

A DEFENSE OF THE *PERICOPE DE ADULTERA* -
THE GENUINENESS OF ST. JOHN 7:53-8:11
AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY

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This brief excursus is dedicated to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who revealed Himself to me in the written word--perfectly preserved down through the ages and given to me in a language I can understand. Recognizing that, as Martin Luther once said, "The Bible is like a lion; it does not need to be defended; just let it loose and it will defend itself," I hereby construct this defense out of genuine gratefulness for the infallible Word of God as contained in the Authorized King James Bible. For without the Written Word, I would know nothing of a personal relationship with the Living Word.

This excursus is also dedicated to the many men, women, and children who gave their lives that I might have the Bible in English, a privilege which I do not take for granted. Thank-you for your sacrifice and may the Lord reward you richly in His kingdom.

-Jesse M. Boyd

*"And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines. **But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.**"*

-II Samuel 23:11-12

THE PERICOPE DE ADULTERA

- 53 And every man went unto his own house.
- 1 ¶ Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.
- 2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.
- 3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,
- 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.
- 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?
- 6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*.
- 7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.
- 8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.
- 9 And they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.
- 10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?
- 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

A DEFENSE OF THE *PERICOPE DE ADULTERA*

Introduction

John 7:53-8:11 is one of the largest textual variants in the New Testament, aside from Mark 16:9-20. As a result, the general consensus of textual critics is to cast doubt upon the passage's authenticity. This is clearly seen by the fact that many modern English versions of the Bible, although failing to excise it from the text, enclose it in brackets and attach a footnote which questions genuineness. Recent authors such as Thomas Lea and James White dismiss these twelve verses with "certainty," offering little if any honest evidence to support their conclusions.¹ Such a situation coupled with the recent practice of citing these verses to excuse the sin of adultery (e.g. Bill Clinton) demands an investigation. The purpose of this brief excursus is to construct a defense of the *pericope de adultera*. Based upon the strong testimony of external and internal evidence, this well-known Gospel story can be regarded as an integral part of the book of St. John's and therefore directly applicable to the Christian life.

External Evidence

James White argues that the external evidence is overwhelmingly against the pericope.² However, a closer look reveals a completely different picture. Even Constantine Tischendorf, by no means a defender of this passage, admits that the pericope began to be read in Greek and Latin mss. from the third century onwards.³ This fact is indicated by the passage's presence in Codex D (fifth century), numerous Old Latin mss. (as early as second century), and the *Apostolic Constitutions* (ca. 380). Already, White's conclusion hints at exaggeration. The UBS' fourth edition of The Greek New Testament⁴ lists numerous mss. that are hostile to the pericope, but such a list is quite small in view of the entire body of extant evidence. Two ancient papyri are hostile toward this passage (P^{66,75}). However, not a single fragment from the rest of the extant papyri listed in the UBS⁴ provides a witness to the pericope one way or another. Therefore, it

¹cf. Thomas Lea, The New Testament, Its Background and Message (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 162. James White, The King James Only Controversy (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1995), 262.

²White, 262.

³Constantinus Tischendorf, Novum Testamentum Graece (Lipsiae: Giesecke & Devrient, 1869), 829.

⁴The Greek New Testament (4th Edition), Ed. by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo Martini, and Bruce Metzger (Germany: United Bible Societies, 1994).

cannot be known whether it was contained in any of them. On the other hand, Jewell Smith, the possessor of the world's largest private collection of ancient biblical mss., claims to have personally handled a papyrus fragment dating back to around AD 250 that includes 7:53-8:11. Apparently, however, it has been withheld from the public world.⁵

Of the five oldest uncials (ⲀABCD), only D contains the disputed passage. However, A and C are defective, having lost the leaves which would have contained the twelve verses. Therefore, of the old uncials, only Ⲁ and B are truly hostile witnesses. In light of this fact, it is no surprise that the UBS casts doubt upon the reading. This Greek text is known for practically worshipping these two mss., especially Vaticanus (e.g. I Corinthians 15:49). Both the UBS⁴ and Metzger⁶ list Codices L and Δ as additional witnesses against the pericope. However, what they fail to mention is that both mss. have a vacant space after John 7:52.⁷ This proves that the scribes were fully aware that they were leaving something out. All in all, as John Burgon concludes, Codices ACLΔ testify for the pericope, not against it.⁸

As far as the minuscules are concerned, 99% of them contain the passage in dispute. This huge body of evidence represents a wide chronological and geographical scope. A very small number of minuscules contain the passage, but place it in a different place.⁹ Such a move can be explained by the Church's use of the passage in its Pentecostal lesson in the lectionary system. This, however, will be discussed later.

The ancient versions also attest to John 7:53-8:11. It finds heavy support in the Latin line of mss., both the Vulgate and the Old Itala, as well as the Palestinian Syriac, Slavonic, Persian, and Arabic versions. The Armenian version originally contained the passage although it only

⁵Jewell Smith, "An Informative Series of Messages on the History of the Word of God" (Rochester, NY: First Baptist Bible Church, 1994), Tape #4 ("Bible Preservation" No. 2).

⁶Bruce Metzger, Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (Germany: United Bible Societies, 1993), 187.

⁷J.P. Lange, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures - The Gospel According to John, Ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1872), 268.

⁸John Burgon, "The Woman Taken In Adultery--John 7:53-8:11," In Unholy Hands on the Bible. Ed. by Jay P. Green (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1990), F-8.

