codex Ebnerianus (GA 105 from the 1100s) in which, after John 7:52, John 7:53-8:2 is in the text of John, but the next verse in the text is John 8:12, minus its opening phrase, so as to yield the equivalent of, “And he sat down and began to teach them, saying, “I am the light of the world,” *etc.* (In the margin next to 8:12, a note provides the missing text for the lector: “*Begin this with, ‘Again Jesus spoke to them, saying,’*” which is used as the incipit for a lection (not the one for Pentecost, but for another day) that begins with 8:12.)

Turning to the end of John in Codex Ebnerianus, we find, after the closing book-title and subscription, John 8:3-11, added in different (and later) handwriting. At the bottom of the page is the lection's title, "*For the Penitents.*" Instead of suggesting that John 7:53-8:11 was a "floating text," what we see here is the removal of most of the passage – the part that was the lection for Saint Pelagia's feast-day – in order to format an expanded form of the Pentecost-lection (with 7:53-8:2 included) as one uninterrupted block of text. It is undeniable, inasmuch as 7:53-8:2 is in the text of John in Codex Ebnerianus after 7:52, that in an ancestor of Codex Ebnerianus, John 8:3-11 stood in its usual place. But when Codex Ebnerianus was made, it did not contain a trace of John 8:3-11. The direction in which we see the episode about Jesus and the adulteress moving is not *into* John 7 and 8, but *from* that location.

The Palestinian Aramaic lectionary implies that the same thing happened elsewhere. The 200th lection in manuscript Pal-A (produced in 1030) of the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary consists of John 8:1-11, and John 8:1 concludes the 48th lection in Pal-A, Pal-B, and Pal-C (these names are given so as to keep them distinct from the Greek manuscripts known as A, B, and C). This alone is significant, inasmuch as it shows that the

passage was included in the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary. But a more interesting feature is a heading-note that appears in Pal-A and Pal-B following John 8:2: *“The Gospel of John was completed in Greek in Ephesus.”* In Pal-C, a heading-note after John 8:2 reads, *“The Gospel of John was completed by the help of Christ.”*

Each of those two sentences is a subscription-note – the sort of note that typically appears at the end of a Gospel. This implies (as J. Rendel Harris wrote back in the late 1800s) that the people who developed the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary used a copy of John in which John 8:3-11 was located at the end of the Gospel of John (after the subscription-note that followed John 21). When the Aramaic Lectionary was made, the copyists mechanically retained the subscription-note. Inasmuch as 7:53-8:2 was in the text of John, this shows that the episode about Jesus and the adulteress was already in the text of John 7-8 before John 8:3-11 was transferred to the end of the Gospel, in the ancient copies upon which the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary was based.

(Readers wishing to learn more about this may consult pages xv, lv, and lxx in *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels*, which was published in 1899 by Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson. Of course most of this

important evidence was unavailable to Westcott and Hort in 1881 – and it still goes unmentioned by almost all commentators in their discussions about the episode about Jesus and the adulteress.)

We cannot read the thoughts of the author of the annotation found in the leading representatives of family-1 to know whether his note is an informed description of a textual compromise, or a guess about why the episode about Jesus and the adulteress appeared after John 21 in some of his exemplars. We can discern however that Codex Ebnerianus and the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary echo the formats of ancestor-manuscripts from the early 400s, in which John 8:3-11 had been transferred to a location after John 21.

The transfer of the entire episode about Jesus and the adulteress, *from* John 7-8 *to* a position after John 21, attested in the family-1 manuscripts and in Armenian copies, appears to have happened in about the same period.

Finally I consider the testimony of three Georgian manuscripts (including Sinai Georgian MS 16) in which the episode about Jesus and the adulteress follows John 7:44. These manuscripts are not particularly old. Even the oldest Old Georgian manuscripts of John – in which the episode about Jesus and the adulteress does not

appear at all – are from medieval times. Among the transmission-streams which have impacted the Old Georgian version, though, the most influential one is the Armenian version, from which the Old Georgian version was initially translated. For this reason, it would not be surprising if this Caesarean witness were to display the same sort of transplanted episode about Jesus and the adulteress that is seen in some Armenian copies.

What we see, however, is a transfer to yet another location: after John 7:44. How did it get there? This mystery is very hard to solve unless one is familiar with the Eusebian Canons and Sections. What has happened here is that the Georgian text of John, which in its earliest stage does not contain the episode about Jesus and the adulteress after John 7:52, was revised by someone who possessed an exemplar that had a note about the episode about Jesus and the adulteress that resembled the note that we see in the family-1 manuscripts. This note stated that the episode about Jesus and the adulteress had been found “at the beginning of the 86th chapter,” that is, at the beginning of the 86th Eusebian Section, which begins at the beginning of John 7:45. Perhaps the note in the Georgian reviser’s exemplar did not proceed to quote from 7:52. Or perhaps the reviser thought that the quotation

from 7:52 was a reference to 7:40-41. Either way, having read the annotation that says that the episode about Jesus and the adulteress was found at the beginning of the 86th Eusebian Section, that is exactly where he inserted it.

(In Wieland Willker's *Textual Commentary on the Greek Gospels*, part of the family-1 annotation has been misconstrued, as if the Greek letters πς are an abbreviated reference to a father, rather than numerals.)

If one were to only read Metzger's *Textual Commentary* and other pro-Alexandrian propaganda, one could understandably believe that the individuals who placed the episode about Jesus and the adulteress at the end of Luke 21, or at the end of the Gospel of John, or on one side or the Pentecost-lection, are comparable to bombardiers dropping bombs onto foreign territory. However when the details of the evidence are given their due weight it becomes clear that the historical situation was totally different.

The people responsible for these text-transfers were like gardeners who want their garden to be tidy. They transplanted the passage from its place after John 7:52 in order to make the lector's job a little easier (and, if the family-1 note conveys an observation rather than a guess, in

order to retain the passage while deferring, in the main text, to the majority of manuscripts known to them). Every transmission-stream that displays a dislocation of the passage also contains (or, in the case of the three Georgian manuscripts, implies) earlier evidence of the presence of the passage in its usual position between John 7:52 and John 8:12.



Chapter Nine: Augustine's Theory of Excision

Some commentators, in the course of building a case against the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, make references to Augustine's assertion that some men had removed the story about the adulteress from the text of the Gospel of John due to concern that the account might be used by their wives to excuse adultery – only to proceed to explain that Augustine's theory is not plausible. They ask rhetorical questions along the lines of, *"If anyone had desires to remove passages which could be misinterpreted as if they obligated a Christian husband to pardon his adulterous wife, why were these other passages untouched?"*

I do not subscribe to the notion that anyone excised John 7:53-8:11 because they were afraid that their wives might read it and conclude that they could expect to be forgiven after committing adultery.

Therefore I will not spend a lot of time answering that objection; I think it's a red herring. Nevertheless at least three points ought to be noticed:

(1) The women in the other passages, by the time they leave the narrative stage, are resolved to spiritual reformation, whereas no

expression of repentance or acceptance of Christ's authority ever comes from the adulteress.

(2) The line of reasoning that says that that it is unlikely that someone removed one passage, because he left two others alone, is fallacious. It is like listening to a bank guard report that someone has stolen \$50,000 out of the bank vault, and replying that this is unlikely because \$100,000 is still in the vault. People in antiquity did not always think things through, any more than they do now.

(3) Augustine may have had in mind people who only had access to the Gospel of John, and who thus did not maul all the other passages because of lack of opportunity.

Another rhetorical question that is sometimes raised against Augustine's theory is, "*Why would anyone with that motivation remove John 7:53-8:2, instead of only 8:3-11?*". (The question comes straight from Hort.) In response, one could point out that in 18 manuscripts, John 7:53-8:2 is in the text and 8:3-11 is absent. One could also point out the possibility that John 7:53-8:11 already stood *as a lection* when the passage was excised, and the offended individual removed 7:53-8:2 because it was part of the same lection that contained 8:3-11, like a pickpocket who steals the credit cards and family-photographs of his

victim, simply because they are in the same wallet.

However, the main thing to see here is when Augustine's theory is used by commentators as a straw-man, presented only to be torn apart, this has no force at all against the explanation for the loss of John 7:53-8:11 that is far more plausible: the explanation that the episode about Jesus and the adulteress was removed due to a second-century copyist's misunderstanding of marks in his exemplar which were intended to instruct a lector about which portions of the text were to be read, and not read, on Pentecost.



INTERNAL EVIDENCE

We now turn to internal evidence, divided into four categories: vocabulary, style, the high number of textual variants in this passage, and the impact of the passage's presence or absence upon the continuity of the narrative in John 7-8.



Chapter Ten: Vocabulary

Regarding vocabulary, the case amounts to this: fifteen words in John 7:53-8:11 are found nowhere else in the Gospel of John. Reckoning that 373 of the 15,635 words in the Gospel of John occur only once, we should expect to find four or five once-used words in the average 190-word segment of text. Does the presence of 15 once-used words in John 7:53-8:11 indicate that it was not composed by John, or does it only mean that John was capable of occasionally using lots of once-used words in close proximity? Alan Johnson, in his article, *A Stylistic Trait of the Fourth Gospel in the Pericope Adulterae?*, points out that in John 2:13-17, there is a high proportion of once-used words – yet nobody concludes on this basis that John 2:13-17 must not be original.

Some commentators, perhaps sensing that the vocabulary in the episode about Jesus and the adulteress does not pose a substantial problem for Johannine authorship, have widened their search-parameters. Andreas Köstenberger has objected that “Several other words [in the *pericope adulterae*] occur only once or twice elsewhere in the Gospel.” Such specious reasoning seems designed to reach a predetermined conclusion.

The reference to “the scribes” in 8:3 has been described as a non-Johannine feature. In response, I would point out two things. First, in the family-1 text of 8:3, the scribes are not mentioned; the family-1 text supports, instead, οι αρχιερείς (“the chief priests”). Secondly, I submit that the entire argument based on vocabulary is precarious because it can be turned in any direction that the commentator wants to take it. That is, if the episode about Jesus and the adulteress contained only a few once-used words, commentators would immediately change their tune and frame that as evidence that the author of John 7:53-8:11 was a skillful mimic who very carefully conformed his vocabulary to that of the author of the rest of the book.



Chapter Eleven: Linguistic Style

The persuasiveness of arguments against the genuineness of John 7:53-8:11 based on style has been greatly exaggerated. Those who deny the genuineness of the passage face the challenge of showing that it is obviously not the work of John; yet at the same time they must explain how, if this is very *obvious*, the episode about Jesus and the adulteress was ever accepted as part of John's Gospel. They must also avoid creating a lose-lose scenario in which any unique feature is treated as foreign, and any non-unique feature is treated as mimicry.

Two stylistic traits in particular have been treated as evidence of non-Johannine authorship: the absence of *ouv* and the presence of *δε*. However, these small nails simply cannot hold the weight that the detractors of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress place upon them: concentrations of *δε* also occur in John 5:2-13 (seven), 6:2-16 (seven), 11:1-13 (seven), and 18:14-25 (nine). Shortages of *ouv* also occur in 1:1-20, 2:1-13, 3:1-24, 4:12-27, 5:1-15, and 11:22-30, and the word does not occur at all in chapters 14, 15, and 17. [See, online, the analysis made by Punch.]

In favor of the Johannine authorship of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress – and, consequently, rarely mentioned by commentators – is Alan Johnson’s observation that the convergence of *τουτο* and *δε* and *ελεγον* in a peripheral remark in John 8:6 is a Johannine syntactical feature – a “distinct literary trait” of Johannine style. In addition, **(1)** the occurrence of *παλιν* in the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, **(2)** the “sin no more” parallel between 8:11 and 5:14, **(3)** the parallel between 6:6 and 8:6, and – if the text of 8:3 in the family-1 manuscripts is adopted – **(4)** the correspondence between the references to “the chief priests and Pharisees” in that verse and elsewhere in the Gospel of John, all support the verdict that John wrote the episode about Jesus and the adulteress.



Chapter Twelve:
The High Number of Variants in the Episode
about Jesus and the Adulteress

It has been claimed that a remarkably high number of the textual variants in the episode about Jesus and the adulteress implies that it was not part of the original text. This can be answered by two lines of evidence. First, the existence of 80 textual variants in this 12-verse segment is not exceptional; its variant-readings have merely received more attention because it has been analyzed more than other 12-verses segments of John. A few random checks in Reuben Swanson's horizontal-line comparison of major Greek manuscripts of John indicate that it is probably safe to say that a typical 12-verse passage of John contains at least 70 variants.

Second, it is surprising that the number of variants is not higher, considering the unique treatment which the episode about Jesus and the adulteress received after its removal due to an early copyist's misunderstanding of the marks in a lector's exemplar. After readers realized the error that had been made, attempts were made to remedy the situation by adding the missing episode back into the text. The omission had

spread so far that in some locales, there were no copies of the Gospel of John that had not been affected by the mistake, and so some copyists who had not memorized the text settled for the next best thing: a similar story which was found in the works of Papias. (Eusebius of Caesarea, in Book 3, chapter 39 of his *Ecclesiastical History*, composed in the early 300s, states that Papias “relates another story of a woman who was accused of many sins before the Lord, which is contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews.”)

Some idea of the contents of this alternative version of the account may be perceived by considering the details in the story as was described by Didymus, and as it was reported to have appeared in a copy of the Gospel of John used by Mara of Amid in the early 500s (which was mentioned earlier). The Armenian manuscript Matenadaran 2374 (formerly Etchmiadzin 229) also has a very different form of the story. In this manuscript from the 900s, a story about an adulteress precedes John 8:12, but instead of the usual contents of John 7:53-8:11, we find the following:

“A certain woman was taken in sins, against whom everyone testified that she was deserving of death. They brought her to Jesus (to see) what he would command, in order that they might malign

him. Jesus made answer and said, "Come ye, who are without sin, cast stones and stone her to death." But he himself, bowing his head was writing with his finger on the earth, to declare their sins; and they were seeing their various sins on the stones. And filled with shame they departed, and no one remained, but only the woman. Jesus said, 'Go in peace, and present the offering for sins, as in their law it is written.'"

This is clearly not John 7:53-8:11. It is a proxy, probably based on the similar story that was preserved by Papias and/or the "Gospel of the Hebrews." Once copies of John that contained 7:53-8:11 re-entered the transmission-stream, such fill-ins were withdrawn, for the most part, but the traces of their visit remain in a few witnesses such as Codex D, and Mara's copy, and Matenadaran 2374, and in the variant-readings that echo their more vivid details.



Chapter Thirteen:
The Continuity of John's Narrative With or
Without the Episode about Jesus and the
Adulteress

According to James R. White, in comments about John 7:53-8:11 in the book *The King James Only Controversy*, "The primary internal consideration, aside from issues of vocabulary and style, is to be found in the fact that John 7:52 and John 8:12 'go together.' The story of the woman taken in adultery interrupts the flow of the text and the events recorded by John regarding Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem (7:45-8:20)."

This so-called 'fact' is nothing of the sort. The scene in John 7:45-52 takes place in Jesus' absence: officers who had been sent by the chief priests and Pharisees report to those assembled in verse 45, and a discussion about Jesus commences. Does White seriously suggest that this was happening in front of Jesus? Of course not; it happened elsewhere.

With the passage about the adulteress, we are told that the next thing that happened is that everyone went home. When the narrative is read without John 7:53-8:11, however, the very next thing that John wrote, after saying that the chief priests and Pharisees told Nicodemus, in

their private meeting, that no prophet has risen from Galilee (or, adopting a different reading, that no prophet is to arise from Galilee), is, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world,’” and so forth. With sudden harshness the scene changes from the Pharisees’ private meeting, to Jesus speaking to them (and Pharisees responding). But with John 7:53-8:11 in the text, the narrative flows more smoothly: the private meeting of the chief priests and Pharisees is concluded; Jesus is teaching the same group of people in 8:12 that is present in 8:2; the Pharisees’ presence with Jesus in 8:13 is explained by their entrance in 8:3.

Against the notion that the inclusion of John 7:53-8:11 disrupts the narrative, the following point are submitted:

① Contrary to what some commentators claim, there is no interpretive problem in the statement in 8:2 that Jesus returned to the temple early in the morning. Of course this implies that a new day has begun. While there is nothing shocking about that, it has been regarded as objectionable by some interpreters, such as Gordon Fee, due to their acceptance of a tenuous theory that John crafted his narrative in such a way that Jesus’ words, “*I am the light of the world*” were presented as if they were spoken at the time

when the temple's lampstand was lit, on the last day of the feast. In other words, part of the reason why these interpreters favor the non-inclusion of John 7:53-8:11 is that without those 12 verses, Jesus' statement in 8:12 can be interpreted as a typological claim upon the imagery of the ceremonial lampstand-lighting which occurred on the last day of the feast, in roughly the same way that Jesus' statement in John 7:37-38 is capable of being understood as if Jesus was staking a typological claim upon the imagery of the ceremonial water-pouring which occurred on that day of the feast.

However, John does not frame Jesus' statement in 7:37 as if Jesus spoke simultaneously with the water-pouring ceremony. John is not as interested in synchronizing Jesus' statements to the beat of the temple's ceremonies as he is in reporting events as they happened, and leaving it up to readers to make the typological connections. But if one wants to see a typological emphasis in 8:12, then simply notice that Jesus' statement that He is the light of the world is particularly appropriate in the early morning, as the lights that illuminated the temple were surpassed by the sunlight. Likewise the covenant of the Law that was given by Moses, with its limited scope, was being surpassed, and a new covenant of grace and truth was being

inaugurated by Christ which would be for the whole world. And what an appropriate sample of that truth it was when Jesus' display of grace triumphed over the Pharisees' demands for Mosaic justice in regard to the adulteress.

② Some commentators have claimed that the opening words of 8:12 do not link up with the end of 8:11. That's just false. The introductory phrase of 8:12 simply means that instead of continuing to speak to the adulteress, He spoke to the crowd again. This introductory phrase is entirely sensible and appropriate when a crowd has already been mentioned (in 8:2), and when Jesus has already spoken (in 8:7): He speaks as He teaches the crowd; he deals with the Pharisees; he speaks to the adulteress; he speaks to the crowd again. Nothing at all is senseless in that sequence. Rather, the variant that provokes a "Huh?" is the one *without* John 7:53-8:11, causing Jesus to appear to suddenly speak in 8:12 to Pharisees who were, one verse previously, in a private conference of their own.

③ Some commentators claim that there is a discrepancy between 8:9 and 8:12-13: verse 9 depicts Jesus alone with the woman, and yet 8:12-13 presumes that a crowd is present. This is a rather desperate objection. What did these commentators think was meant by the words "*in the midst*" at the end of verse 9?? Clearly the

individuals who depart in 8:9 are the ones who brought the adulteress to Jesus – not the crowd He was teaching. Even the driest imagination can easily picture the scene in the temple as the accusers interrupt Jesus' teaching-session, occupy space around Him, and then depart, leaving Jesus and the adulteress alone in that particular small space, around which the crowd is still present. To interpret the reference to Jesus and the adulteress being left alone, as if the watching, listening crowd had a reason to leave, and as the group that brought the adulteress to Jesus included every Pharisee in Jerusalem, is to abandon common sense.

④ The charge is sometimes made that the inclusion of John 7:53-8:11 creates a discrepancy with 8:13, which describes Pharisees speaking to Jesus, on the grounds that if the Pharisees left, as described in 8:9, there would be none to speak to Jesus in 8:13. However, the problem is even worse for the form of the text that is missing John 7:53-8:11: the Pharisees are then last seen (in 7:52) at a conference by themselves, and thus cannot be present to interact with Jesus in the temple two verses later. But come: nothing but a determination to squint a problem into existence requires anyone to imagine that the Pharisees who brought the adulteress to Jesus, and subsequently departed, were the only Pharisees in

the temple that day, as if no other Pharisees could be in the crowd.

Consider the case of John 9:35-41: there, Jesus seeks out the man who had received sight, and after Jesus speaks in verse 40, “some of the Pharisees who were with him” ask a question, even though no hint has been made about how or when these Pharisees arrived. They just step out of the background. This is just the way John writes. This shallow objection is merely the side-effect of John’s regard for his readers as intelligent people who would not assume that the only Pharisees in Jerusalem were the ones who brought the adulteress to Jesus.

I submit that the continuity of John’s narrative is maintained and even augmented, rather than disrupted, with John 7:53-8:11 included after 7:52.



Chapter Fourteen: Four Miscellaneous Concerns

(A) FOR EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS, ONLY THE ORIGINAL TEXT IS AUTHORITATIVE

Some commentators, following Metzger's lead, reject John 7:53-8:11 but embrace it as a true historical anecdote about Jesus. This approach reminds me of the affirmation that was made by Tommy Wasserman, Chris Keith, and Jennifer Knust at a conference about the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in 2014: even though all three of these individuals argued that the episode about Jesus and the adulteress is not part of the original text, they all affirmed that it should be proclaimed and preached.

A similar approach was taken by the leaders of the American Bible Society and, subsequently, the United Bible Societies, in the mid-1900s, when they arranged for the compilation of the *Greek New Testament*. This was to be an ecumenical enterprise; its compilers were chosen from a wide theological spectrum. The ecumenical movement of that era had no better friend than Bruce Metzger, the influential textual critic on the UBS compilation-committee. Bridled by an ecumenical agenda, and fully aware that translations based on a Greek text of the New Testament that diverged drastically from the Vulgate were unlikely to

receive a Roman Catholic imprimatur, the compilers included some passages, including the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, within double-brackets – passages which the compilers felt certain were not part of the original text. By taking this step, the compilers showed that their decisions were made not only on the basis of scientific analysis, but also on the basis of longstanding tradition and ecclesiastical sanction.

Evangelicals, for whom ecumenical concerns are not as high a priority as the purity of the text of the New Testament, are under no such burden. For most evangelicals, their theological school of thought practically requires that anything that is not the original text – no matter how edifying – lacks the right to be called Holy Scripture. The low quality of their text-critical training also renders almost all of their textual scholars oblivious to the power of lectionary-related factors to produce drastic effects upon the text. Due to the continuing collision of these two factors, a real risk exists that evangelical scholars' embrace of the so-called "reasonable eclectic" method will yield a compilation which is practically 100% Alexandrian, and in which John 7:53-8:11 (and Mark 16:9-20, Luke 22:42-44, and even Jesus' words from the cross in Luke 23:34) is completely jettisoned from the New Testament text.



**(B) RELIANCE ON MANUSCRIPTS' QUALITY
AND AGE TO SOLVE SPECIFIC TEXTUAL CONTESTS
IS FALLACIOUS**

I wish to revisit something that some commentators regard as the foremost argument against John 7:53-8:11: its absence in the “best” manuscripts. I submit that inasmuch as John 7:53-8:11 is genuine, and certain manuscripts do not contain it, those manuscripts’ status as the “best” manuscripts may fairly be drawn into question. A degree of circularity is built into this “best manuscripts” nomenclature. (It is a bit like Hort’s use of the term “Neutral” text.) *If* it is granted that the text which these manuscripts exhibit has been handed down with particular accuracy, *then* they should be called the “finest” manuscripts, but the answer to the question, “*Is John 7:53-8:11 genuine?*” answers the question, “*Is a manuscript of John that does not contain 7:53-8:11 a reliable manuscript?*”, at least to some extent.

Why should a reading that is manifestly ancient, and which is supported by 85% of the extant Greek manuscripts, and against which there is no decisive internal evidence, be rejected? Many of those who reject John 7:53-

8:11 answer this question by resorting to the blunt instrument which is wielded under the disguise of “reasoned eclecticism”: assert that manuscripts must be weighed rather than counted, and then give the manuscripts with the Alexandrian reading more weight than all the others. Thump. Why are the Alexandrian manuscripts given more weight? Because – it is said – they have the best text. And how is the quality of the text decided, at specific points? By appealing to the manuscripts with the most weight!

Such reasoning is clearly circular; nevertheless almost all commentators who reject John 7:53-8:11 treat an appeal to the “best” manuscripts as the number one reason for their position. Although 85% of the Greek manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11, it is argued that the 15% that do not contain the passage ought to be assigned six times the weight of the manuscripts that contain it, because that 15% includes the “best” manuscripts.

When scholars refer to one manuscript being better than another, they are not referring to the quality of the parchment, or the neatness of the script, or other aesthetic factors. They are referring to the quality of the manuscripts’ text. However, **the relative qualities of manuscripts’ texts should never be the primary consideration**

in attempts to resolve specific text-critical questions. To illustrate: suppose, after a professional basketball game, someone asked, “*Did LeBron make his twentieth shot-attempt?*”. What is the scientific way to find out? Is it scientific to say, “*LeBron is one of our best*

basketball players, and he made fourteen of his first nineteen shots, so, yes, he probably made the twentieth one”? That’s an appeal to probability, not evidence. We might settle for that as a last resort, but our first resort ought to be to gather information about what happened on the basketball court.

Even if it were granted that the text in some manuscripts from Egypt is *generally* better than the text in other manuscripts, simply saying, “*Trust the best manuscripts*” is a method of last resort; it is not a scientific way to undertake the resolution of a specific textual contest. To use the *generally* high quality of a manuscript’s text as if it decides the quality of its text *at specific points* is to guarantee that after a manuscript’s text has been declared to be generally of high quality, its text will get better and better as more and more variant-units are examined.

Nor should the importance of a manuscript’s age be overstated, as if the reading with the oldest support must be correct. The

Nestle-Aland/UBS compilers frequently rejected textual variants with the oldest manuscript-support. Think of the oldest manuscripts as *the manuscripts that have survived the longest*. The main factor that caused papyri in Egypt to survive the longest is the **climate**. And the climate did not ensure that Egyptian copyists made accurate copies. All the climate did was allow papyri in Egypt to survive, while elsewhere the New Testament manuscripts made of papyrus naturally decomposed.

A manuscript may outlive other manuscripts because it was kept in a climate with low humidity, or because it was hidden in a remote monastery, or because it was hidden in a clay jar, or because it was cherished as a relic associated with a much-admired bishop, or because it was seldom used. Just because a manuscript is old, this is not a sufficient reason to assume that it was accurately copied.

To successfully reconstruct the New Testament text, we must do more than simply assume that a manuscript that we are confident is correct 75% of the time must be correct 99% of the time. And we must not be held captive by the assumption that the older a manuscript is, the fewer mistakes its copyist must have made. Instead, ***we must think***, and this includes thinking about special factors that appear to have

impacted the manuscripts' text and the text of their ancestor-manuscripts. If there is any canon of New Testament textual criticism that overrules all others, it is that a special factor may be involved at any point, and for this reason no text-critical canon should be applied mechanically.



**(C) THE THEORY THAT JOHN 7:53-8:11 WAS A
FLOATING, EDITED, ACCEPTED INSERTION
IS INTRINSICALLY UNLIKELY**

One more piece of internal evidence in favor of the genuineness of John 7:53-8:11 merits special mention: the contents of the opening verse. Metzger described the passage as “*a piece of oral tradition*,” and many others, such as D. A. Carson and Daniel Wallace, have similarly depicted it as a sort of textual butterfly – an independent, freestanding composition that happened to perch within the passage that served as the lection for Pentecost. But what kind of freestanding composition begins with the statement that everyone went to his own house? In April of 2014, at a conference of scholars at the Southwestern Theological Baptist Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, Dr. Maurice Robinson made this point emphatically:

responding to Chris Keith's suggestion that someone had written the story to show that Jesus was literate, Robinson pointed out that no one writes stories that way. We do not find stories that begin, "Once upon a time, everybody went home."

Some audience-members at the conference laughed, and the reason they laughed is because the statement is *funny*. It is *amusing* to suggest that an oral tradition began that way. This point was conceded – but in order to salvage the idea that the account began as an oral tradition, a second step in its production was posited, in which the beginning of the account was reworded in order to create verbal handles, so to speak, to connect the narrative to the passage of John to which the interpolator wished to attach the interpolation.

And thus what appears, from a distance, to be a simple theory – there once was this story floating around, and someone put it into the text of John – becomes more complicated when we view it up close: there once was this story floating around, and somebody *rewrote* it, added extra introductory material to it, and then – for whatever reason (some say to show that Jesus was literate; some say to teach something about clemency in cases of major sins; some say something else) – inserted it into the Gospel of

John, right in the middle of a passage which was read annually at Pentecost. Then, although it was not accepted as part of the Pentecost-lection, and although it had never before been seen in any manuscript of the Gospel of John, and although the copies with the new story were competing with a host of manuscripts that did not contain it, the otherwise vigilant bishops and scriptorium-supervisors of Christendom accepted it and, despite the obvious risk of controversy that such a step invited, added it to the text of their Gospels-manuscripts, as shown by its presence in 85% of the extant Greek manuscripts, as well as by the statements from writers in the 300s and 400s who treated the passage the same as they treated the rest of the text of John. In addition, it somehow floated onto the end of Luke 21 in some of the family-13 manuscripts, not as a lectionary-related adaptation, but by some random floating-process. Which hypothesis is more plausible?

(D) THINKING THROUGH THE IMPLICATIONS OF “PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION”

Some evangelical commentators have affirmed the premise that God has providentially arranged the preservation of exactly what he wanted to communicate to modern-day Christians. Yet the very same individuals who

have made reassuring claims about “an embarrassment of riches” in the New Testament manuscripts have declared that where John 7:53-8:11 is concerned, more than eight out of every ten coins in the royal treasury are counterfeit. This is not a consistent position.

In the Reformed branch of evangelical Protestantism, one of the most important theological creeds is the *Westminster Confession*, which states that the Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek, have been “immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages.” The phrase “immediately inspired by God” cannot describe both a text of the Gospel of John with, or without, 7:53-8:11. The passage does not become inspired by becoming popular; it was either divinely inspired at the point of its production, or else it was never divinely inspired.

Also, it is not easy to make a plausible case that a New Testament text with John 7:53-8:11, and a New Testament text without John 7:53-8:11, are equally pure. Either a genuine and inspired report of some of Jesus’ words and actions is missing in 268 Greek manuscripts, or else a counterfeit and uninspired story has infected the text in 1,476 Greek manuscripts.

If modern-day Reformed commentators continue to reject John 7:53-8:11, they should be

honest about the implications of their belief that 85% of the extant Greek manuscripts of John, and all of the English translations used by the authors of the *Westminster Confession*, contain a passage that God has neither inspired nor approved. They should stop pretending that they believe the *Westminster Confession's* claim that the same text that God inspired has been kept pure in all ages by God's singular care and providence.

(Speaking for myself – in case readers might wonder – I do not subscribe to the *Westminster Confession*, and as far as providential preservation is concerned, I only affirm that the purity of the message of the original text has been sufficiently maintained, not every detail of the form of the original text. A ship may lose some of its paint, and gain some barnacles, without losing its cargo.)

On the other hand, if future Reformed individuals affirm with no pretense that the same text which God inspired has been providentially kept pure in all ages, and they do not resort to novel definitions, but refer to the text that was used by the composers of the *Westminster Confession*, then it seems inevitable that such individuals will believe, either on the basis of a scientific analysis of the evidence, or due to a thoughtful consideration of the contents of Bibles typically used in Christian churches throughout most of the church's existence, or simply on the

basis of faith, that John 7:53-8:11 was immediately inspired by God when it was first written.



CONCLUSION

It has been proposed that John 7:53-8:11 should not be considered Scripture, and that the foremost reason to reject the passage is its absence in “the best and most reliable manuscripts.” When we obtain a close view of what is being described in this way, we see that the pivotal evidence amounts to six Greek manuscripts (Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, T, and W) which, in the pertinent place in the Gospel of John, are connected to a single transmission-line, specifically, the Alexandrian Text. This is, however, balanced on the other side of the scales by witnesses of comparable date – the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, Ambrose, Pacian, Augustine, Codex Bezae, Codex Fuldensis’ chapter-titles, and the many Greek and Latin manuscripts mentioned by Jerome, *etc.* – which affirm the early existence of the passage, and most of which support its inclusion in the usual place between John 7:52 and 8:12.

If the non-genuineness of John 7:53-8:11 is assumed, then the explanation of the available evidence is complicated, involving stages of oral circulation, editing, insertion, and recirculation as part of the text of the Gospel of John. When the genuineness of John 7:53-8:11 is assumed, then

the explanation of the evidence is much less complicated: the witnesses that do not support the inclusion of the passage may all be traced back to an influential copying-center in Egypt in the mid-100s, where a mechanically minded copyist, using a lector's copy as his exemplar, misunderstood instructions to skip from the end of John 7:52 to the beginning of John 8:12.

The earliest manuscripts of the Byzantine transmission-line which show John 7:53-8:11 being skipped in the Pentecost-lection, and the earliest representatives of the Caesarean transmission-line which show John 7:53-8:11 (and, in the Palestinian Aramaic Lectionary, 8:3-11) being transplanted to the end of the Gospel of John, are not as old as the earliest Egyptian manuscripts, but they are as old as one could reasonably expect them to be, considering the differences between the Egyptian climate and the harsher climates elsewhere. The earlier manuscripts representing these transmission-lines have not survived, but their voices survive loud and clear in the multitude of copies which echo them.