⁹225 places the pericope after John 7:36; five mss. (1, 565, 1076, 1570, 1582) place the pericope at the end of John; four mss. of the Farrar group place it after Luke 21:38.

survives in a few copies.¹⁰ With regard to the Coptic Version, Metzger says the witness is minute.¹¹ However, Burgon argues that the reading appears in fifteen out of thirty-eight extant Bohairic mss.¹² The only feasible explanation for this is that the reading came from a common Coptic archetype. It's easy to see how the passage could have been omitted in the Bohairic, but interpolation seems far-fetched.

The patristic witness for this passage is extremely strong in the Western Church. It is quoted as early as the second century in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. Moreover, it shows up in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (ca. 380) as well as the writings of Ambrose (ca. 374), Jerome (ca. 385), Rufinius (ca. 400), Augustine (ca. 419), Cassiodorus (ca. 550), and many others.¹³ Of notable importance is a statement made by Jerome in his treatise *Against the Pelagians*. He claims that the passage is found in many Greek and Latin mss., contrary to the argument of the UBS⁴.

It is true that none of the extant writings of the Eastern Fathers are known to cite the passage.¹⁴ However, this fact does not serve to discredit the pericope because it is nothing more than an argument from silence. The silence of the Eastern Fathers tells us nothing. Perhaps they had no use for it in their writings. More than likely, this was the case considering the Church's use of John 7-8 in their lectionary system.

In the lectionaries, it is interesting to note the Church's use of John's Gospel for the Pentecost Lesson. It begins with 7:37-52, overleaps 7:53-8:11, and continues with 8:12. On the surface, such a fact might be seen as evidence against the pericope. However, a closer look yields quite the contrary. The story of the adulteress has little to do with Pentecost. Therefore, it was probably removed along with the three introductory verses (7:53-8:2) to maintain

¹⁰Ibid. F-9. Burgon's conclusion is apparently based upon the fact that Nikon (tenth century) claimed that the pericope was removed from the Armenian Version in some copies due to its tone of leniency toward the sin of adultery. Nikon's statement makes obvious sense, especially in light of the widespread practice of asceticism in the ancient Church. J.P. Lange also confirms this (Lange 270).

¹¹Metzger, 188.

¹²Burgon, F-9.

¹³For a more complete presentation of the patristic witness to the pericope plus documentation, see Appendix B.

¹⁴Metzger, 188.

continuity.¹⁵ John Burgon personally handled over sixty lections.¹⁶ In each of them, he found the instruction “υπερβα” (overleap) written after 7:52, directing the reader to skip down to και μηκετι αμαρτανε in 8:11. It is there that the instruction “αρξαι” (recommence) is found. If the passage were not part of John’s Gospel, it seems nonsensical for such rubrication. C.R. Gregory, a well-known authority on lectionaries, believed that the lessons for Sundays in particular were chosen at a very early date.¹⁷ This being true, the Pentecostal Lesson must have been chosen extremely early, for Pentecost was one of the most important Sunday’s on the Ecclesiastical Calendar. Let’s suppose the passage were an interpolation. It seems utterly ridiculous that a scribe, wishing to add to the sacred text, would insert it right into the middle of the passage used for Pentecost. Most assuredly, there were many other places in the Gospels that it would have fit better. Apparently the scribes who penned the four mss. of the Farrar group thought so, for they place the pericope after Luke 21:38. As for the small number of manuscripts that place the pericope elsewhere in John, this was probably done to keep from disturbing the verse sequence as read in the lectionaries.

The rubrication of John 7-8 in the Church lectionaries makes plain why Eastern Fathers such as Chrysostom and Cyril did not cite the pericope. They were publicly commenting on John 6-8 according to the lectionary. Nevertheless, the Eastern Church is not without witness. According to Burgon, as far back as the Eastern patriarchies reach, nine out of the twelve disputed verses were selected to be a special lesson for October 8--St. Pelagia’s Day.¹⁸ Metzger conveniently fails to mention this fact.

All in all, we can fairly conclude that the pericope of the adulteress exhibits widespread geographical and chronological support in the realm of external evidence. It is apparent that both the Western and Eastern churches solemnly recognized these twelve verses as an integral part of

¹⁵This practice of overleaping Scriptures is common from the pulpit, especially in topical sermons.

¹⁶Burgon, F-11.

¹⁷C.R. Gregory, Canon and Text of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons. 1907), 387.

¹⁸Burgon, F-13.

John's Gospel from the earliest of times. This is quite a different picture than the one painted by White.¹⁹

Internal Evidence

Having addressed the issue of external evidence, it is only appropriate to consider the internal evidence. Metzger argues that the style and vocabulary of the pericope are remarkably different from the rest of John's Gospel. Moreover, he claims that the passage interrupts the sequence of 7:52 and 8:12ff.²⁰ This is nothing short of unfair judgment without any presentation of evidence. On the other side of the coin, Hills points out that one of the strongest proofs for the genuineness of John 7:53-8:11 is that the absence of these verses extinguishes the connection between the seventh and eighth chapters.²¹ Simply speaking, the context demands the pericope.