The internal evidence reveals no compelling reason to deny Johannine authorship of John 7:53-8:11. The external evidence indicates that an early copyist omitted John 7:53-8:11 either due to a misunderstanding of notes or marks which were

intended to tell a lector which text was to be read on Pentecost-Sunday, or as a conscious simplification of the Pentecost-lection, transplanting the passage to the end of John's Gospel, from which position it was lost.

In conclusion I therefore encourage ministers of the gospel everywhere to preach the text known as John 7:53-8:11 and to give it the respect and reverence that it deserves as part of the inspired Word of God.



A TOUR OF THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

A lot of misinformation is circulating about John 7:53-8:11. The individuals spreading false information – in commentaries, in online articles, and in classrooms – come from a wide spectrum of theological backgrounds; they include atheists, evangelicals, and fundamentalists. They include novices and experienced scholars. Some of the people who have rejected John 7:53-8:11 with the most confidence are among the most misinformed.

How can people make sound decisions about this passage when they are dependent upon sources with descriptions of the evidence which are terribly incomplete, one-sided, and in many cases flatly erroneous? It seemed worthwhile to improve this situation by offering a review of the most important pieces of evidence – mainly manuscript-evidence, evidence from early versions, and the evidence from patristic writers. (In this review, some material covered in the main part of this book will be revisited; although renders the text somewhat repetitive, I thought it was a better option than requiring readers to navigate back and forth to different parts of the book.) First, though, I wish to expose a few cases of misinformation, and to review the proposal

offered in *A Fresh Analysis of the Story of the Adulteress* about how these 12 verses were lost in an early influential transmission-stream.

Very many commentators only describe the relevant evidence in a vague and generalized way, and invite their readers to consult Bruce Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* for further details. Metzger's comments – published in 1975 – are unfortunately outdated, one-sided, and inaccurate.

Even scholars such as Daniel Wallace and Larry Hurtado still refer their readers to Metzger's comments, despite knowing quite well that Metzger left out many important details about the evidence Metzger offers a sample-list of manuscripts that do not include the passage, but he provides no similar list of the manuscripts that include it. Metzger fails to mention almost all of the patristic evidence that favors the inclusion of the passage. He does not even mention Jerome's statement that the passage had been found in many manuscripts, both Greek and Latin. Instead, he tells his readers that no Greek church father before the 1100s comments on the passage.

We can generously reckon that Metzger made this claim, not to deliberately deceive anyone, but simply because he was unaware of the contents of the relatively obscure statements in the British Library's Add. MS 17202, and

because he did not know about the publication of Didymus' *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. However, when writers 30 or 40 years after the publication of Didymus' statements are still referring their readers to a source which will misinform them about this point (and others), it is hard to believe that these writers are determined to ensure that their readers receive accurate and up-to-date information on the subject.

Metzger depicts the dislocations of the passage as if they imply that it was "a piece of oral tradition" which most scribes inserted after John 7:52 but which other scribes arbitrarily inserted at other points. Metzger fails to provide any clue (as if he himself was unaware) about the lectionary-related mechanism which led to the transplantation of the passage. Metzger also fails to mention that the passage that is accompanied by asterisks is frequently not John 7:53-8:11, but only John 8:3-11. I submit that commentators and professors who still recommend Metzger's comments to their readers and students must be either negligent or devious.

Nevertheless the authors who still rely upon Metzger (and who invite their readers to do so) are paragons of precision compared to some other writers. In the interest of brevity I cite just one example: Bart Ehrman, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He has

presented the history of the passage in the following way: “How did we get the story? Well, in the Middle Ages, apparently a scribe knew the story, had heard of the story someplace, through somebody telling him the story, and wrote it down in the margin of a manuscript. And some other scribe came along and saw this story in the margin of a manuscript, and then transferred it into the manuscript itself, in the gospel of John. And from then on that manuscript got copied, and one of the subsequent copies of that manuscript was the copy that was used then by the King James translators when they translated the Bible.” If such a gross inaccuracy had come from a complete beginner, one might feel a sense of pity for him. When this pungent nonsense comes from an experience professor, one feels pity for his students.

There is no excuse for such mistakes in a world in which Wieland Willker’s *Textual Commentary on the Greek Gospels* exists and is freely available online. Willker’s work is far from perfect, and I disagree with many of his text-critical decisions, but in terms of both the extent of the data he shares, and the balance of his presentations, and the depth of his analysis, Willker’s work in general is far superior to that of Metzger. Readers who want to know more about the Greek manuscripts in which the episode about

Jesus and the adulteress is located at the end of the Gospel of John, and about the cluster of manuscripts in which the episode about Jesus and the adulteress (or part of it) is found in the Gospel of Luke, after Luke 21:38, will benefit from a careful reading of Willker's descriptions.

As explained previously, in the ancestor-manuscript of the major family-13 manuscripts, the episode about Jesus and the adulteress is placed after Luke 21:38 for the convenience of someone who wanted a continuous-text copy of the Gospels with helpful adaptations to the lectionary. This copyist possessed manuscripts similar to 1 and 1582, in which the episode about Jesus and the adulteress had already been placed at the end of the Gospel, after being extracted from within the passage where the Pentecost-lection was found (John 7:37-8:12). Finding it inconvenient to turn to the end of John to find the lection for Saint Pelagia's Day (October 8), he simplified the situation by transferring the text into Luke, where its opening words interlock with the words in Luke 21:38, but also where it would be conveniently close to the Menologion-lection for the previous-day; the lection for October 7 (for Saints Sergius and Bacchus), which is Luke 21:12-19.

F. C. Burkitt, along with several others who have looked into this question (Colwell, Van Lopik,

and earlier, Burgon), concluded that the displacement in family-13 as the result of lectionary-influence. Burkitt regarded any other explanation as “inconceivable.”

(Perhaps a brief detour into the background of these saints is in order, lest anyone imagine that the celebration of their feast-days was a late medieval development. Sergius and Bacchus were martyred in the early 300s. There are officially three saints named Pelagia in the current martyrologies. The story of Pelagia of Tarsus, set in 304, looks like a muddled legend. The story of Pelagia of Antioch, who died in 311, looks mostly real, and she was mentioned by Ambrose and Chrysostom. (Pelagia of Antioch died by throwing herself from a building in order to escape some lascivious soldiers. It is understandable that her story was rewritten – so as to become the story of Pelagia of Tarsus – or replaced – with the story of Pelagia the Penitent – so as to not appear to encourage suicide.) The story of Pelagia the Penitent (set in the mid-400s) is told at the *Vitae-Patrum* website. October 8 is well-established as her feast-day in the Menologion. The lection assigned to her is typically John 8:3-11 although there were some variations; in a copy of the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary it is John 8:1-11.)

The theory that the dislocations of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress to the end

of John, and to before or after the text for Pentecost (John 7:37-8:12, minus 7:53-8:11), and to the end of Luke 21, indicate that John 7:53-8:11 landed in those locations as the verses floated down from oral-tradition-land is a corpse that now stinketh and it must be buried. Confirmation of this point will be granted by anyone who has read and understood Chris Keith's book *The Initial Location of the Pericope Adulterae in Fourfold Tradition*. Whether one regards the passage as authentic Scripture or not, its textual history clearly began in the Gospel of John, between 7:52 and 8:12. Nevertheless the groupthink and herd-mentality in New Testament academia is so pervasive that it will probably take decades for that insidious lie – or in the polite language of academia, that unfortunate misappraisal – to die.

Regarding commentators' presentation of the manuscripts that include the episode about Jesus and the adulteress (if they present them at all), there is much room for improvement. Some commentators have given their readers the false impression that the passage is only attested in a small minority of manuscripts. Precise statistics about the number of manuscripts with, and without, John 7:53-8:11, have not been easy to find until recently, when Dr. Maurice Robinson made this the focus of a long-term research project. As a result, the following statistic is

offered: in early 2024, the number of known Greek Gospels-manuscripts that do not contain any text from John 7:53-8:11 is **270**. The number of known Greek Gospels-manuscripts that contain at least some text from John 7:53-8:11 is **1,503**.

That is not a close contest. Of course authenticity is not decided by a democratic election. This count does not take into consideration the possible implications of the asterisks and other marks that accompany the passage in over 270 copies. (Metzger described these marks as if they must have been added to convey scribal suspicion that the passage is dubious. However, Robinson has proposed that in many instances the marks only accompany 8:3-11, and their purpose was not to convey doubt but to convey to the lector that the passage is to be skipped when John 7:37-52 and John 8:12 are read for the Pentecost-lection.)

Let's take a closer look at some of the early manuscripts in which John 7:52 is followed immediately by 8:12 and see if there are any unusual aspects of their testimony. The UBS4 apparatus lists two papyri and 12 uncials as witnesses for the non-inclusion of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress – Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Sinaiticus (01), Vaticanus (03), L (019), N (022), T (029), W (032), X (033), Y (034), Delta (037), Theta (038), Ψ (044), and 0141. (Robert

Waltz adds 0211 to the list.) Five members of this list – Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and W – have production-dates before the 400s. (As I mentioned before, I assign a production-date for W in the late 300s but this is an estimate and one could fairly assign it to the early 400s.) A and C (both from the 400s) are damaged but do not have enough space on the missing pages to include the full text of John 7:53-8:11, so they should also be included as witnesses that support the non-inclusion of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. The others break down as follows: L = 700s. N = 500s. T = 400s. X = 900s. Y = 800s. Delta = 800s. Theta = 800s. Psi = 800s (or 900s).

Instantly granting that the Alexandrian Text lacks the passage, the manuscripts Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Sinaiticus, B, C, L, Delta, T, and Psi may be placed on the scales as representatives of the Alexandrian Text. The text in Codex Borgianus (T, 029) is particularly easy to identify as Egyptian, because its Greek text is accompanied by a text in Sahidic.

Codices 019 and 037 both have unusual features which indicate that although their exemplars apparently did not contain John 7:53-8:11, their scribes were aware of other manuscripts that contained the missing passage. In both of these manuscripts, the copyists left a prolonged blank space after John 7:52 – a detail

which Bruce Metzger apparently did not consider worth mentioning when he listed these two manuscripts as witnesses against the inclusion of the passage.

Codex W, also, has a feature which might suggest scribal reluctance to disallow the retention of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress: Willker notes that W has a blank page (blank on both sides, but ruled for writing) between John and Luke, and states, "It is possible that this indicates knowledge of the PA."

Codex Sinaiticus similarly has one blank page – blank on one side – after the end of John. This may merely be a "filler" page but it cannot be ruled out that it was reserved in case the owner of the manuscript wished to add the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress.

Codex N (022), a purple Gospels-codex produced in the early 500s, does not contain the episode about Jesus and the adulteress after John 7:52. The text on its last extant page stops in John 21:20: with the "ακολου" of ακολουθουντα. (See Cronin's 1899 presentation of the text of Codex N in *Texts & Studies*, Vol. 5.) The text of Codex N has some affinities with the text of the family-1 manuscripts and the family-13 manuscripts, in which the passage is dislocated. Cronin (on pages LIX-LX of his introductory notes) lists nine agreements between family 13 and N in John

(including the insertion of οι ιουδαιοι after απεκριθησαν αυτω in John 8:33. There is also a remarkable agreement between the text of family-1 and Codex N in John 8:21: they read και ουχ [ουκ in N] ευρησετε με (“and will not find me”) after ζητησετε με (“you will seek me”). (A similar reading is in 565.)

It was once thought that Codex B (03, Vaticanus) testified that its copyists were aware of the existence of manuscripts that contained John 7:53-8:11. In the 1990s, Philip Payne showed that Codex Vaticanus contains marks in its margin – two dots placed side-by-side horizontally, called umlauts or *distigmai* – which signify the presence of a textual variant in the line of text that they accompany. In Codex Vaticanus, alongside the blank space in the column below the conclusion of John 21, there is an umlaut-mark. Of course the only textual variant that occurs after the end of John is the inclusion of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in the family-1 manuscripts.

Recent study of the *distigmai*, anticipated by me in 2022, showed conclusively that the *distigmai* were added to Codex B in the 1500s, almost certainly by Juan de Sepulveda. (Incidentally, features very similar to *distigmai* are found in the Freising Gospels, a Latin manuscript produced in the mid-800s – now housed at Munich in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm

#17011. It is not the identically-named Freising Gospels at the Walters Art Museum.)

Dr. Dan Wallace, who rejects the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, erroneously treated the distigmai in 03 as if they were added when the codex was produced in his equally erroneous rejection of Mark 16:9-20 in a chapter in *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: Four Views* (B & H Academic 2008).

The Greek witnesses which provide unqualified support for the non-inclusion of the story about the adulteress before the 500s are: Papyrus 66 (unless it had the story about the adulteress at the end of John), Papyrus 75, Sinaiticus, Borgianus, Alexandrinus, and C. I'll add W to the list, working from the premise that its blank page is just a filler-page.

Thus the Greek manuscript-evidence against John 7:53-8:11 from before the 500s consists predominantly of manuscripts that either have an Egyptian provenance, or which represent the Alexandrian Text of John, or both. We could just as easily say that as far as Greek manuscripts before the 500s are concerned, the unqualified manuscript-evidence for non-inclusion of the story about the adulteress consists of representatives of the Alexandrian Text plus Codex A.

If we were asking, “*Was the passage present in the Greek text from which these seven manuscripts from Egypt are descended?*” then we would quickly reach a conclusion: **No**. But not everyone is content to treat the Egyptian text as if its testimony alone is sufficient to establish the original text of the New Testament. Let’s explore the text using testimony from some other locales – once again setting aside, for the time being, evidence from the 500s or later. The climates in other locales were not as conducive to manuscript-preservation as the climate in Egypt, so in order to explore the early testimony outside Egypt, it is necessary to consult versional and patristic evidence.

- The earliest reference to the story about the adulteress, or to a story resembling it, was embedded in the work of an extremely early witness: Papias of Hierapolis, who wrote his *Five Books of Expositions of the Lord* around 110. Irenaeus, in *Against Heresies* Book 5 (33:3-4), described Papias as “a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp.” A note in Codex Vaticanus Alexandrinus 14 (produced in the 800s) states that Papias served as John’s amanuensis: “He wrote down the Gospel correctly as John dictated” and a note in a catena-commentary likewise states that John dictated his Gospel and

Papias wrote down John's words. (See Fragment of Papias #19 and #20, on page 324 of *The Apostolic Fathers*, second edition, by Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, © 1989 by Baker Book House Co.)

Papias' *Five Books* has not survived except in meager fragments and occasional citations by later writers. One of those later writers was Eusebius of Caesarea. In *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, 39:17, Eusebius states that Papias "has related another account about a woman accused of many sins before the Lord, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews contains." – εκτέθειται δε και άλλην ιστορίαν περι γυναικος επι πολλαϊς αμαρτίαις διά βληθείσης επι του κυρίου, ήν το καθ' εβραίους ευαγγελιον περιέχει.

This statement raises several questions: did Eusebius mean that Papias is responsible for the story about the adulteress, and that the same episode was in the Gospel according to the Hebrews? Or did Eusebius mean that Papias was responsible for a similar, but different, story, and that this other, similar story is found in the Gospel of the Hebrews?

Papias is mentioned in an extract from the Arabic writings of Agapius of Hierapolis (who lived in the 900s in Hierapolis-in-Syria, not the Hierapolis in Asia Minor). Agapius stated, "At this time there lived in Heirapolis a prominent teacher

and author of many treatises; he wrote five treatises about the gospel. In one of these treatises, which he wrote concerning the gospel of John, he relates that in the book of John the evangelist there is a report about a woman who was an adulteress. When the people led her before Christ our Lord, he spoke to the Jews who had brought her to him: whoever among you is himself certain that he is innocent of that of which she is accused, let him now bear witness against her. After he had said this, they gave him no answer and went away.”

In another fragment, a statement from Vardan Areveltski (a.k.a. Vardan Vardapet), an Armenian historian, is also presented. He wrote in the 1200s: *“That story of the adulterous woman, which the other Christians have written in their gospel, was written by a certain Papias, a disciple of John, who was declared and condemned as a heretic. Eusebius said this.”* The doctrine which Vardan Areveltski regarded as heresy was chiliasm, the belief in a future earthly kingdom which shall be ruled by Christ for a thousand years. He stretched the facts considerably. Chiliasm was not considered a heresy in the second century (bishops such as Irenaeus endorsed the idea). Vardan’s low view of Papias seems to be based on Eusebius’

comments about Papias in *Ecclesiastical History*, Book Three, chapter 39, along these lines:

He says that the kingdom of Christ will be physically established for a thousand years upon this present earth after the resurrection of the dead. I suppose he got this idea by receiving the apostolic accounts superficially, not having perceived that the things they speak of were expressed using typological symbols. Honestly, his mental capacity is demonstrated by his words to have been small indeed. Nevertheless, he was responsible for the fact that very many clergymen after him hold his opinion; they enlist for support the antiquity of men – Irenaeus, for instance – and any man will do, if he has proclaimed that he thought the same as they do.

The combination of **(a)** the attribution of a story about an accused woman to Papias (deduced from Eusebius' comment in *Ecclesiastical History*, Book Three, 39:17) combined with **(b)** the description of Papias as a heretic, would probably (in the minds of some medieval Armenian copyists) form a valid reason to reject the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. But the existence of such a motive in medieval Armenia does not mean that it existed earlier in other locales.

In the Armenian MS Matenadaran 2374 (formerly Etchmiadzin 229), an episode that

resembles John 7:53-8:11 is included in the text of John. Here is an English translation which was presented by F. C. Burkitt in a note attached to his *Two Lectures on the Gospels* (1901) (extracted from F. C. Conybeare's article in *The Expositor* for Dec. 1895, page 406):

"A certain woman was taken in sins, against whom all bore witness that she was deserving of death. They brought her to Jesus (to see) what he would command, in order that they might malign him. Jesus made answer and said, "Come ye, who are without sin, cast stones and stone her to death." But he himself, bowing his head was writing with his finger on the earth, to declare their sins; and they were seeing their several sins on the stones. And filled with shame they departed, and no one remained, but only the woman. Saith Jesus, 'Go in peace, and present the offering for sins, as in their law is written.'"

In this form of the story, the woman is not specifically said to be accused of adultery. Instead she is accused of many sins – which is pretty close to what Eusebius describes was said in the story that was perpetuated by Papias. It seems that Eusebius meant that Papias wrote down a different report of the same events reported in John 7:53-8:11, and that the alternative version was also found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. If so, Eusebius might display awareness

of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress by referring to Papias' account as *another* story, unless he was merely transitioning from the subject he had been describing in the previous paragraph.

- Papyrus Egerton 2, to which a production-date around 150 has been assigned, features a story about Jesus cleansing a leper. After the miracle, Jesus is depicted saying something to the person who has been healed. When this text was published in 1935 in *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Christian Papyri*, by Idris Bell and T. C. Skeat, Jesus' statement was reconstructed with much guesswork: "And the Lord said to him, 'Go and show thyself unto the priests'" – in Greek, "[ο δε κυριος ειπεν αυτω]· πορε[υθεις επιδειζον σεαυτον] τοι[ς ιερευσι . . .]" That was a reasonable guess considering that the story seems to generally echo Matthew 8:1-4 and Mark 1:40-44 and Luke 5:12-14.

However in 1987 Michael Gronewald discovered that an additional papyrus fragment, Köln 255, is part of Egerton Papyrus 2. K. C. Hanson's webpage displays the reconstruction that results from the addition of Köln 255: after Jesus says, "*Go show yourself to the priests,*" He also says, "*and offer concerning the purification as Moses commanded, and sin no more.*" – the

reading of the last line is [μ]ηκει α[μα]ρτανε. This could come from the imagination of the author. It could be derived from John 5:14. Or it could be extracted from John 8:11.

- Chapter 16 of the *Protevangelium of James*, composed in the mid-100s, briefly narrates a scene in which the chastity of Mary and Joseph is tested, following the instruction of the Law (in Numbers 5) and they are both vindicated. The priest who administers the chastity-test declares, “If the Lord God has not made manifest your sins, neither do I judge you.” The late Diatessaron-specialist William Petersen proposed (in an essay in *Sayings of Jesus – Canonical and Non-Canonical: Essays in Honor of Tjitze Baarda*, 1997) that this statement might express the author’s awareness of the story about the adulteress (though not necessarily as part of the Gospel of John). Specifically, the Greek phrase spoken by the priest – ουδε εγω [κατα]κρινω υμας – corresponds to the words in John 8:11, ουδε εγω σε κατακρινω. The oldest known copy of the *Protevangelium of James*, from the 300s, has the phrase to which Petersen refers. Anticipating the objection that the *Protevangelium of James* says “judge” (κρινω) rather than “condemn” (κατακρινω), Petersen first mentioned that according to Tischendorf’s data-compilation (initially published in 1876), one

copy of the *Protevangelium of James* (MS 1468 in Paris, made in the 1000s), reads κατακρίνω. But a second observation makes a heavier impact: in the Byzantine Text (RP2005), John 8:11 reads ουδε εγώ σε κρίνω.

How much weight should be put on this small peg? One could dismiss the similarity as coincidental. Nevertheless this is an interesting early witness.

- The Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* is generally regarded as a text that was composed in the 200s. Kevin P. Edgecomb has placed R. Hugh Connolly's English translation of this text (published in 1929) online. The contents of its seventh chapter do not constitute an exact quotation of John 7:53-8:11, and the author does not say that he is quoting the Gospel of John, but he is clearly describing the events that are recorded in John 7:53-8:11. It would be remarkable for an author in the mid-200s to think that he could use this episode to establish an authoritative precedent if it were arcane in any way. This consideration is not absolutely decisive, inasmuch as the author used an agraphon, "*Be ye approved moneychangers,*" in chapter 9. But it is pretty close.

- In 1957, René Draguet published the text of a fragment in the article "*Un morceau grec inédit*

des vies de Pachôme apparié à un texte d'Evagre en partie inconnu," in *Le Muséon* 70, pages 267-306. An English translation of Draguet's fragment (in Vat. Gr. MS #2091) is in the second volume of Armand Veilleux's *Pachomian Koinonia* on pages 111-114.

The fragment features an account of the following incident in the life of Pachomius: two monks got into an argument. One struck the other one, who responded by hitting the first monk just as hard. In the midst of the whole assembly, the blessed Pachomius the Archimandrite summoned the two monks to interrogate them, and after obtaining their admission of guilt, he expelled the one who had struck first, and suspended the other one for a week. As the first monk was being led out of the monastery – I now depend on a translation found on pages 33-34 of *The Highest Poverty – Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, by Giorgio Agamben, © 2013 Stanford University Press –

"A venerable old man named Gnositheos, eighty years of age – and in fact, as his name indicated, he had knowledge of God – came forward and cried out from among the monks: 'I, too, am a sinner and I am leaving with him. If anyone is without sin, let him remain here.' And the whole crowd of brothers, as though they were one man, followed the old man, saying, 'We also

are sinners and we are going with him.’ Seeing them all leaving, the blessed Pachomius ran out in front of them, threw himself on the ground with his face in the dirt, covered his head with earth, and asked forgiveness of them all.”

The account then states that later, Pachomius asked himself, *“If murderers, magicians, adulterers, and those who are guilty of whatever other sin take refuge in the monastery to work out their salvation there by penance, who am I to drive a brother from the monastery?”*.

Can the similarities between this account and verbiage found in John 7:53-8:11 be merely coincidental? They seem remarkable when one considers the Greek text (which is provided by Draguet, beginning on page 271): the woman is “in the midst” – εν μεσω – in John 8:3 and 8:9; Gnositheos cries out εν μεσω της αδελφότητος. Jesus says to the scribes in John 8:7, ο αναμάρτητος υμων πρωτος επ’ αυτην βαλέτω λιθον; Gnositheos says to his fellow-monks, καγω, αδελφοί, αμαρτωλός ειμι και υπάγω μετ’ αυτου· ει τις ουν ουκ εχει αμαρτιας παραμένη ενταυθα and his fellow-monks reply και ημεις αμαρτωλοί εσμεν. (The reading of D in 8:11 is υπαγε.) A crowd departs in John 8; a crowd departs in the anecdote about Gnositheos. An offense goes unpunished in John 8; an offense goes unpunished in the anecdote. The woman is accused of

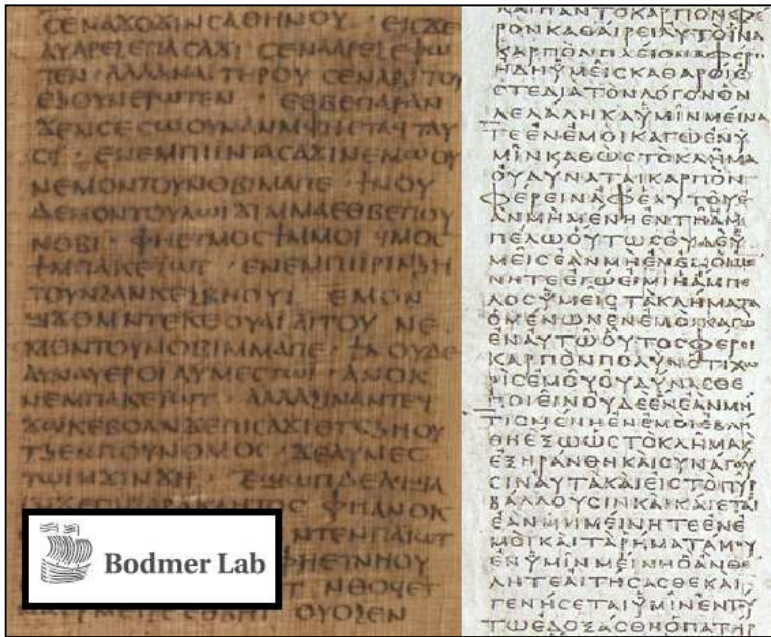
adultery in John 8; Pachomius thinks of adulterers in the anecdote.

Although Vat. Gr. MS 2091 was produced in the 1000s, the source of the anecdote may go back to a source contemporary with Pachomius, who died in 346. Thus, if the framework of the Gnositheos-anecdote was modeled on the events in the story about the adulteress, it attests to an awareness of the passage in southern Egypt in the same era when Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were made.

- Pacian of Barcelona, bishop from 365-391 (a married bishop), mentions that “the Lord spared even the adulteress who confessed, when none had condemned her,” in paragraph 39 of his *Third Epistle to Sympronian – Against the Treatise of the Novatians*.

- Bodmer Papyrus III, a Sahidic manuscript produced in 350-375, contains the Gospel of John without 7:53-8:11. (See Herbert Thompson’s book about this manuscript for a lot more information about it.) Metzger observed (in *The Bible in Translation*, page 37, © 2001 by Bruce M. Metzger) that the handwriting of this manuscript “bears a strong resemblance to that of the mid-fourth-century copy of the Greek Bible known as Codex Vaticanus, allowances being made for the

fact that one is on papyrus and the other on parchment.”



For comparison: Bodmer Papyrus III (left)
and Codex Vaticanus (right)

- Hilary of Poitiers, bishop from 350-368, makes a couple of references in his *Commentary (or Homily) on Psalm 118* (in parts 8 and 15) to the absence of sin, which resemble Christ's words in John 8:7. See Chris Keith's comments on page 207 of *The Pericope Adulterae, the Gospel of John, and the Literacy of Jesus*.
- Codex Vercellensis, a fragmentary Old Latin Gospels-manuscript that was probably made by, or under the supervision of, Eusebius of Vercelli (who died in 373), does not include John 7:53-8:11. More will be said about this witness in the description of Old Latin evidence.
- *Apostolic Constitutions*, a composite text from about 380, echoes the Syriac *Didascalia* in the first six of its eight parts. In Book 2, the 24th chapter is focused on the proposition, "*Christ Jesus Our Lord Came to Save Sinners by Repentance,*" and includes among the examples of divine mercy the following:

"He says also to another, [the reference is Luke 7:47] a woman that was a sinner: 'Your sins, which are many, are forgiven, for you love much.' And when the elders had set another woman which had sinned before Him, and had left the sentence to Him, and had gone out, our Lord, the Searcher of the hearts, inquiring of her whether

the elders had condemned her, and being told, 'No,' said unto her, 'Go your way therefore, for neither do I condemn you.' This Jesus, O you bishops, our Savior, our King, and our God, ought to be set before you as your pattern."

The differences in this text do not obscure its clear echo of the *Didascalía*.

- Ambrose of Milan, c. 386, writing in Latin, cited the story about the adulteress repeatedly and extensively. One example is in *Epistle 26, To Irenaeus (or Studius)*. (This Irenaeus was a contemporary of Ambrose in the 300s, not the identically-named bishop of Lyons in the 100s.) Near the outset of this letter, Ambrose mentions that *"The acquittal of the woman who, in the Gospel of John, was brought to Christ accused of adultery, is very famous."* He does not mention any controversy about the genuineness of the passage. In paragraphs 11-20, Ambrose quotes the story about the adulteress in short segments, offering comments as he goes. A sample is given here – Ambrose's comment on John 8:11:

"The Lord answered her, 'Neither do I condemn thee.' Observe how He has phrased His own sentence, so that the Jews might have no ground of allegation against Him for the absolution of the woman, but by complaining could only draw down a charge upon themselves.

For the woman's case is dismissed; she is not declared innocent – and this is because there was no accuser, not because her Innocence was established. So how could they complain, who were the first to abandon the prosecution of the crime, and the carrying out of the punishment?

“Then He said to her who had gone astray, ‘Go and sin no more.’ He reformed the criminal; he did not absolve the sin. Faults are condemned by a more severe sentence, whenever a man hates his own sin, and begins the condemnation of it within himself. When a criminal is put to death, it is the person rather than the transgression that is punished. But when the transgression is forsaken, the absolution of the person becomes the punishment of the sin.

“What, then, is the meaning of ‘Go and sin no more’? It is this: since Christ has redeemed you, allow yourself to be corrected by grace; punishment would only afflict you, not reform you.”

In *Epistle 74, To Irenaeus*, paragraph 4, Ambrose again quotes the words of Jesus found in John 8:11: *“But to you, the sun of righteousness [he is alluding to Malachi 4:2] does not allow the shade to be a hindrance; rather, pouring forth the full light of His grace, He says to you, ‘Go and sin no more.’”* Clearly, Ambrose discerned a thematic

parallel between Malachi 4:2 and John 8:12 (where Jesus describes Himself as “the light of the world”), and saw in 8:11 an example of the radiant grace of Christ.

Thus Ambrose’s testimony affirms that the story about the adulteress well-known, and that it was in his manuscripts of the Gospel of John in its usual place. He offers no inkling of a doubt about its legitimacy as Scripture.

- Ambrosiaster (c. 370s, probably in Rome), in *Quaestiones ex Utroque Mixtim*, 102: *Contra Novatianum* (Migna P.L. 35, Col. 2307), refers to the story about the adulteress, stating, “Dominus autem oblatae sibi meretrici pepercit, ei videlicet quam in adulterio se deprehendisse majores judaeorum dixerunt; ut quia pia praedicatio incoeperat, non condemnandum, sed ignoscendum doceret.” – Something like, “*When they brought a prostitute to the Lord, and He spared her who had been apprehended in adultery, most of the Jews said, ‘Let us begin to preach piety – not condemnation, but forgiveness.’*”

- Didymus the Blind resided in Alexandria until, after a long and productive life, he died in 398. He was not a bishop but he was a very prolific teacher whose students included Jerome and

Rufinus. In his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (223:7), Didymus states that he found the story of the adulteress “in certain Gospels” (εν τισιν ευαγγελιαις). His full statement is as follows:

Φερομεν εν τισιν ευαγγελιαις· Γυνη, φησιν, κατεκριθη υπο των Ιουδ[αι]ων επι αμαρτια και απεστελλετο λιθοβοληθηναι εις τον τοπον, οπου ειωθει γιν[εσθ]αι. Ο Σωτηρ, φησιν, εωρακως αυτην και θεωρησας οτι ετοιμοι εισιν προς το λιθ[οβ]ολησαι αυτην, τοις μελλουσιν αυτην καταβαλειν λιθοις ειπεν· Ος ου[χ] ημαρτεν, αι[ρε]τω λιθον και βαλετω {ε}αυτον. Ει τις συνοιδεν εαυτω το μη ημαρτηκεναι, λαβων λιθον παισατω αυτην. Και ουδεις ετολμησεν· επιστησαντες εαυτοις και γνοντες οτι και αυτοι υπε[υθ]υνοι εισιν τισιν, ουκ ετολμησαν καταπταισαι εκεινην.

Something like – “We find in certain gospels: A woman, it says, was condemned by the Jews for a sin and was being sent to be stoned in the place that was for that. The savior, it says, when he saw her and observed that they were ready to stone her, said to those that were about to cast stones, ‘He who has not sinned, let him take a stone and throw it. If anyone is conscious in himself not to have sinned, let him take a stone and smite her.’ And no one dared; because they knew in themselves and perceived that they, too,

were guilty in some things, they did not dare to strike her.”