Let us take a closer look to see what is happening in John 7-8. In 7:37, we learn that Jesus is in Jerusalem at the Temple on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. He begins to preach, and a division arises among the people. Some argued that Jesus was the Christ while others contested this fact because he was from Galilee, citing Micah 5:2 as proof that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. In 7:44, we learn that the division was so strong among the people that they tried to lay hands upon Jesus. However, they were not able because Jesus slipped away. In 7:45-53, the Pharisees and chief priests come onto the scene, but Jesus is gone. In 8:1, we discover that Jesus had fled the crowds and went into the Mount of Olives. The next day, he returns to the Temple to finish teaching the people (8:2). John 8:3-11 contains the interruption of the scribes and Pharisees and their accusations against the adulteress. Finally, in 8:12, after the teachers of the law have left the scene, being convicted of their sin, Jesus resumes his teaching. Such a sequence flows perfectly. One is hard-pressed to find Metzger's so-called "interruption." Therefore, his conclusion is unmerited. Without the pericope, there is no logical sequence to this portion of John's narrative. The reader is forced to skip from "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" to "Then spake Jesus unto them again." As Ruckman points out, the scene in 7:52 is a discussion between Nicodemus and the Pharisees with the officers, and Jesus is nowhere in the vicinity (cf.

¹⁹White, 262.

²⁰Metzger, 188.

²¹Edward Hills, The King James Version Defended (Des Moines, IA: Christian Research Press, 1956), 88.

7:32,45). In 8:12, Jesus is teaching the multitudes in the presence of the Pharisees in the Temple treasury (cf. 8:20).²²

As far as Metzger's assertion that the style and diction of the pericope are remarkably different from the rest of John's Gospel, therefore warranting its exclusion, we can turn to the text itself. There are only seven words or phrases used in this passage that are not found elsewhere in John's Gospel.²³ This is hardly fair evidence. There is nothing fantastic about John using a few unique words. After all, Metzger and the UBS except readings that contain *hapax legomena* numerous times in their Greek New Testament against the overwhelming majority of external evidence.²⁴ With regard to style, Lange argues that the pericope portrays a "mystic twilight" that is characteristic of John.²⁵ Nonetheless, the issue of an author's style, especially in a theological biography of the life of Christ, is extremely subjective. One can make John's style into anything he wishes it to be. The pericope may seem more like something out of the Synoptics, as some have argued, but it cannot be forgotten that all four Gospels deal with the life of the same individual. Naturally, there will be "stylistic" similarities.

Another issue of interest with regard to internal evidence is John's use of *παλιν* in 8:12, 21. Jesus' words in 8:21 literally refer back to his words in 7:34. However, there is no previous reference that yields, "I am the light of the world" or anything similar to it. Thus, the use of *παλιν* in 8:12 must be taken absolutely as referring to the fact that he was addressing them again. If the pericope is included, the first discourse came to an end when the people tried to lay hands on Jesus. Later, however, he returned to continue where he left off. Without the pericope, this adverb in 8:12 is nonsensical.²⁶

²²Peter Ruckman, Manuscript Evidence (Pensacola, FL: Pensacola Bible Press, 1970), 133.

²³ὄρθρον, πᾶς ὁ λαός, οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ φαί., ἐπιμένειν, ἀναμαρτητός, καταλείπεσθαι, κατακρινεῖν. This list is provided in by J.P. Lange (Lange 268).

²⁴In I Timothy 1:4, for example, the UBS accepts the reading of ἐκζητήσεις [*hapax legomena*] over the Textus Receptus reading of ζητήσεις which is used elsewhere in the New Testament. Metzger is going against his own argument.

²⁵Lange, 268.

²⁶Ibid. 271.

On final aspect of internal evidence that must be confronted is the introductory nature of the first three verses (7:53-8:2). If the narrative of the adulteress circulated independently before it was later incorporated into the Gospel of John, as Metzger asserts²⁷, 7:53-8:2 could not have been part of that “oral tradition” because these verses refer to the meeting of the Sanhedrin which concludes the seventh chapter. Hills observes that if the story were an interpolation, then 7:53-8:2 would have been the sheer invention of the interpolator for the purpose of linking the story with the surrounding verses. However, such a link was not needed. It would have been just as easy to begin with “And the scribes and Pharisees . . .”²⁸ Those who deny the genuineness of the passage are forced to wrench it from its rightful context, for John wrote these introductory verses to describe the way in which things happened.

All in all, the internal evidence is clearly in favor of the pericope. Metzger’s conclusion is apparently concocted to align with the verdict he has already passed against the passage. The reader is supposed to believe that John snatches him away from the middle of a dispute amongst the Sanhedrin back to Jesus teaching the multitudes in the Temple treasury without one word of explanation. As Hills promulgates, such literary technique might be expected from modern impressionistic writing, but hardly in the simple narrative of John.²⁹

The Applicability of the Pericope to the Christian Life

It is commonly asserted that the variant readings in the New Testament in no way affect doctrine. This, however, is hardly truthful, the pericope of the adulteress being a case and point. This passage has much to say about hypocrisy, mercy, and forgiveness. In recent times especially, it has been utilized out of context to excuse the sin of adultery and downplay the consequences for sin (i.e. Bill Clinton).³⁰ In light of such misuse, the true teaching of the pericope should be considered. First of all, in a case of adultery, the adulterer and the adulteress were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22) at the hands of the witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:7). In John 8:4, there is no man brought before Jesus who was “caught in the

²⁷Metzger, 188.

²⁸Hills, 91.

²⁹Ibid., 89.