(The Greek text prepared by Jeffrey Gibson, and Andrew Criddle’s translation, are online at <http://www.textexcavation.com/pericopedeadultera.html> . I have made minor alterations to both. Images of some pages from Didymus’ *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* are also online.)

Bart Ehrman has attempted to frame Didymus’ statement as a reference to apocryphal Gospels. However he has not adequately explained why the natural sense of Didymus’ statement should not be granted. That is, the natural understanding of Didymus’ reference to “Gospels” is to copies of the four canonical Gospels. Didymus would probably have been more specific if he had had some other Gospel-text in mind.

- Jerome’s testimony regarding the story about the adulteress merits the utmost attention especially because it seems to have been unknown to Bruce Metzger (who did not mention it in his *Textual Commentary*), and to the authors of the NET’s footnotes, and to the authors of some other lopsided commentaries. In about 417, toward the end of his career, Jerome wrote in *Against the Pelagians 2:17*, “*In the Gospel according to John, there is found, in many of the*

Greek, as well as the Latin, copies, the story of the adulteress who was accused before the Lord.” – In evangelio secundum Ioannem in multis et Graecis et Latinis codicibus invenitur de adultera muliere, quae accusata est apud Dominum. In the same composition, Jerome offers the explanation that Jesus, when he wrote in the earth, wrote down the names of the woman’s accusers, using a phrase from Jeremiah 17:13 as the lens through which to perceive this (“Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth”). Thirty-three years earlier, in 383, Jerome had included the passage in the text of John in the Vulgate Gospels. As we have seen, Jerome specifically stated that he had consulted early Greek manuscripts when he did that, both in his remarks to Damasus in the *Preface to the Gospels*, and again in *Epistle 27, To Marcella*, written in 384.

It may be safely deduced that Jerome did not find the story about the adulteress in *all* of the manuscripts of the Gospel of John that he examined; otherwise in *Against the Pelagians* he would not have referred to many manuscripts; he would have simply referred to the Gospel of John. But clearly if we trust Jerome’s descriptions we must conclude that before 417 the story about the adulteress was found in many Greek manuscripts and many Latin manuscripts.

- Rufinus must have thought that Eusebius, when he mentioned Papias' story (already described), was referring to the story about the adulteress, inasmuch as when he translated Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* into Latin in the very early 400s (before 410, when Rufinus died), he paraphrased Eusebius' statement so as to refer to a *muliere adultera*.

- Augustine of Hippo, Jerome's contemporary in North Africa (where he served as bishop from 395 to 430), abundantly cited the story about the adulteress. In *Tractate 33 on John*, written sometime in 408-420, Augustine comments on John 7:40-8:11. He quotes 7:53 in paragraph 2 and focuses on the rest of the passage in paragraphs 4-8. As he offers his interpretation of the passage, at no point in this composition does Augustine raise, or answer, questions about the genuineness of these verses.

In *Contra Faustus*, Book 22, chapter 25, Augustine mentions that those who find faults with the prophets "*are like those pagans who profanely accuse Christ of folly or madness because He looked for fruit from a tree out of season, or with childishness, because He stooped down and wrote on the ground, and, after answering the people who were questioning Him, began writing again.*" Thus he implies that the

episode about Jesus and the adulteress was known and accepted by some false teachers, who used part of it as the basis for a jibe.

In *Adulterous Marriages (De Adulterinis Conjugiis)*, Augustine makes his most interesting comment about the story about the adulteress. Charles T. Wilcox (on pages 107-108 of *St. Augustine: Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects* (Fathers of the Church, Vol. 27, © 1955 The Catholic University of America Press) provides an English translation of the passage. In chapter 6, Augustine's subject is a husband's responsibility to be reconciled to a wife who has repented of unfaithfulness. He writes: "*Christ says to the adulteress: 'Neither will I condemn thee. Go thy way, and from now on sin no more.'* Who fails to understand that it is the duty of the husband to forgive what he knows the Lord of both has forgiven, and that he should not now call her an adulteress whose sin he believes to have been eradicated by the mercy of God as a result of her penance?"

Augustine continues in chapter 7:
*"However, the pagan mind obviously shrinks from this comparison, so that some **men of slight faith, or, rather, some hostile to true faith, fearing, as I believe, that liberty to sin with impunity is granted their wives, remove from their Scriptural texts the account of our Lord's pardon of the***

adulteress, as though He who said: ‘From now on, sin no more,’ granted permission to sin, or as though the woman should not have been cured by the Divine Physician by the remission of that sin, so as not to offend others who are equally unclean. The ones who that act of the Lord displeases are themselves shameless, nor is it chastity that makes them stern. They belong, rather, to those men of whom the Lord says, ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her.’ But the men, terrified by their consciences, departed, and they ceased to try Christ and to vilify the adulteress. These men, on the contrary, sick as they are, censure the physician.”

This statement shows that Augustine’s manuscripts included the passage, but he was aware of copies that did not include it, and he believed that the reason it was absent from those copies was because of deliberate excision by men who thought that the passage was likely to be used to encourage the forgiveness of adultery, or even to encourage adultery.

- Faustus, the Manichean opponent of Augustine, referred to the story about the adulteress in a quotation of one of his compositions preserved by Augustine near the end of *Contra Faustus*, in Book 33. Faustus wrote, “In iniustitia namque et in

adulterio deprehensam mulierem quamdam Iudaeis accusantibus absolvit ipse, praecipiens ei ut iam peccare desineret.” – Something like, *“When the woman was accused by the Jews as sinful, and as having been caught in adultery, and he absolved her, he told her to sin no more.”*

● Peter Chrysologus, archbishop of Ravenna from 433-450, wrote in *Sermon 115* (Migne P.L. 52, Col. 316): *“Hinc est, fraters, quod cum in Evangelio a scribis et doctoribus legis apud Dominum ista accusaretur adultera, avertit faciem suam Dominus, et declinavit in terram, ne crimen cerneret quod puniret; et maluit, fraters, in pulvere scribere veniam, quam dare in carne sententiam.”* – Something like, “And so, brothers, in the Gospel, when the scribes and doctors of the Law accused the adulteress before the Lord, the Lord turned His face aside, and turned to the ground, so that He would not see and punish the crime. Brothers, He preferred, I think, instead of delivering the sentence in the flesh, to chose to write it in the dust.”

● Leo the Great was bishop, or pope, of Rome from 440-461. In *Sermon 62*, part 4 (*Why Judas Could Not Obtain Forgiveness Through Christ*), Leo stated that Judas had not heeded Jesus’ declarations of forgiveness, and Leo briefly

described a few of them, including the occasion when Jesus said “*to the adulteress that was brought to Him, ‘Neither will I condemn you; go and sin no more.’*”

- Codex Bezae, the flagship-manuscript of the Greek “Western” Text of the Gospels and Acts, produced in the 400s or 500s, includes the passage with substantial variations from the ordinary Byzantine form(s). (For a comparison of the text of John 7:53-8:11 in Codex D and the text of the passage in the *Textus Receptus*, see pages 97-98 of D. C. Parker’s *The Living Text of the Gospels*.) Reuben Swanson’s volume on John in the *New Testament Greek Manuscripts* series, pages 105-109, may be consulted for details regarding the variants among representatives of different Greek forms of the passage.

- The Old Latin evidence includes six distinctly non-Vulgate witnesses that support the inclusion of the story about the adulteress, but also includes four witnesses that support non-inclusion of the story about the adulteress. Their testimony is described by Jonathan Clark Borland in *The Old Latin Tradition of John 7:53-8:11*, a preview of which can be accessed online.

- ▶ Codex Veronensis (OL *b*), produced in the 400s, has been mangled, and is missing the

whole page (from 7:44 onward) which the episode about Jesus and the adulteress occupied. Just as space-considerations preclude the presence of the passage in Codex A, space-considerations require the **inclusion** of the passage in Codex Veronensis. It looks like somebody deliberately detached these verses from this copy. OL *b* has the Gospels in the order Mt-Jn-Lk-Mk. (Transcripts of pages 156v and 157r, the pages before and after the excision of the passage from Codex Veronensis, are online.)

▶ Codex Palatinus (OL *e*), from the 400s, is a purple manuscript in which the Gospels appear in the Western order (Mt-Jn-Lk-Mk). It includes the story about the adulteress, beginning on 72r.

▶ Codex Bezae (OL *d*), from the 400s or 500s – the Latin portion of Codex Bezae – contains the story about the adulteress, beginning on 134r, as mentioned earlier.

▶ Codex Colbertinus (OL *c*), produced in the 1100s, contains the story about the adulteress on fol. 73v.

▶ Codex Corbeiensis (OL *ff*²), produced in the 700s, contains the story about the adulteress (from 8:1 onward), beginning on 59v, in a form almost identical to the text in Codex Colbertinus. It does not contain John 7:53. Knust and Wassermann, on page 420 of *“Earth Accuses Earth”* (in *Harvard Theological Review*, 2010),

mention that the section-number for the passage is given as #16, and the *capitulum* reads, “*et adducunt ad Iesum mulierem depraehensam in moecharionem ut eam iudicaret,*” and the same feature is in a manuscript in the Vatican Library (Cod. Vat. Lat 8523) from the 800s.

▶ Codex Sarzanensis (OL *j*), produced in the early 500s, is fragmentary but contains remnants of the story about the adulteress, mainly on fol. 41r.

▶ Codex Vercellensis (OL *a*), produced in the second half of the 300s, possibly by (or under the supervision of) Eusebius of Vercelli, who died in 370, does not include the story about the adulteress. Like OL *e*, OL *a* is a purple manuscript with the Gospels in the order Mt-Jn-Lk-Mk.

▶ Codex Rehdigeranus (OL *l*), produced in the 700s, does not contain the story about the adulteress in the handwriting of the copyist. The episode about Jesus and the adulteress has been added in the margin from the Vulgate text. The encounter between Jesus and the adulteress is also depicted on the illustrated cover of this manuscript.

▶ Codex Monacensis (OL *q*), produced in the 500s or 600s, does not contain the passage.

▶ Codex Brixianus (OL *f*), produced in the 500s, is a purple manuscript in which the Gospels appear in the Western order (Mt-Jn-Lk-Mk). It

does not include the passage. It is probably closely related to the Gothic Codex Argenteus.

Borland's virtually exhaustive analysis of the text of the passage about the adulteress in OL manuscripts yielded an interesting result; he reports (on page 93): "The OL MSS, as a group, show the closest agreement with Greek groups μ^1 , μ^2 , μ^3 , all three of which appear in the primary tier of every OL MS." Borland also reports that the text of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in the Greek members of group μ^5 is related to the text in OL *e* (and, less distinctly, to OL *d*), and the text of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in the Greek members of group μ^7 is related to the text in OL *c* and *ff*². This seems to imply that the Old Latin manuscripts which include the episode about Jesus and the adulteress are descended from at least three localized Greek forms of the passage, and that in all of these forms, the passage followed John 7:52.

- Gelasius, bishop, or pope, of Rome, wrote his *Epistle 100 – To Andromachus, Against the Celebration of Lupercalia*, in 494 (See CSEL 35, page 455). He stated: "Nonne ipse Dominus, cum adultera ad eum esset adducta, accusantibus dixit: si quis uestrum sine peccato est, primus in eam lapidem mittat? Non ait 'si quis uestrum non simili modo adulter est' sed 'si quis sine peccato

est'; quolibet ergo obstrictus quisque peccato in alterius peccati reum lapidem non audeat mittere. Quibus tunc pro sua conscientia discedentibus mundi saluator adiecit: Mulier, ubi sunt accusatores tui? Nemo te condemnauit nec ego te condemnabo. Sed uade, ulterius ian noli peccare." – Something like, *"Didn't the Lord say, when the accused adulteress was brought to him, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him first cast a stone upon her? He does not say, 'If any one of you is not likewise an adulterer;' it is, rather, 'He that is without sin.' . . . He stated, 'Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you? Nor will I condemn you. But go, and furthermore, sin no more.'"* Gelasius thus quoted John 8:7 and 8:10-11.

- The Gothic Version, produced in the mid-300s by Wulfilas, is represented by Codex Argenteus, a deluxe purple Gospels-manuscript from the early 500s. Its format is remarkably similar to the format of the Old Latin Codex Brixianus. It does not include the story about the adulteress.
- The Sinaitic Syriac MS, produced c. 400, does not include the story about the adulteress.
- The Curetonian Syriac MS, produced c. 425, does not include the story about the adulteress.

- The Peshitta, the standard New Testament text in Syriac, was produced no later than the late 300s, after which came a gradual standardization process in the 400s. Most copies of the Peshitta do not include the story about the adulteress. (See the information about the text of the British Library's Add. MS 17202 for an example of the inclusion of the passage in some Peshitta copies.)
- Sedulius, around 450, in *Carmen Paschale*, Book 4, lines 233-242, summarizes the episode in rhythmic Latin, beginning with lines something like this: *"And while He is sitting in the middle of the temple, warning the nation to choose the right path, and guiding the wanderer to reconciliation, behold: a multitude approaches, accusing a dishonorable woman and threatening to stone her."* – "Dumque sui media residens testudine temple / Ore tonans patrio directi ad pervia callis / Errantem populum monitis convertit amicis, / Ecce trahebatur magna stipante caterva / Turpis adulterii mulier lapidanda reatu"
- The British Library's Add. MS 17202, produced in the late 500s or 600s, contains the *Syriac Chronicle*, parts of which are by, or dependent upon, a Greek composition by Zachariah of

Mitylene (Zacharias Rhetor). In Book 8, the author/compiler adds the following statements:

“Now there was inserted in the Gospel of the holy Moro the bishop, in the 89th canon, a chapter which is related only by John in his Gospel, and is not found in other manuscripts, a section running thus: It happened one day, while Jesus was teaching, they brought him a woman who had been found to be with child of adultery, and told him about her. And Jesus said to them, since as God he knew their shameful passions and also their deeds, ‘What does He command in the law?’ and they said to him: ‘That at the mouth of two or three witnesses she should be stoned.’

“But he answered and said to them: ‘In accordance with the law, whoever is pure and free from these sinful passions, and can bear witness with confidence and authority, as being under no blame in respect of this sin, let him bear witness against her, and let him first throw a stone at her, and then those that are after him, and she shall be stoned.’ But because they were subject to condemnation and blameworthy in respect of this sinful passion, they went out one by one from before him and left the woman. And when they had gone, Jesus looked upon the ground and, writing in the dust there, said to the woman: ‘They who brought you here and wished to bear witness against you, having understood what I

said to them, which you have heard, have left you and departed. Do you also, therefore, go your way, and commit not this sin again.”

This witness is particularly complex, and to understand its significance we must turn to John Gwynn, who hunted down details about this in the 1800s. On pages 288-290 of his article *“On a Syriac MS Belonging to the Collection of Bishop Ussher”* (in *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, Vol. 27, 1866) he mentioned three Syriac manuscripts that contain the episode about Jesus and the adulteress (besides the one the article is mainly about, which is a copy made in the 1600s, notable for its omission of the Syriac equivalent of “no” in 8:11). These three manuscripts are:

► A secondary page in Add. MS 14470. On a page attached to one of the earliest copies of the Peshitta (BM Add. MS 14470 is a Gospels-manuscript from the 400s or 500s), a note (written in a script typical of the 800s) says, “Yet another chapter from the Gospel of John son of Zebedee. This σύνταξις is not found in all copies, but the Abbat Mar Paul found it in one of the Alexandrian copies, and translated it from Greek into Syriac, according as it is here written; from the Gospel of John, canon tenth, number of sections 96, according to the translation of Thomas the Harklensian.” Gwynn described its

contents as follows: “It then starts from vii. 50 (“Nicodemus saith unto them”), giving it and the two following verses as in the Harklensian text, then proceeds with the disputed passage, beginning vii. 53, and ends with viii. 12, modified as in our MS.” Gwynn means that that the text begins in John 7:50, continues with the rest of the text including John 7:53-8:11 as found in the Harklean Syriac version, and then has 8:12 in an adjusted form, similar to what is found in the Old Latin witnesses *b* and *e*, so as to mean, “When therefore they were assembled together, Jesus spoke, saying, ‘I am the light of the world.’”

► Syriac MS XXII, Catal. Bibl. Reg., at Paris.

Gwynn states that this manuscript contains the passage after the end of the Gospel of John. This is a copy of the Harklean Syriac Gospels, dated by a colophon to A.D. 1192. Gwynn states that the text after the end of John consists of 7:53-8:11, followed by a note that resembles the note that precedes the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in the note on the extra page in Add. MS 14470.

► Codex Barsalibaei, a Gospels-manuscript of the Harklean Version (obtained from Amida by Gloucester Ridley, housed at the Vatican Library, and described in *Scrivener’s Plain Introduction*), contains the episode about Jesus and the adulteress within the text of John, followed by the

altered form of 8:12. Gwynn reported that “A marginal note states that “this συντυχιον is not found in all copies” and offered the deductions that συντυχιον is evidently a blunder for σύνταξις and that all three notes share a common origin.

Besides providing three Syriac witnesses to the text of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, these manuscripts apparently echo the text of the passage as it existed when “the Abbat Mar Paul found it in one of the Alexandrian copies.” This probably is a reference to Paul of Tella, who worked alongside Thomas of Harkel at the Enaton monastery when Thomas of Harkel produced the Harklean Version, which he finished in 616.

The implications of this evidence might be clearer if we get better acquainted with bishop Moro, who found a manuscript at Alexandria in which the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress (or something like it) was present. At Roger Pearse’s *Tertullian* website an English translation of part of Book 8 of the *Syriac Chronicle* tells us more about him:

After the death of Nonnus of Seleucia, who was from Amida, “*They ordained Moro Bar Kustant, the governor, who was steward of the Church, an abstemious man and righteous in his deeds, chaste and believing. And he was fluent and practised in the Greek tongue, having been*

educated in the monastery of St. Thomas the Apostle of Seleucia, which in zealous faith had removed and had settled at Kenneshre on the river Euphrates, and there had been rebuilt by John the Archimandrite. . . . And this Moro had been trained up in all kinds of right instruction and mental excellence from his boyhood by Sh'muni and Morutho, his grave, chaste, and believing sisters."

"And after remaining a short time in his see he was banished [by Justin] to Petra, and from Petra to Alexandria; and he stayed there for a time, and formed a library there containing many admirable books; and in them there is abundance of great profit for those who love instruction, the discerning and studious. These were transferred to the treasury of the Church of Amida after the man's death."

Moro is also known as Mara of Amid, whose exile in Alexandria began in 517 or 519 and ended in 527. Thus we can securely deduce from this evidence that a Greek manuscript that included the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress in a very unusual form (or an unusual account similar to what we know as John 7:53-8:11) existed at Alexandria in the early 500s. In about the same area, about 100 years later, a Greek manuscript containing the passage was also consulted by Paul

of Tella (unless the note that refers to Paul of Tella really meant Thomas of Harkel, but in either case the date and location are the same).

- Codex Λ (039), produced in the 800s, includes John 7:53-8:11, with obeli alongside John 8:3-11. According to Burkitt (in *Two Lectures*, page 82) and Scrivener (in a footnote on page 440 of the first edition of his *Plain Introduction*), a scholium accompanies the passage: τα ωβελισμένα έν τισιν αντιγράφους ου κείται, ουδε 'Απολιναρίου· Εν δε τοις αρχαιοις όλα κείται· Μνημονευουσι της περικοπης ταυτης και οι αποστολοι [20: παντες], εν αις εξεθεντο διαταξεις εις οικοδομην της εκκλησίας.

Burkitt mentions that the same note appears in MS 262. (It is also in MS 1282, as a footnote, and in GA 1424. Minuscule 20 has it after the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, which follows the end of John.) The first two sentences in the note mean, "The obelized section is not in some copies, or in Apollinaris'. In the old ones, it is all there." The Apollinaris mentioned in the note may be Apollinarius of Laodicea, a writer from the late 300s (d. 390) who is said in another scholium to have made a text-critical comment on Mt. 6:1. The last sentence in the note means something like, "This pericope is also recollected by [all the] apostles, [a reference to *Apostolic*

Constitutions], which affirms that it is for the edification of the church.”

Codex Λ/039 is one of the manuscripts that has the Jerusalem Colophon (“copied and corrected based on the ancient exemplars from Jerusalem preserved on the holy mountain,” or words to that effect) after all four Gospels.

- MS 135 (produced in the 900s) has, according to Burkitt, the following scholium before the episode about Jesus and the adulteress, which is placed after John 21: εύρηται και έτερα εν αρχαίοις αντιγράφοις, άπερ συνείδομεν γράψαι προς τω τέλει του αυτου ευαγγελιστου ά εστι τάδε.

Burkitt mentions that this scholium is also in MS 301. Lake reported its presence in 1076 and 1078 (in *Texts from Mount Athos*, pages 176-177). The note means, “This also was discovered in ancient copies, so we felt obligated to write, at the end of his Gospel, what follows here.”

- MS 34 (produced in the 900s or 1000s) has, according to Burkitt, the following scholium accompanying the episode about Jesus and the adulteress; the passage is accompanied by asterisks: Ιστέον οτι δια τουτο μετα αστερίσκων ετέθησαν τα περι της μοιχαλίδος επειδη εις τα πλείω των αντιγράφων ουκ εγκειται· πλην εις τα αρχαιότερα ηυρηνηται. This means something like,

“It has been determined that the passage with asterisks alongside it, about the adulteress, is not present in a great number of [or, most of] the copies. Yet it is found in the old ones.”

- MS 565 (Theodora’s Gospels, a purple minuscule from the 800s or 900s) does not have the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in its usual location. The text of John in 565 is Caesarean; *i.e.*, it tends to agree with the text found in family-1, in which John 7:53 is found at the end of the Gospel of John. One would therefore expect to find John 7:53-8:11 in that location in 565. However, the testimony of 565 is difficult to discern because the manuscript has been damaged. After John 21, 565 has a note, very similar to part of the note in manuscripts 1 and 1582:

Το περι της μοιχαλιδος κεφάλαιον εν τω παρα Ιωάννου ευαγγελίω ως εν τοις νυν αντιγραφοις μη κείμενον παρέλειψα' κατα τον τόπον δε κειται ουτως εξης του ουκ εγηγερται. This means something like, “The chapter about the adulteress, in the Gospel of John, not being present in the current copies, was omitted; it was located right after ‘does not arise.’” Burkitt explained the implication of this note: “In other words, the *Pericope* stood in the usual place in the MS from which 2^{pe} [= 565] was copied, but the

scribe left it out intentionally for what we may call critical reasons.” D. C. Parker seems to have understood this to mean that the person who added this note had omitted the episode about Jesus and the adulteress even though it was part of the text in the manuscript from which he was copying. (See *The Living Text of the Gospels*, page 96, © David Parker 1997.) However inasmuch as the note resembles the note in manuscripts 1 and 1582, in which the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress *pericope adulterae* follows the note, it seems probable that before 565 was damaged, the episode about Jesus and the adulteress appeared after this note. (It is worth noting that manuscript 565, like Codex Λ/039, has the Jerusalem Colophon.)

- Minuscule 145, a copy of Luke and John (produced in the 1000s), was described by Scrivener as having John 7:53-8:11 in a secondary hand, accompanied by a scholium which states, regarding John 8:3-11, *τοῦτο τὸ κεφάλαιον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀντιγράφοις οὐ κεῖται*. – “This chapter is not present in many copies.”
- A scholium in 1006 (a manuscript produced in the 1000s) alongside the beginning of the passage says (with abbreviations), *τὸ κεφάλαιον τοῦτο τοῦ κατὰ Θωμᾶν εὐαγγελίου ἐστίν*. – “This

chapter is in the Gospel According to Thomas.”

This may simply be the effect of the annotator’s faulty recollection of Eusebius’ statement about Papias’ story found in the Gospel of the Hebrews.

Another scholium in 1006, alongside the passage, says, *ἔγραφεν ἐκάστου αὐτῶν ἀμαρτίας* – “*He wrote the sins of each of them.*” This is similar to a reading which appears within the text of John 8:7 in Codex Nanius (U), which was produced in the 900s.

Wasserman, using “preliminary data,” observed that 35 manuscripts that are members of the “Patmos Group,” as well as 68 other manuscripts, share this reading in John 8:7. (See Tommy Wasserman’s article “*The Patmos Family of New Testament MSS and Its Allies in the Pericope of the Adulteress and Beyond*” in Vol. 7 (2002) of *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*.)

- *Synopsis Scriptura Sacrae*, a Greek composition, used to be assigned to Athanasius, but is now considered an anonymous work of the 500s. Its author briefly mentions the woman accused of adultery (in P.G. Vol. 28, col. 401): *Ἐνταυθα τα περι της κατηγορηθείσης επι μοιχεια*. Hort dismissed this as an interpolation.

- *Apologia David* has been attributed to Ambrose. This attribution may be wrong. Nevertheless *somebody* wrote it (See page 359 of Schenkl's presentation of its Latin text in *CSEL Vol. 32, Part 2*), and in the opening sentences, as the author comments on Psalm 51, he refers to the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress as a lection in the Gospels:

“Fortasse plerosque psalmi titulus offenderit, quem audistis legi, quod uenit ad eum Nathan propheta, cum intrauit Betsabee. Simul etiam non mediocre scrupulum mouere potuit inperitis euangelii lectio, quae decursa est, in quo adueretistis adulteram Christo oblatam eandemque sine damnatione dimissam.” –

“Perhaps most people are taken aback by the title of the psalm, which you have heard read, that Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Likewise those with weak faith could be disturbed by the Gospel-reading, which has been covered, in which we see an adulteress presented to Christ and sent away without condemnation.”

A few paragraphs later the author uses 8:11, again locating the text in a lection in the Gospels.

- The Armenian testimony is split. Precise and exhaustive data is still hard to come by but my

general impressions are that *most* Armenian copies do not contain John 7:53-8:11 after John 7:52 and that some Armenian copies which contain the passage after John 7:52 show signs of Vulgate influence, and that *numerous* Armenian copies have the episode about Jesus and the adulteress at the end of John. I suspect that the more the Armenian Gospels-text is studied, the more obvious the affinity between its best representatives and the family-1 text will become.

- The Old Georgian version, which tends to echo the Armenian texts(s), reflects a text-form from the 400s which did not include the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. In three manuscripts representing a revision of the Georgian version undertaken by Euthymius the Athonite (in the late 900s) using Greek exemplars, the passage was placed at John 7:44, where the 86th Eusebian Section of John begins. (The CSB English version has a footnote which erroneously treats these Georgian copies as if they are Greek manuscripts.)
- Codex Ω (045), produced in the 800s, includes the episode about Jesus and the adulteress after 7:52, accompanied by asterisks.
- Codex M (021), produced in the late 800s, includes the episode about Jesus and the

adulteress after 7:52, with an asterisk accompanying the beginning of 7:53 and another asterisk at 8:3.)

- The earliest form of the Bohairic Version, the “Proto-Bohairic” text in Bodmer Papyrus III, was mentioned earlier, but a more panoramic view of the Bohairic evidence for/against the passage may be helpful. The testimony of the Bohairic version regarding the episode about Jesus and the adulteress has been described by Christian Askeland in *John’s Gospel: The Coptic Translations of Its Greek Text* (© 2012 Walter de Gruyter). Askeland observed that 24 Bohairic manuscripts do not contain the *pericope adulterae* in any form. Sixteen Bohairic MSS contain the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in a form which was probably translated from Arabic. One Bohairic MS (Horner’s “V”) contains the *pericope adulterae* in a different form.

The general impression is to the extent that the passage has Bohairic support, it is due to infiltration. The older Bohairic MSS, and the older Coptic versions in general, do not support the inclusion of the passage.

Askeland mentioned that the Sahidic manuscript P.Palau Ribes Inv. 183 – which, when published, was assigned a production-date around 425 – “may date later than previously thought.”

This may be several *centuries* later. I have therefore opted not to give P.Palau Ribes Inv. 183 a special entry, and instead regard it as a good representative (whatever its production-date may be) of the earliest Sahidic version of John.

- The Ethiopic version, made no later than the 500s, is not listed as a witness for inclusion or non-inclusion of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in either UBS4 or NA27. Hort cited it as a witness for the inclusion of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. However Ethiopic specialist Dr. Michael Wechsler has informed me that the Garima Gospels – by far the earliest Ethiopic manuscript of the Gospels, produced in the 500s – does not include John 7:53-8:11. The three chief representatives of the earliest strata of the Ethiopic version squarely support non-inclusion. (See pages x-xi and 200-201 of *Evangelium Iohannis Aethiopicum*, edited by Michael G. Wechsler, Vol. 617 in the series *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, © 2005 Peeters Publishers.)

- Cassiodorus (active 537-580), the Ezra of his age, quoted John 8:11 in his *Exposition on the Psalms* when commenting on Psalm 32:2: “*We ought to realize that there are some to whom sins are ascribed. Paul for example was told: Saul,*

Saul, why persecutest thou me?, and in the gospel Christ said to the woman in adultery: Go, and sin no more.” (See page 306 of the first volume of P. W. Walsh’s English translation of Cassiodorus’ *Explanation of the Psalms* in the *Ancient Christian Writers* series, © 1990 Paulist Press.) When commenting on Psalm 57:6, Cassiodorus quoted John 8:5 as an example of the ambushes prepared for Jesus: *“The evangelist charges the Pharisees with this when they brought before Christ the woman taken in adultery, and said, ‘We have taken this woman in adultery. Now Moses commanded us to stone such a one. But what sayest thou?’ and further words of this kind provoked by malicious inquiry.”* (See page 42 of the second volume of Walsh’s translation of Cassiodorus’ *Explanation of the Psalms*, © 1990 Paulist Press.)

- Gregory the Great, pope from 590 to 604, was the author of a large composition called *Moralia on Job*. In Volume One, Book 1, paragraph 16, Gregory mentions Jesus’ declaration in John 8:7: *“When certain persons, having brought an adulteress before Him, would have tempted Him, in order that He might step into the fault either of unmercifulness or of injustice, He answered both alternatives by saying, ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.’ ‘He*

that is without sin among you' gives us the simplicity of mercy, 'Let him first cast a stone at her' gives us the jealous sense of justice."

Gregory quotes John 8:11 again in the same composition, Volume One, Book 14, paragraph 34.

- The Nordenfalk Canons – a moniker for a witness described by Carl Nordenfalk (in a 1982 article in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* Vol. 36, pages 28-38) – appears to have been the property of Epiphanius of Thebes in the early 600s. Although this witness is extremely mutilated, enough has survived to justify most of Nordenfalk's observation: "In Canons III and IV all numbers in the row for John are, from some number after seventy and before ninety-one, one digit ahead of the normal sequence. There can be only one explanation. The Gospel text must have contained the apocryphal pericope of the Woman Taken in Adultery (Jn. 7:53-8:11)."

- The Palestinian Aramaic lectionary (called the Jerusalem lectionary in the 1800s, and then the Palestinian Syriac lectionary) is extant in three manuscripts produced in 1030, 1104, and 1118. It utilizes an Aramaic Gospels-text. Transliterations in the Palestinian Aramaic text show that its text was derived directly from a Greek text, or possibly Greek texts. Bruce Metzger, in the course of

conducting research for his 1980 article on the Palestinian Syriac (*i.e.*, Aramaic) lectionary, noticed that lection 200 in MS A begins with John 8:1, and in the same manuscript, John 8:1 is included in the end of lection 48. Yet there are textual differences between the two occurrences of John 8:1. Metzger interpreted this as evidence that both the structure and the text of the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary were based on a Greek lectionary (or lectionaries).

However, while it is entirely possible that the structure and text of a Greek lectionary was consulted when the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary was created, a remarkable feature that accompanies John 8:2 in the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary indicates that at least one continuous-text manuscript of the Gospel of John, probably a manuscript written in Aramaic, was also utilized. (Hug's descriptions of conflate-readings may have a bearing here.)

Lewis & Gibson, in their publication of the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary (which they called Palestinian Syriac), named the three manuscripts A, B, and C. Manuscript A, according to Scrivener (in his *Plain Introduction*), includes a note which states that its copyist was Elias, and that he worked at the monastery of the Abbot Moses, at Antioch, in the year of Alexander 1341, which is A.D. 1030. In manuscripts A, B and C, the 48th

lection (the lection for Pentecost) consists of John 7:37-8:2. In manuscripts A and B, a rubric after John 8:2 states (rendered into Greek by Lewis & Gibson), Ἐτελειωθη το ευαγγέλιον Ιωάννου ελληνιστι εν Ἐφέσω. – “*The Gospel of John was completed in Greek in Ephesus.*” (Also, in manuscript A, the 200th lection consists of John 8:1-11.) In manuscript C the rubric after 8:2 states (rendered into Greek by Lewis & Gibson), Ἐτελειωθη το ευαγγέλιον Ιωάννου βοηθεια του Χριστου. – “*The Gospel of John was completed by the help of Christ.*”

Lewis & Gibson share J. Rendel Harris’ deduction about the implications of this evidence: “that the section *de adultera*, John vii. 53 – viii. 11, was at one time appended to St. John’s Gospel after the final colophon, and that in the Greek or Syriac MS from which the lessons of the Palestinian lectionary were taken, the section was removed to the place (between chap. vii. and chap. viii) which it now usually occupies; but that this being done by scribes who were not highly endowed with intelligence, the colophon was transported with it. The section must, in this instance, have comprised only John viii. 2-11, which is present in codex A, but wanting in B and C.” (See pages xv, lv, and lxx in *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels*, by Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson, 1899. The

pages are formatted in reverse-order, befitting a Syriac text. It appears that the reference to “John viii. 2-11” contains a typographical error, and was intended to refer to John 8:3-11.)