³⁰Perhaps it was for this reason that scribes long ago decided to omit the pericope, believing it to exhibit leniency toward the sin of adultery.

act.” Thus, the adulterer must have been one of the Pharisees. As Jerome once explained, Jesus’ writing on the ground was perhaps a revealing of the sins of those making the accusations.³¹ In the face of such astonishing revelation in accordance with Jesus’ pronouncement (8:7), the Pharisees left the scene without speaking a single word. Jesus then proceeded to tell the woman, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (8:11). This was hardly a case of Jesus being too lenient toward sin, but of his knowledge concerning the hearts of men. The Lord recognized the Pharisees’ hypocrisy and lashed out against it, at the same time showing mercy toward the adulteress. The motive of the Pharisees was clear (8:6). They wanted to trap Jesus. If he was too lenient, he would alienate the legalists. On the other hand, if he proscribed condemnation, he would alienate the crowds who opposed the death penalty. Jesus beat the Pharisees at their own game by inviting those without sin to cast the first stone. He was not saying that it was wrong to judge, for the Scripture tell us elsewhere that we are to be “fruit inspectors” (Matthew 7:16, 20). Moreover, human governments are ordained of God to execute judgment against evil (Romans 13:1-4).³² The Pharisees, however, had ulterior motives, to trap Jesus. Their response gave the Lord occasion to show mercy as he often did, not, however, at the expense of excusing sin. He commanded the woman to go and sin no more after she recognized his authority by calling him “Lord” (8:11), a sign of true repentance. In the same manner, we as Christians are to show mercy toward those who repent of their sins, all the while expecting a conscious effort to refrain from that sin in the future. Without this passage, the Christian Church would be robbed of one of the greatest examples of mercy ever shown. In the same manner that the adulteress deserved punishment for her sin, we deserve eternal punishment because of our sinful nature. However, like the adulteress, we too can receive mercy and forgiveness by placing our faith in Jesus as Lord. Only then, can we have the power to turn from sin.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a strong case has been made for the genuineness of John 7:53-8:11 based upon both external and internal evidence. Hasty dismissals of the passage by authors such as

³¹*Dialogue Against the Pelagians*, in Fathers of the Church (Washington D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 1965) 53:321.

³²In the case of Bill Clinton, his defenders need to turn from John 7:53-8:11 and look at Proverbs 19:5,9 for a minute.

Thomas Lea and James White are foolish in light of the whole spectrum of evidence. We are not talking about one verse or even a mere phrase as is the case with so many textual variants. Rather, we have a huge block of text that enjoys wide geographical support from the earliest days of the Christian Church. To think that twelve verses would be able to successfully implant themselves into the middle of John's Gospel as a forgery and remain there for hundreds of years is unthinkable. To reject the pericope takes more faith than to accept it. Because of this difficulty, White is forced to admit that these twelve verses represent oral tradition and probably occurred in the ministry of Jesus.³³ Unfortunately for White, however, the evidence for such an oral tradition is null and void apart from the Gospel of John. The narrative bears the impress of Divine origin and cannot be the work of a fabricator.³⁴ Therefore, it properly received its place in the Authorized King James Version where it has remained for almost four hundred years, without brackets and misleading footnotes, as an authoritative portion of the Word of God, being "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (I Timothy 3:16).

³³White, 262.

³⁴Burton, F-6.

APPENDIX A -

SUMMARY OF MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE SURROUNDING THE *PERICOPE DE ADULTERA*

Ancient Papyrii

According to the UBS Greek New Testament, P^{66,75} are hostile to the pericope. However, one must not forget that there are about one hundred extant papyrus manuscripts. Ninety seven percent of these bear no witness to John 7-8. Therefore, it cannot be known whether the pericope was contained in any of them. However, we do know that Jerome (ca. 385) says that the passage is found in many Greek and Latin manuscripts. In fact, he makes an exegetical remark about a Greek phrase in the passage. We may have no extant Greek papyrii, but that does not mean that none ever existed favorable to the pericope. Jerome had to have gotten the reading from somewhere. Perhaps he was looking at one of the papyrus mss that has since lost John 7-8 to the elements. Also, the Old Latin tradition witnesses to the pericope. We know that this translation was made in the second century from Greek papyrii.

Jewell Smith, the owner of the largest private collection of ancient Bible manuscripts in the entire world, claims to have personally handled a papyrus fragment dating back to about AD 250 which contains John 7:53-8:11. Apparently, it has been withheld from the outside world.³⁵

Uncials

Of the five oldest uncials (ⲀABCD), only D contains that pericope. However, it cannot be said with UBS, Bruce Metzger, and James White that the other four are hostile to the passage. Such an assertion is a half-truth. Codices A and C are defective in this portion, having lost John 6:50-8:52 and 7:3-8:34 respectively.³⁶ codex

Alexandrinus (A), in particular is said to be missing two leaves. If this assumption is true, then there would exist eight lines of blank space had the pericope been admitted. In the days of A's composition, space was very precious due to the expensive nature of writing materials. An eight line blank space is unthinkable unless the scribe consciously knew he was leaving something out and intended to promulgate his move. Furthermore, it should be noted that upon the ensuing leaf, the scribe crowds letter together on two abnormally long lines at the top of the first column as if he had no room on the preceding leaf. How could this have been the case if there was an eight-line blank space? It is best to conclude with

³⁵Jewell Smith, "An Informative Series of Messages on the History of the Word of God" (Rochester, NY: First Bible Baptist Church, 1994), Tape #4 ("Bible Preservation" No. 2).

³⁶Tischendorf, 826.

John Burgon that we cannot conclude what form John 7:53-8:11 contained in A.³⁷ Therefore, it cannot be lumped together with \aleph and B in the same category.