To restate: before the Palestinian Syriac lectionary was made, two continuous-text copies of the Gospel of John existed in which, after John 21:25, one manuscript had a note which said, “*The Gospel of John was completed in Greek in Ephesus,*” and the other one had a note after John 21:25 which said, “*The Gospel of John was completed by the help of Christ.*” Then, copyists who were using these two copies as exemplars re-inserted John 8:3-11 into the text of John after John 8:2, but when they did so, they also transferred the notes. When the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary was made, its creators used continuous-text manuscripts in which those notes were thus embedded in the text between John 8:2 and John 8:3. This explains why the note “*The Gospel of John was completed in Greek in Ephesus*” appears at the end of the Pentecost-lection in manuscripts A and B, and why the note “*The Gospel of John was completed by the help of Christ*” appears at the end of the Pentecost-lection in manuscript C.

Thus, not only does the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary show us that the Pentecost-lection, in some cases, extended to include John 7:53-8:2

(which explains why, in many manuscripts, only John 8:3-11 is marked with asterisks, to designate the lection for the feast-day of Pelagia, or for the Penitent Women), but it also shows us that before the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary was made, John 8:3-11 – *not 7:53-8:11!* – had been transferred to the end of John in (at least) two of the earlier continuous-text manuscripts from which the lectionary-makers extracted the text of the lections.

We also see that in the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary-cycle John 8:1-11 was used as the lection for the feast-day of Saint Pelagia (lection 200), as shown in manuscript A. It is notable that in manuscript A, the text of John 8:1 in lection 48 (the Pentecost-lection) is different from the text of John 8:1 in lection 200, confirming that that manuscript A echoes not just one source, but two, both of which contained John 8:1.

- The earliest representatives of the Sahidic version and the earliest representatives from versions in other Coptic dialects do not have John 7:53-8:11 between 7:52 and 8:12, or after 21:25. The Sahidic version was probably made in the 200s.
- Codex Cyprius (K, 017) was produced in the 800s. In this manuscript, throughout the Gospels,

dots interrupt the text, probably echoing the stichometric arrangement of its exemplar. In Codex K, John 7:53-8:11 is in the text of John after 7:52. In addition, the episode about Jesus and the adulteress forms a chapter in its list of chapter-titles at the beginning of the book.



We now turn to the remainder of the early evidence which consists mainly of other patristic use, and non-use, of John 7:53-8:11. An author's non-use of the passage may suggest, with varying degrees of force, that these verses were not known to him. We should keep in mind that an author's non-use of a particular passage may be the result of factors other than its absence from the writer's manuscripts. For example, it would be potentially misleading to cite an author's non-use of John 7:53-8:11 as evidence against the

passage if the same author made only scarce use of the Gospel of John as a whole.

- Tertullian, who worked as a Christian apologist in the vicinity of Carthage, in North Africa, in about 200-225, did not quote from John 7:53-8:11. In Tertullian's composition *De Pudicitia (On Modesty)*, Tertullian engaged the subject of the forgiveness of sins. He criticized the bishop of Rome for declaring that the church would offer forgiveness to church-members for the sins of adultery and fornication. Tertullian had no problem with the idea of inviting adulterers and fornicators to Christ to find forgiveness; his objection was that the church should overlook sins so serious as to constitute, in his opinion, acts of treason against Christ by members of the body of Christ. In chapter 11, Tertullian wrote,

"If our Lord himself did anything like this [granting of forgiveness] for sinners even in his own dealing, for example, when he permitted the sinful woman to touch his body, washing his feet with tears and drying them with her hair . . . or when He indicated his identity to the woman of Samaria – who, being in her sixth matrimony, was not only an adulteress but a mere prostitute – which He did not like to do, none of these things speak in support of the view of the opposite school

of thought, as if He had given His forgiveness for sins even to Christians.”

As Burkitt noticed more than a century ago, Tertullian’s line of reasoning shows why he might have considered the case of the adulteress to be superfluous: his objection was not against the granting of forgiveness to non-Christians (such as the adulteress in the story) who committed adultery.

- Origen, who worked in Alexandria before moving to Caesarea, where he taught a school of theology until his death in 254, wrote a *Commentary on John*, but only part of it has survived: in Book 13, Origen discusses chapter 4; then there is a gap in the extant copies, and the next part that has survived is Book 19, at the beginning of which Origen is discussing John 8:19. Yet, if one sifts through all the parts of John 7-8 that Origen quotes throughout the extant portions of the commentary, they stop at 7:52 and resume at 8:12. (However, they also do not cover 7:31-36, 43-45, 49-50, and 8:26-27.) It seems likely that Origen’s manuscripts from Egypt did not have the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. In *Homily 19 on Jeremiah*, in a discussion about degrees of punishment proportionate to degrees of maturity, Origen seems confident that Scripture teaches that the

penalty for adultery is to be stoned. Yet the verse that he cites as the basis for his claim is not John 8:5, but Leviticus 24:16 (which is about the punishment for blasphemy, not adultery).

- Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in the mid-200s, did not quote from the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress. But, as Burkitt noticed, this “is not very surprising, as his only reference to the woman in Luke 7:36-50 is a short and inaccurate quotation of the last clause of 7:47 (*Testimonies* 3:116).”

- Apollinarius, a not-entirely-orthodox bishop of Laodicea in the second half of the 300s, is probably the individual mentioned in the scholium about the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in Codex A (“The obelized section is not in some copies, or in Apollinaris’.”)

- John Chrysostom, who worked in 380-407, first in Antioch and then as archbishop of Constantinople, did not quote from the passage about the adulteress; in *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, his subject runs from the scene in 7:52 directly to Jesus’ statement in 8:12. This seems like clear evidence that the passage was not in his copies, but Burgon (in *Causes of Corruption*, page 257) proposed another

explanation: Chrysostom's comments, he reckoned, were confined to lections for public reading, the limits of which had already been set, and which, in the case of the lection for Pentecost, already did not include 7:53-8:11.

Chrysostom's *Homily 51* begins exactly at John 7:37 (thus corresponding to the beginning of the Pentecost-lection) and he comments upon the text up to the end of 7:44. In *Homily 52*, he comments on 7:45-7:52 and on 8:12-18, without using or mentioning the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress. Thus the contours of Chrysostom's homilies at this point fit the lection-divisions of the Byzantine lectionary only partly; *Homily 51* begins at the same place the Pentecost-lection begins, but it does not stop at the end of 8:12, and neither does the homily after it.

- Cyril of Alexandria, who was Patriarch of Alexandria from 412 to 444, wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John. In Book 5, he goes directly from commenting on 7:52 to commenting on John 8:12. He does not mention the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. Furthermore the divisions of the sections of his commentary do not conform to the pattern of any known division of lections.

- Nonnus of Panopolis, an Egyptian author whose career has been deduced to have been in the early 400s, wrote a poetic paraphrase of the Gospel of John. He does not use or mention the episode about Jesus and the adulteress.
- Theodore of Mopsuestia, bishop from 392 to 428 in what is now south-central Turkey, wrote a *Commentary on the Gospel of John* in 404-408. Its Greek text is fragmentary, but there is a Syriac translation. On page 76 of Marco Conti's recently published English translation of Theodore's commentary on John (in the *Ancient Christian Texts* series), Theodore does not comment on, or mention, the episode about Jesus and the adulteress; he also states, as he begins his citation of 8:12, that Jesus spoke when the persons on the scene in 7:52 were still arguing, very clearly showing that the passage was not in his text of John.
- Vigilius of Thapsus was a Latin-speaking North African bishop in the second half of the 400s. As representative of the Trinitarian bishops of North Africa, he attempted to present and explain a creedal statement to the Arian king Huneric at Carthage in 484. Burgon (in a footnote on page 248 of *Causes of Corruption*) stated that Vigilius provides support for the *pericope adulterae*, and

that his work has been mislabeled as the work of Idacius. Vigilius' utilization of the *pericope adulterae* is probably somewhere in Migne's P. L. Vol. 67.

- Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 440), in *Call of All Nations*, Book 1, chapter 8, devoted a paragraph to the story about the adulteress: *"This is why the adulterous woman, whom the Law prescribed to be stoned, was set free by Him with truth and grace, when the avengers of the Law, frightened with the state of their own conscience, had left the trembling guilty woman He, bowing down . . . 'wrote with His finger on the ground,' in order to repeal the Law of the commandments with the decree of His grace."* (See page 38 of P. De Letter's *St. Prosper of Aquitaine – The Call to All Nations*, Vol. 14 in the ACW series, © 1952 by Rev. Johannes Quasten and Rev. Joseph C. Plumpe. For the Latin text see pages 460-462 of *Sancti Prosperi Aquitani – Opera Omnia*, 1782.) The authorship of this text was questioned in the past (see the heading in the 1782 text, *"Ignoti Auctoris, Liber I,"*) but more recent researchers have affirmed it to be the work of Prosper.

- Quodvultdeus of Carthage (440s), in *Liber De Promissionibus Et Praedictionibus – Pars 2: Dimidium Temporis*, cites John 8:3-5 and 8:7 as

follows (See the Latin text in Migne's P. L. 51, col. 793): *"Adducunt enim ad eum Pharisei mulierem in adulterio deprehensam, et dicunt tentantes: Magister, modo hanc deprehendimus. Moyses jussit hujusmodi lapidari; tu vero quid de ea statuis?"* – "The Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken in adultery, and testing Him they said, 'Teacher, she was caught in the act. Moses commanded such as her to be stoned. What is your decree regarding her?'" And a bit further in the text, Quodvultdeus records Jesus' answer: *"Qui, inquit, vestrum sine peccato est, prior in illam lapidem mittat."* – "Whichever one of you is without sin, let him first cast a stone at her."

- Cosmas Indicopleustes, a traveler of the early 500s, a native of Egypt who is nowadays perhaps best-known for his insistence that the earth is flat, has been cited as a witness for the non-inclusion of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress. However, when he lists things that are described only in John's Gospel, in Book 5 of *Christian Topography*, Cosmas' list is not thorough; it consists of samples: *"He gave to the world his book, which in a manner supplied what had been omitted; as for instance, the account of the marriage in Cana, the account of Nicodemus, of the Samaritan woman, of the nobleman, of the man who was blind from his birth, of Lazarus, of*

the indignation of Judas at the anointing of the Lord with myrrh, of the Greeks that came to him, of the washing of feet, and of further doctrines concerning the Comforter stated in the course of the narrative.”

- Bede, writing in Latin in the early 700s, makes substantial comments on the passage about the adulteress in his *Homilies on John*, and shows that it followed 7:52 in his copies of John.
- Nikon, possibly writing in the 900s, in Greek, composed *On the Impious Religion of the Vile Armenians* (cited by Burgon as Gen. iii. 250), in which he accuses the Armenians of rejecting the passage about the adulteress on the grounds that it was injurious to the faith of most of the people who listened to it.
- Euthymius Zigabenus, a monk who worked in Constantinople in the early 1100s, commenting on the passage, mentioned its absence in “the accurate copies.” Amy Donaldson, on page 433 of Volume 2 of her 2009 doctoral work *Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings Among Greek and Latin Church Fathers*, provides Euthymius’ statement (found in Greek in Migne’s P.G. Vol. 129, Col. 1280): “*It is necessary to know that from there until ‘Then, again, Jesus spoke to*

them, saying, "I am the light of the world," among the accurate copies is neither found nor obelized. Wherefore these words appear written alongside the text and as an addition; and the proof of this is that Chrysostom does not remember them at all. But nevertheless we must attempt to elucidate even these things; for the section in these texts concerning the woman caught in adultery is not without benefit."

- Codex Fuldensis, produced in 546, has the Vulgate text of the Gospels arranged in segments according to the order that Victor of Capua found in the Gospels-text of a manuscript that came into his possession – a manuscript which seems to have been a copy of a Latin translation of Tatian's Diatessaron. (See Willker's description for details.) Thus, the *content* of Codex Fuldensis represents Victor's Vulgate-text, but its *arrangement* echoes Victor's source-document. Although Victor did not preserve the Gospels-text of his source-document, he did preserve its chapter-titles, and the episode about Jesus and the adulteress is included in chapter-title #120: *De muliere a iudaeis in adulterio deprehensa*. Thus the source-document of Codex Fuldensis should be added to the list of witnesses for the inclusion of the John 7:53-8:11.



The following list summarizes the highlights of this tour of the external evidence. Witnesses in favor of the passage, even if their testimony is extremely tenuous, are accompanied by a square. Witnesses against the passage, even if their testimony is extremely tenuous, are accompanied by a circle.

- 1,503 Greek manuscripts contain at least part of John 7:53-8:11.
- 270 Greek manuscripts do not contain John 7:53-8:11.
- Papias wrote a story about an accused woman.
- Papyrus Egerton 2 depicts Jesus saying to a healed leper, “Go show yourself to the priests and offer concerning the purification as Moses commanded, and sin no more.”
- In the *Protevangelium of James*, when a judge declares Mary innocent of adultery, he says, “neither do I judge you.”
- Tertullian writes about forgiving acts of adultery but does not utilize the episode about Jesus and the adulteress.
- Papyrus 66 does not contain the passage.
- Papyrus 75 does not contain the passage.
- Origen seems unaware of the passage.
- Cyprian does not use the passage.

- The author of the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* loosely recollects the passage.
- The Draguet Fragment indicates that a community of Pachomian monks in the early 300s thought that Jesus had established that the right to judge belongs to those who have not sinned.
 - Codex Vaticanus does not contain the passage.
- Distigmai in Codex Vaticanus convey scribal awareness of the passage's presence after John 21. (This witness may now be discounted inasmuch as the source of the distigmai worked in the 1500s.)
 - Codex Sinaiticus does not contain the passage.
 - Bodmer Papyrus III, containing the Gospel of John in Proto-Bohairic, does not contain the passage.
- Pacian of Barcelona recollects the narrative about Jesus and the adulteress from the Gospels.

- Hilary of Poitiers might allude to the passage.
 - Codex Vercellensis does not include the passage.
- *Apostolic Constitutions*, relaying the contents of the *Didaskalia*, quotes from the passage.

- Ambrose quotes the passage extensively and repeatedly.
- Ambrosiaster recollects that Jesus spared the adulteress.
- Apollinarius did not have the passage in his Gospels-text, according to a note in Codex A.
- Didymus the Blind reports that a story about a sinful woman who was about to be stoned until Jesus intervened was in certain Gospels.
- John Chrysostom comments on John 7:52 and on 8:12, but not on John 7:53-8:11.
- Jerome reports that the story of the adulteress was found in many manuscripts, both Greek and Latin.
- Jerome's report implies that he had encountered manuscripts that did not include the passage.
- Jerome includes John 7:53-8:11 in the Vulgate text of John, which he claimed he had conformed to the text of ancient Greek manuscripts.
- Codex W does not have the passage. (It does, however, have a blank page after John.)
- Rufinus, when translating Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, rendered Eusebius' reference to the accused woman in Papias' story as a reference to a woman who was an adulteress.
- Augustine quoted John 7:53-8:11 extensively.

- Some pagans, according to Augustine, were using Christ's actions in John 8:6-8 as the basis on which to accuse Christ of childishness.
- Some individuals with weak faith, or hostile to true faith, according to Augustine, had removed the story about the adulteress from their Scriptures, out of concern that the passage might be misused so as to encourage adultery.
- Faustus the Manichaean refers to the passage.
- The Sinaitic Syriac manuscript does not include the passage.
- The Curetonian Syriac manuscript does not include the passage.
- The Peshitta, as initially produced, does not include the passage.
- Nonnus of Panopolis does not use or mention the passage, but uses the surrounding passages.
- Sedulius rephrases the passage in rhythmic Latin.
- Theodore of Mopsuestia, author of a commentary on John, does not use these verses.
- Cyril of Alexandria comments on John 7:52 and 8:12, but not on these verses.
- Codex A does not have the passage (as shown by space-calculations).
- Peter Chrysologus recollects the passage.
- Codex Borgianus (T), a Greek-Sahidic manuscript, does not include the passage in Greek or in Sahidic.