The Sinaitic and Vatican mss. truly omit the passage. Perhaps this is the reason why critical scholars are so apt to disregard it. On many occasions, the UBS text follows the reading of \aleph B even when they stand in opposition to an overwhelming amount of external evidence (e.g. John 3:36, 14:5; I Corinthians 15:49, 15:54).

Codex D contains the Johannine pericope in its traditional location. Moreover, it is found in later uncials such as GHKMU.³⁸

Three other uncials (L Δ X) are also lumped together by the UBS as hostile witnesses. However, both L and Δ exhibit blank spaces after John 7:52.³⁹ This unequivocally attests to the scribes' consciousness of purposefully leaving the passage out. Codex X, according to Burgon, is nothing more than a commentary on the Gospels as they were read in Church.⁴⁰ Due to the content of this passage, it was left out of the Pentecostal Lesson in the church's lectionary system. Therefore, it is understandable why the scribe who composed X left it out. He was merely following the Church's system of public reading. All in all, these three codices cannot be seen as witnesses against the pericope. Their characteristics concerning the passage show that it was known.

Minuscules

Burgon asserts that ninety-nine percent of all minuscules contain the pericope. Those hostile to it include 33, 157, 565, and 1241. The UBS also lists 1333. However, the passage is placed in this mss at the end of Luke's Gospel by another hand. Such an action reveals that someone recognized the importance of the pericope as part of the Gospel tradition. It would have been impossible to go back and insert the passage in its proper place or in the margin for that matter. Therefore, the scribe was forced to place it where there was space. Apparently, this was at the end of Luke's Gospel.

In 225, the pericope is found after 7:36 and followed by 7:37-52 then 8:12ff. Because of the Church's selection of readings for the Day of Pentecost in the lectionary system, it is easy to see why the scribe messed up the order. In the lectionaries, John 7:37-8:12 is read overleaping 7:53-8:11. It is obvious that the scribe wished to maintain consistency with the lectionaries of his day, so he placed the pericope in the next best place, after 7:36. In his mind, this action would not interrupt the narrative. A similar situation occurs with 1, 565, 1076, 1570, and 1582, all of which place the pericope at the end of John.

³⁷Burgon, F-9.

³⁸Lange, 268.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Burgon, F-8.

Four mss of the Farrar group place the pericope after Luke 21:38. However, these all descend from a common archetype and are known for tampering with passages in this manner. (e.g. Luke 22:43 removed and thrust into Matthew 26 between verses 39 and 40.)

Ancient Versions

It cannot be denied that John 7:53-8:11 was included in the Latin New Testament very early in church history. It is found in *b,c,e,ff,g,h,j*, all of which are very early. Moreover it is found in the Latin Vulgate. Only four known Old Latin mss omit the passage--*a,f,l,q*. Michael Maynard argues that there are 6000+ Old Latin mss which have not even been examined.⁴¹ This fact coupled with the pericope's testimony among Latin fathers (e.g. Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, etc.) suggests that the Latin tradition overwhelmingly testifies to the authenticity of the pericope.

Metzger argues that the pericope is absent from the oldest Syriac mss.⁴² However, this statement is a misrepresentation of the evidence. As Burgon promulgates, fifteen out of thirty-eight Bohairic contain the pericope.⁴³ How is it possible that nearly half the copies contain it and half do not if the passage was inserted? It is more likely that the passage was omitted.

Early versions such as the Coptic (fifth century), the Palestinian Syriac (fifth century) and the Georgian (fifth or sixth century) contain the disputed passage. Others of later date (Slavonic, Arabic, and Persian) likewise contain it.⁴⁴

Several Armenian mss retain the passage although it is left out of others and placed at the end of John's Gospel. Most likely, it was found in the original Armenian because Nikon (tenth century) said that the Armenians expunged it from their text because it seemed to teach leniency toward adultery.⁴⁵

Conclusion: John 7:53-8:11 enjoys a wide range of geographical support in Greek manuscripts and ancient Bible versions. Its authority is represented by the great majority of mss evidence. This, coupled with the patristic witness of the Western Church and the Lectionary System of the Eastern Church attest wholeheartedly to the passage's authenticity.

⁴¹Michael Maynard, The History of the Debate Over 1 John 5:7-8 (Tempe, AZ: Comma Publications, 1995), 344.

⁴²Metzger, 187.

⁴³Burgon, F-9.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Lange, 270.

APPENDIX B -

SUMMARY OF ANCIENT PATRISTIC WITNESS TO THE *PERICOPE DE ADULTERA*

Didascalia Apostolorum (2nd century)

“But if thou receive not him who repents, because thou art without mercy, thou shalt sin against the Lord God; for thou obeyest not our Saviour 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 saith to him: Nay, Lord. And he said to her: Go thy way: neither do I condemn thee.* In Him therefore, our Saviour and King and God, be your patter, O bishops . . .⁴⁶

Ambrose of Milan (ca. 374)

“Consequently, when the Jews made accusation against the adulteress, the Lord Jesus wrote with His finger on the earth.”⁴⁷

J.P. Lange cites in Latin another instance where Bishop Ambrose refers to a scruple during the period of ascetic austerity (2nd-4th centuries) whereby this passage was neglected from public reading because it seemed as if the sin of adultery was too leniently dealt with by our Lord.⁴⁸

Burgon claims that Ambrose quotes from the pericope at least nine times.⁴⁹

Apostolic Constitutions (ca. 380)

“And when the elders had set another woman which had sinned before Him, and were gone out, our Lord, the Searcher of the hearts, inquiring of her whether the elders had condemned her, and being answered No, He said unto her: ‘Go thy way, therefore, for neither do I condemn thee.’”⁵⁰

⁴⁶Didascalia Apostolorum, Ed. by R. Hugh Connolly (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969), 76.

⁴⁷*The Prayer of Job and David* in Fathers of the Church, Ed. by Roy Joseph Deferrari (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 65:405.

⁴⁸Lange 270.

⁴⁹Burgon, The Woman Taken in Adultery F-9.

⁵⁰*Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* in Ante-Nicene Fathers, Ed. by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951), 7:408.

Jerome (ca. 385)

“In the Gospel, according to John, there is found in many of both the Greek as well as the Latin copies, the story of the adulteress who was accused before the Lord. Moreover, the Scribes and Pharisees kept accusing her and kept earnestly pressing the case, for they wished to stone her to death, according to the law. ‘But Jesus, stooping down, began to write with his finger on the ground,’ the sins, to be sure, of those who were making the accusation, and of all mortal beings . . . Finally, raising His head, He said to them: ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her.’ The phrase ‘without sin’ is written in Greek as *anamartetos*. He, therefore, who says that ‘without sin’ is one thing, and *anamartetos* quite another thing, should wither translate the Greek phrase with a new word, or, if it has been translated by the Latins, as the truth of the translation demands, it is clear that *anamartetos* is nothing more or less than ‘without sin.’ And, because all of the accusers fled . . . He again stooped down and wrote on the ground: they began to go away gradually, one by one, and to avoid His eyes, and he remained alone with the woman, to whom Jesus said: ‘Where are they who accused you? Has no one condemned thee? She said: “No one, Lord.’ Then Jesus said ‘sin no more.’”⁵¹

Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 400)

“A woman taken in adultery was brought before our Lord by the Jews, so that they might see what judgment he would pronounce according to the law. He, the merciful and pitying Lord, said: ‘He that is without sin among you let him cast a stone at her. And then, it is said, they all departed.’”⁵²

Augustine of Hippo (ca. 419)

“Certainly, I would not say that that woman should indeed, be considered an adulteress after she heard from the Lord: ‘Neither will I condemn thee; go thy way and from now on sin no more,’ if she heeded this in a spirit of obedience.”⁵³

“For it would not be a bad thing for a husband to be reconciled to such a woman as that to whom, when nobody had dared to stone her, the Lord said, ‘Go, and sin no more.’”⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Dialogue Against the Pelagians* in Fathers of the Church, 53:321-322.

⁵² *The Apology of Rufinus* in Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Ed. by Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Research Press, 1888), 3:459.

⁵³ *The Retractions* in Fathers of the Church, 60:83.

⁵⁴ *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount* in Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, 6:19.

“For, when He acquitted the woman accused by the Jews as sinful, and as having been caught in adultery, He told her to sin no more.”⁵⁵

“Then they who were leading the adulteress came, like raging waves against a rock: but they were dashed to pieces by His answer. For he said to them, ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.’ And again bending His head, He began writing on the ground. And now each man, when asked his own conscience, came not forward. It was not a weak adulterous woman, but their own adulterate conscience, that drove them back. They wished to punish, to judge; they came to the Rock, their judges were overthrown by the Rock . . .”⁵⁶

J.P. Lange provides an additional quotation from Augustine in Latin. It refers to scribes leaving the pericope out because it supposedly encouraged adulterous behavior.⁵⁷

Burgon claims that Augustine refers to the passage at least eighteen times in his voluminous works.⁵⁸

Cassiodorus (ca. 550)

“ . . . and in the gospel Christ said to the woman in adultery: *Go and sin no more.*”⁵⁹

“The evangelist [John] charges the Pharisees with this when they brought before Christ the woman taken in adultery, and said: *We have taken a 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.”⁶⁰

Others

Burgon claims that the passage is also cited by Pacian (370), Faustus the African (400), Chrysologus (433), Sedulius a Scot (434), Victorinus (457), Vigilius (484), Gelasius (492), Gregory the Great, and other fathers of the Western Church.⁶¹

⁵⁵*Reply to Faustus the Manichaean* in Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, 4:341.

⁵⁶*The Works of Saint Augustine* in Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, 8:506.

⁵⁷Lange, 270.

⁵⁸ Burgon, F-9.

⁵⁹*Explanation of the Psalms* in Ancient Christian Writers, Ed. by Walter J. Burghardt & Thomas Comerford Lawler (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 51:306.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 52:42

⁶¹ Burgon, F-9.

J.P. Lange quotes a certain Nikon (ca. 10th century) in Greek who states that the Armenians expunged the pericope from their version because of its lenient handling of the sin of adultery.⁶²

Conclusion: From the preceding evidence, it is clear that the pericope of the adulteress shows up numerous times in the writings of the Church Fathers across 9 centuries. Moreover, the geographical distribution of the patristic witness is widespread. Such a fact coupled with the ancient manuscript evidence led John Burgon to assert accurately, “In all parts of ancient Christendom this portion of Scripture was familiarly known in early times.”⁶³ Let it also be noted that although all of the aforementioned are Latin Fathers, there is no doubt that they were familiar with and used Greek manuscripts containing the disputed passage. This is especially evident with Jerome, who promulgates that the passage is found in many manuscripts, Greek and Latin. Furthermore, he makes an exegetical note on a Greek phrase from the pericope. He must have been looking at a Greek manuscript.