- The earliest Sahidic manuscripts of John (and copies in related dialects) do not support the passage.
- The earliest Bohairic manuscripts of John (and copies in related dialects) do not support the passage.
- Leo the Great quotes John 8:11.
- Vigilius of Thapsus has been listed as support for the passage.
- Codex Bezae includes the passage, with variations, in Greek and in Latin.
- Sahidic MS P.Palau. Ribes Inv. 183 does not include the passage.
- Codex C does not have these verses (as shown by space-considerations).
- Codex Veronensis had these verses when the manuscript was made.
- In Codex Veronensis, the pages that contained John 7:53-8:11 have been removed.
- Codex Palatinus has the passage.
- The source-document of Codex Fuldensis contained the passage.
- Prosper of Aquitaine quotes from the passage.
- Quodvultdeus of Carthage quotes from the passage.
- Cosmas Indicopleustes does not have the passage in his summary of events recorded especially by John.
- Codex Colbertinus contains the passage.

- Codex Corbeiensis contains the passage.
- Codex Sarzanensis is fragmentary but contains remnants of the passage.
- Codex Rhedigeranus did not have the passage when the manuscript was made.
- A page containing the passage has been sewn into Codex Rhedigeranus.
- Codex Monacensis does not contain the passage.
- Codex Brixianus does not contain these verses.
- Codex Argenteus (the flagship manuscript of the Gothic version) does not contain these verses.
- Gelasius quotes from the passage.
- Codex N does not have the passage after John 7:52. Its extant text ends in John 21:20.
- Mara of Amida, according to the *Syriac Chronicle* associated with Zacharias Rhetor, obtained a manuscript in Alexandria which contained the passage, or a story resembling it.
- *Synopsis Scriptura Sacrae* mentions the passage, although the reference is out of sequence.
- Paul of Tella obtained a Greek manuscript at Alexandria that contained the passage.
- John 8:1-11 (or 8:3-11) is a lection for the Feast-Day of Saint Pelagia (Oct. 8).
- Cassiodorus quoted John 8:11.
- Gregory the Great quoted John 8:7 and 8:11.

- The author of *Apologia David* quotes from the passage.
- The Nordenfalk Canons imply that the Gospel-text that accompanied them included the episode about Jesus and the adulteress in John.
 - Codex L does not include these verses.
 - Codex L has blank space between 7:53 and 8:11, conveying the copyist's awareness of a copy or copies which contained these verses.
 - Codex Δ does not include these verses.
 - Codex Δ has blank space between 7:53 and 8:11, conveying the copyists' awareness of a copy or copies which contained these verses.
 - Codex Ω has the passage after John 7:52, with asterisks.
 - All three manuscripts of the Palestinian Aramaic Lectionary include John 7:53-8:2 as part of the Pentecost-lection, and one manuscript (the earliest) also has a lection consisting of John 8:1-11. Anomalous features imply before the Palestinian Aramaic Lectionary was made, two continuous-text manuscript of John existed in which John 8:3-11 was placed after the end of John 21.
 - The Ethiopic version in its earliest form does not include the episode about Jesus and the adulteress.
 - The main Armenian transmission-line does not support the inclusion of the passage after 7:52.

- The earliest strata of the Georgian version does not include the passage.
- Codex Psi does not include the passage.
- Some Armenian manuscripts include the passage after John 7:52 or at the end of John.
- Codex Y does not include the passage.
- Codex Y has two faded asterisks alongside the non-inclusion of the passage.
- The list of chapter-numbers and chapter-titles for John in Codex Y does not mention the passage.
- Codex K includes the passage.
- The list of chapter-numbers and chapter-titles for John in Codex K includes the story about the adulteress as chapter 10.
- Codex M contains the story about the adulteress, with asterisks at its beginning and end that seem lectionary-related.
- Nikon accuses the Armenians of rejecting the story about the adulteress on the grounds that it was harmful.
- A scholium in Codex Λ, 20, 262, and 1282 states that John 8:3-11 is not in some copies.
- A scholium in Codex Λ, 20, 262, and 1282 states that the entire passage is in the old copies (presumably the old copies referred to in the Jerusalem Colophon).
- A scholium in minuscules 135 and 301 states that the story about the adulteress was found in ancient copies.

- A scholium in minuscule 34 states that the story about the adulteress was not found in many copies.
- A scholium in minuscule 34 states that the story about the adulteress was found in ancient copies.
- Euthymius the Athonite included the story about the adulteress in his revision of the Georgian version.
- Euthymius Zigabenus says that the accurate copies did not include the story about the adulteress but he commented on it anyway.

Totals:

44 against the episode about Jesus and the adulteress

56 in favor of the episode about Jesus and the adulteress

Granting that this comparison involves oversimplifications, I do not see how anyone can survey this list and conclude that the evidence against John 7:53-8:11 is “overwhelming.”



Appendix B:
A Sermon Based on John 7:50-8:20

The Light of the World

Welcome. Let's look into the Gospel of John chapter 7, beginning in verse 50, where the Pharisees have been having a discussion about Jesus. They have sent officers to take him, and the officers came back without Jesus and said, "Nobody ever spoke the way this man speaks."

In verse 50, "Nicodemus (he who came to him by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man, unless it first hears from him personally and knows what he does?" Nicodemus is almost on Jesus' side. He's almost there, almost a disciple. At least he is on the side of fairness. He does not rely on lies; he does not rely on assumptions. He also shows that he knows the spirit of the law; he refers to "our law" as if it's a person.

But the Pharisees "answered him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search, and see that no prophet has arisen out of Galilee."

Now that's odd, because in real life, some prophets *had* ministered in the area of Galilee. But maybe they were thinking in terms of "the" prophet, the one prophesied by Moses.

And then in verse 53, “And everyone went to his own house. But” – moving into chapter 8 – “Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.”

Now all through this chapter, things have been taking place at the time of the Feast of Sukkoth, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a time when the people around Jerusalem would live in tents. But now it’s near the end of that time, and everybody goes back to his own house. Everybody stops camping and goes home. But Jesus sticks around a little longer. He goes to the Mount of Olives, but in the morning He comes back to the temple. “Now very early in the morning, he came again into the temple, and all the people came to him. He sat down and taught them. ”

Jesus is not done! The Feast of Sukkoth is now done, but the ministry of Christ, and His teaching, continues. It’s gone into overtime!

Then The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman taken in adultery. Having set her in the middle, they told him, “Teacher, we found this woman in adultery, in the very act.”

Something has happened in the interlude between the previous day and this day. Something has happened, and the Pharisees had realized, “*We can use this as an opportunity to trap Jesus in the way he responds.*”

We don't know the details about what happened to her partner, or how she was caught. Was she a Gentile? We don't know. Was this a one-time mistake, or was it just the first time she had been caught? We don't know. All we see is that they they presented her to Jesus, interrupting His lesson.

They say in verse 5, "Now in our law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What then do you say about her?"

The Pharisees weren't allowed to enforce the death penalty. They were under Roman rule. So whatever point they were trying to make would be academic. But they wanted to see how Jesus would respond to this challenge.

"They said this testing him, that they might have something to accuse him of." The idea is, if He lets her go, then they could say, "*Well, how can you disagree with the law of Moses?!*" But if he says, "Stone her," then they could say, "*What happened to your mercy?!*" They think Jesus is trapped. There's no way out, one way or the other. They think they've got Him!

We've all been there where the woman is: trapped. Guilty. Caught. We all may be wondering, the way this woman was wondering, "*What's Jesus going to do with me?*". Because we know we're guilty.

In the second part of verse 6, “But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with his finger.”

This is an interesting non-response. Jesus had been teaching and now his lesson is quite thoroughly interrupted. In response, He just starts writing on the ground as if He doesn’t hear.

Now, since Jesus was not a Pharisee, his opinion was not binding; they wouldn’t feel obligated to abide by what He said. And since Jesus was not a Roman citizen, His opinion was not legally binding. And Jesus, as the Son of God, had been teaching on an entirely different subject! But instead of proclaiming a judgment on the case they have barged in and offered to Him, He acts as if they’re not even there, as if nobody has made Him an arbiter over them.

Now I think John, in mentioning this detail, noticed its significance. The only other time in the Bible where it mentions writing with a finger is when begins a new covenant by writing the law of the 10 commandments.

But John doesn’t say what Jesus wrote! Lots of people have wondered about that. And lots of people have given speculative answers. But I think the best we can say is, “We don’t know what He wrote.” The Pharisees wanted to see what He wrote; they were asking one another, *“What’s he writing? Is he writing “Guilty”? Is he writing “Innocent”? What’s he writing?”* They

wanted to know what Christ thought about this case.

So when they continued asking Him," in verse 7, "he looked up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw the first stone at her."

She was guilty, but what would the consequences be? Jesus challenged them, before they answer that question, to ask themselves if **they** were guilty. "And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground with his finger."

After giving this proclamation, Jesus just let it simmer in their minds. But it quickly comes to a boil.

"They, when they heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning from the oldest, even to the last." Those who were the most aware of their sin left first. And everyone soon left. All their stones, they put down. None of them could say, "*I'm without sin.*"

What about Christ? It's hard to believe, but many people in America believe that Jesus was a sinner! That's wrong. Christ was the Lamb of God, who took our sins upon Himself. He was tempted in all things, yet without sin.

We all know that nobody's innocent. Nobody truly wants to be judged by the law. Nobody can measure up to a standard so high.

And so Jesus Christ, the One who does meet that high standard, was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” Now, understand that when John says they’re alone, it’s not as if they’re suddenly deserted there in the temple. The crowd who was listening to Jesus before is still there. The Pharisees who had brought the accusation are the ones who left.

Jesus, standing up, saw her and said, “Woman, where are your accusers? Did no one condemn you?”

It’s a pivotal question, because when no accusers are present to pursue the case, the case cannot proceed. “She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

There are two implications in that declaration, “Go and sin no more.” First, it’s implied that she has sinned. And second, she’s been called to not let that sin define her. To not let it captivate her or imprison her. Christ came to set the captive free.

And then, in verse 12: “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.””

Here Christ points to Himself as the counterpart of the pillar of fire in the wilderness. At the Feast of Sukkoth there were these big

lights, candelabras, set in the temple. Christ said, “*Those are not the light. I am the light.*” We too are sent to be the light of the world. He *shines* the light, and we *reflect* that light. But Christ doesn’t stop there, with the fulfillment of that pattern that was made in the Old Testament. He expands on it. The pillar of fire was to lead the children of Israel. He comes as the light of the whole world.

The Pharisees therefore said to him, “You testify about yourself. Your testimony is not valid.”

Now the Pharisees are getting frustrated at this point. They’re being reduced to quibbling. They thought to themselves, “This man is not the light of the world.” Their objection is that He’s endorsing himself.

In verse 14, “Jesus answered them, “Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you don’t know where I came from, or where I am going.”

They had been assuming that they knew things about Jesus that they did not know. And oftentimes people today still make wrong assumptions about Christ. Here Jesus makes two counter-objections. First, the Pharisees were judging His words as if His words were false. If they thought they were true, they would have

joined Him! They don't really know the things they have assumed.

He says in verse 15, "You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one." Jesus was there in the temple to teach, not to judge. The Pharisees, though, had already concluded in their minds that Jesus was a sabbath-breaking sinner.

Jesus continued, in verse 16, "And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true. For I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent me." Here is his second counter-objection. Jesus has another witness who confirms the same things that he says: the Father.

"It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true." By "your law," he refers to Deuteronomy 19:15. If two human beings' testimony had to be taken seriously, how much more when the Father and the Son speak. And he says elsewhere that John the Baptist also testified that he was true, the Father testified that he was true, and his works testify that he is true.

In verse 18, he says, "I am One who bears witness of myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness of me."

The Father will confirm what Christ has said about Himself.

"Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you had known me, you would

have known my Father also.” They thought they knew. We saw back in verse 27 that they thought they knew where Jesus was from. And notice how they don’t ask “*Who is your father,*” but, “*Where is your father?*”. They’re thinking, “*You don’t really have another person to testify; you’re just saying so.*”

Their question implies that they already have a judgment in their minds against Jesus. They have not just gotten off on the wrong foot; they’ve been going down the wrong path from the start.

And finally in verse 20, “Jesus spoke these words in the treasury, as he taught in the temple. Yet no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

Jesus was teaching in the part of the temple called the Court of Woman; that’s where the treasury was – easily heard by the Pharisees and Sadducees, whose Sanhedrin headquarters was nearby.

It was not yet his time to be taken to Calvary. That time was coming, when his role as the embodiment of the things forecast by the customs of the feast of Sukkoth would be fulfilled. The time would come when he would show how he was to be the One who would provide living water, and how he would be the One who shines light upon his people. Now those things have

taken on new meaning – at the cross. He does not shine his light so we can continue to walk in darkness. He does not offer living water so that we can continue to thirst for meaning.

He does not say *“Go and sin no more”* so we can run after the bait offered by the world. His desire for us is to receive him as the light of the world, and having received him, to walk in that light. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

The scene of that woman before Jesus is so moving. Lots of us have thought, “I’m guilty, and I deserve it. I deserve what’s coming.” Thank You for promising to us an even greater experience than what she experienced: of not only having our case thrown out because there were no accusers to pursue it, but the experience of having the guilty sentence overturned because Christ has taken our sins upon Himself on the cross. The penalty has been paid in full. And we have received Your Word that You will remember our sins no more. Guide us by that Word to walk in the light of being restored to serve You.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Page-views of Codex Campianus (Codex M, 021) can be accessed at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10507213z/f466.image> .

German-readers will benefit from Ulrich Becker's 1963 *Jesus und die Ehebrecherin. Untersuchungen zur Text und Überlieferungsgeschichte von Joh. 7₅₃ - 8₁₁* (BZNW, 28; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann). Even without reading German, the charts may be helpful.

Latin-readers can find more information about Codex Barsalibaei in *De Syriacus Novi Foederis Versionibus Dissertatio*, which is an appendix in *Wetstenii Libelli ad Crisin atque Interpretationem Novi Testamenti*, pages 247-339, at <http://books.google.com/books?id=NB0UAAAAQAAJ> .

F. C. Burkitt analyzes some relevant evidence in *Two Lectures on the Gospels in Assorted Essays on New Testament Textual Criticism* at <http://www.amazon.com/Assorted-Testament-Textual-Criticism-Annotated-ebook/dp/B004WPZZHW> .) and at

<https://archive.org/details/twolecturesonthe00burkuoft> .

Several stories about Pachomius, including the Gnositheos-anecdote, are included in the volume at

http://www.copticchurchreview.com/Coptic/Home_files/volume%205%20No.%201.pdf .

Chris Keith's dissertation (for which Larry Hurtado was a supervisor) is at

<https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/2595/4/Keith%20C%20PhD%20thesis%2008.pdf> .

Jennifer Knust's analysis of the early transmission of the *pericope adulterae* is at

http://www.academia.edu/687660/Early_Christian_Re-Writing_and_the_History_of_the_Pericope_Adulterae .

David Palmer's chart of textual variants in John 7:53-8:11, in a format reminiscent of Swanson's horizontal-line comparisons, is at

<http://www.bibletranslation.ws/trans/pachart.pdf>

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Alison Sarah Welsby's analysis of the text of John in f^1 is at <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3338/1/Welsby12PhD.pdf> .

Zane Hodges' articles "*The Woman Taken In Adultery (John 7:53-8:11): The Text*" and "*The Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7:53-8:11): Exposition*" are in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct. 1979 and Jan. 1980.

An article by Alan Johnson about some of the internal evidence pertaining to John 7:53-8:11 is at http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/9/9-2/BETS_9_2_91-96_Johnson.pdf .

An article by Dr. Daniel Wallace about the non-relationship between a manuscript's inclusion of the *pericope adulterae* in its chapter-list and in its text is at

<http://www.csntm.org/tcnotes/archive/DidCodex2882OriginallyIncludeThePericopeAdulterae> .

(Note: Wallace's claim that "Gospels MSS that have the PA usually list it in the Johannine *kephalaia*" is incorrect. Several claims that Wallace has made about evidence pertaining to John 7:53-8:11 should not be taken at face value. Let the reader beware.)

Maurice Robinson and other scholars discuss the passage in [*The Pericope of the Adulteress in Contemporary Research*](#), the result of a 2014 conference on the subject.

Also see Scrivener's comments about the passage in *A Plain Introduction*, Burgon's chapter on the passage in *Causes of Corruption*, and D. C. Parker's chapter on it in *The Living Text of the Gospels*.



THE END

Glory to God