⁶²Lange, 270.

⁶³ Burgon, F-9.

APPENDIX C -

THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH LECTIONARIES

*According to C.R. Gregory, some of the lessons in the Church Lection go back to extremely early dates, particularly those for Sundays.⁶⁴ This being the case, the Lesson for Pentecost must have been chosen very early, for Pentecost was one of the most important Sundays on the Ecclesiastical Calendar.

*The Lesson for Pentecost began with John 7:37 and continued to 7:52 where it overleaped 7:53-8:11 and concluded with 8:12. Thus, the lectionaries omitted the pericope of the adulteress from the Pentecostal Lesson.

*If the passage was omitted from the lectionaries because it was not a genuine part of the Gospel of John, one is forced to wonder why a scribe would place the forgery right in the middle of the lesson for one of the most important Sundays in the year.

*John Burgon personally handled over sixty ancient lectionaries. In each one of them, he noticed that rubrication occurs and the reader is instructed to “overleap” (υπερβα) after 7:52 and “recommence” (αρξα) prior to 8:12. Without the pericope, these instructions would serve no purpose.⁶⁵

*The extant writings of the Eastern Church Fathers yield silence on the passage, but this is understandable in light of the lectionary setup for this passage. Fathers such as Cyril and Chrysostom were publicly commenting on John 7-8 and would have used the lectionary to do so.

*The Eastern Church, however, is not without witness. The lectionaries utilize nine out of the twelve disputed verses for the lesson on October 8 (St. Pelagia’s Day) as far back as the Eastern Church’s written records reach.⁶⁶

Conclusion: “By the very construction of her Lectionary, the Church in her corporate capacity and official character has solemnly recognized these verses as an integral part of S. John’s Gospel from an exceedingly remote time.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴Gregory, 387.

⁶⁵Burgon, F-11.

⁶⁶Ibid., F-13.

⁶⁷Ibid., F-11.

APPENDIX D -

QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE ANSWERED IF THE ARGUMENT AGAINST THE PERICOPE IS TO CARRY ANY WEIGHT

If John 7:53-8:11 is an interpolation,

Why was it inserted right into the middle of the Scriptures used in the Church's lectionary system for the Day of Pentecost, one of the most important Sundays in the religious year?

Why did the Eastern Church set aside nine out of the twelve verses to be a special lesson for St. Pelagia's Day (October 8) as far back as the time of the Eastern Fathers who are silent on the subject?

Why do four out of five of the oldest uncials not contain the pericope while ninety-nine out of every hundred minuscules do?

Why is the pericope attached to three introductory verses (7:53-8:2) that have absolutely nothing to do with the story itself apart from the Gospel?

Why does John use the adverb *παλιν* in 8:12?

Why did Codex Alexandrinus have at least eight lines of blank space on the second lost leaf?

Why did the fabricator, wishing to disguise his fabrication, include the peculiar feature of Jesus' writing on the ground?

What evidence exists outside the Gospel of John that this pericope reflects oral tradition about an actual event in the life of Christ?

Why do numerous lectionaries insert rubrical directions after 7:52, instructing the reader to overleap down to 8:12 in the Pentecostal Lesson?

Why was the passage cited by Ambrose nine times and Augustine at least eighteen times?

Why does it form an integral part of the *Didache* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*?

Why do Ambrose, Augustine, and Nikon claim that the passage was removed because many thought it encouraged leniency toward adultery?

Why does Jerome promulgate that the passage appears in many Greek and Latin manuscripts?

Why does the passage appear in the Latin Vulgate; the Greek editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, and the Elzivir brothers; all English Bibles of the Reformation; the Latin Bibles of the Waldensians; and Martin Luther's German Bible, all of which were compiled *at least* four hundred years closer to the days of the apostles in a time when Codex Vaticanus was known to be in existence?

Why is it cited by defenders of President Clinton to excuse his sin of adultery?

APPENDIX E -

DECEPTION BEHIND THE KING JAMES ONLY CONTROVERSY BY JAMES WHITE EXPOSED

In 1995, James White, a Scholar in Residence in the College of Christian Studies at Grand Canyon University penned a book entitled, The King James Controversy. His premise was to attack the idea of “King James Onlyism” and proclaim God’s preservation of Scripture through modern translations that he believes to be more credible than the Authorized King James Version that has ministered to English-speaking people for almost 400 years. On page 248 of his book, White claims, “King James Onlyism is a human tradition. It has no basis in history. It has no foundation in fact. It is internally inconsistent, utilizing circular reasoning at its core, and involves the use of more double standards than almost any system of thought I have ever encountered.” These are pretty strong words from a man who seeks to prove his point via deception after deception, exaggeration after exaggeration, and misrepresentation of evidence after misrepresentation of evidence. A case and point is White’s treatment of John 7:53-8:11 on page 262 of his work.

1. It is apparent that White takes his list of manuscript evidence straight out of the UBS⁴. However, he fails to include an asterix with mss. 1424. According to the UBS’ abbreviation system, the asterix refers to the original hand of the manuscript. Apparently, 1424 has the pericope in the margin. White does not want anyone to know that.
2. White includes Codices L and Δ in his list of evidence, but he fails to mention that both mss. exhibit a blank space after John 7:52. It is clear that the scribes were aware of the fact that they were leaving something out.
3. White argues that the pericope is absent from the majority of Latin versions. This is simply untrue. It is found in the Vulgate tradition and numerous mss of the Old Itala dating back to the second century. The UBS⁴ lists four italic mss hostile to the pericope, but seven plus the Vulgate that include it. White’s majority does not exist. Besides, there are thousands of Latin mss. that have not been examined by anyone, especially James White.
4. White claims that the pericope is missing from the majority of Syriac mss. also. However, he fails to mention that it is found in the Palestinian Syriac and numerous later mss. of the Peshitta and the Harclean Syriac (even the UBS⁴ admits this). The pericope is also found in certain mss. of the Philoxenian Syriac. White’s assertion is misleading.
5. White argues that the pericope is missing from the majority of lectionaries. Most assuredly, White has never seen an ancient lectionary in his life. John Burgon, on the other hand, personally handled over sixty of them. According to him, the passage was found rubricated in every one of them. In other words, there were liturgical directions that instructed the reader to skip from 7:52 down to 8:12. This is hardly an omission of the pericope, for the

pericope served no purpose on Pentecost Sunday when John 7:37-52; 8:12 was read. White also conveniently fails to mention that the Church selected nine out of the twelve disputed verses to be read on October 8. This reading, according to Burgon goes all the way back to the earliest of times in the Christian Church.

6. White gives more credence to ten minuscules that place the pericope in different place in the Gospels than he does to the hundreds of them that retain the passage in the traditional place. His use of the exclamation point at the end of the sentence containing the aforementioned assumption indicates that he considers these witnesses to be great evidence against the passage. What White doesn't promulgate is that the four mss. that place the pericope after Luke 21:38 come from a common archetype and are known for reworking the Scriptures (e.g. Luke 22:43 is removed and thrust into Matthew 26 between verses 39 and 40. White claims, "such moving about by a body of text is plain evidence of its later origin and the attempt on the part of the scribes to find a place where it 'fits.'" This situation proves nothing of the sort save that a few irresponsible scribes wished to remove the passage from the Pentecostal Lesson because they believed it to treat the sin of adultery too leniently. Or, perhaps the mss. they were copying did not include the passage, but the scribe wished to include it where he had space (e.g. at the end of Luke or John).
7. White says that some scribes included the pericope after John 7:44. It is apparent that White gets this information from Metzger who get it from Eberhard Nestle. In a footnote, Metzger promulgates that Nestle mentioned some Georgian mss. that placed the pericope after John 7:44. However, Nestle provided no specific mss. How do we know Nestle did not just make this up out of thin air.
8. White says that John 7:52 and 8:12 go together. Are we to believe that "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" is immediately followed by "Then spake Jesus again to them saying" without a word of explanation. As Edward Hills asserts, "Such impressionistic writing might possibly be looked for in some modern author. It is unthinkable in the simple narrative of John."⁶⁸ Besides, what does White do with the fact that Jesus is nowhere in the vicinity in 7:45-52? Also, what is the purpose of the word "again" in 8:12? Without the pericope, there is no "again."
9. White says, "aside from issues of vocabulary and style." What issues is he referring to? Of course, White gives absolutely no examples to back his claim. J.P. Lange, a scholar far more learned than White, says that the pericope exhibits the same "mystic twilight" that is common in John's Gospel.⁶⁹
10. White says, "The story of the woman taken in adultery interrupts the flow of the text." How? The average reader does not see this.'

⁶⁸Hills, 89.

⁶⁹Lange, 268.

11. White says that it is a “near certainty” that the pericope is not an authoritative part of the Bible. His “near certainty” is based upon one-sided evidence that is promoted with no documentation whatsoever.
12. White claims that the story itself represents an oral tradition about Jesus that came to have its part in the Gospel of John over time. There is no concrete evidence for such a tradition whatsoever apart from the Gospel text itself. If all of this is true, why would a scribe insert the passage right in the middle of the passage preached from on the most important Sunday of the year--Pentecost?
13. White does not provide a single sliver of documentation for the claims he makes on the pericope. Is the reader supposed to believe what he says simply because he says it. Apparently, White never consulted writers such as John Burgon, J.P. Lange, or Edward Hills.
14. It is interesting to note the striking similarity between White’s words and those of Bruce Metzger in his Commentary on the Greek New Testament. White uses the term “earmark” as does Metzger.⁷⁰ This word is so uncommon that it is very doubtful it came from White’s vocabulary when Metzger was obviously sitting right in front of him.
15. Concerning internal evidence surrounding the pericope, White writes, “aside from issues of vocabulary and style.” Metzger writes, “the style and vocabulary of the pericope differ noticeably . . .”⁷¹ White writes, “interrupts the flow of the text.” Metzger writes, “it interrupts the sequence.”⁷² Concerning the external evidence, White takes his list of witnesses straight out of Metzger. Also, he writes, “Both A and C most probably did not contain the passage, though both are defective in this section of John . . .” Metzger writes, “Codices A and C are defective in this part of John, but it is highly probable that neither contained the pericope.”⁷³ What is going on here? White is taking information from Metzger, changing a few words, and offering no documentation. That is called “plagiarism” Mr. White, not scholarship.

Conclusion: Fifteen counts of misrepresentation of evidence have been cited on one page of White’s book, The King James Only Controversy. This fact is scary. One can only wonder how much White bends the truth in the other 285 pages. This work is not scholarship. It

⁷⁰see Metzger, 188.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., 187.

seeks to trash the King James Bible through deception. Believe James White if you will, but I choose to believe God's promise in Psalm 12:6-7. "The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

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