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IN DEFENSE OF THE PERICOPE DE ADULTURA

The passage in John 7:53 – 8:11 known as the *pericope de adultura* is held today by the majority of scholars to be a later addition that was not a part of the original text.¹ Representative of this viewpoint, Colin Kruse states that “[i]t is very unlikely that this attractive story was an original part of the Fourth Gospel.”² That said, most conservative commentators do not dismiss the pericope as without value. Gerald Borchert, for instance, concludes that “[t]his little pericope is one of the great jewels of Christian Scripture.”³ Along the same lines, Leon Morris comments:

But if we cannot feel that this is part of John’s Gospel, we can feel that the story is true to the character of Jesus. Throughout the history of the church it has been held that, whoever wrote it, this little story is authentic. It rings true. It speaks to our condition. And it can scarcely

¹ The text (KJV) follows: “7:53 And every man went unto his own house. 8:1 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.”

² Colin G. Kruse, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2003), 198.

³ Gerald Borchert, *The New American Commentary: John 1-11* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers 1996), 369.

have been composed in the early church with its sternness about sexual sin. It is thus worth our while to study it, though not as an authentic part of John's writing. The story is undoubtedly very ancient.⁴

And while D. A. Carson rejects the authenticity of the passage, he is certain that the event actually occurred: "On the other hand, there is little reason for doubting that the event here described occurred, even if in its written form it did not in the beginning belong to the canonical books."⁵ With due respect for the views of these and other commentators, I will argue below that while the evidence is not sufficient to be dogmatic, neither is it sufficient to dismiss the authenticity of the pericope, so that unless and until further manuscript evidence is discovered, the story should be accepted as both historical and canonical within its present placement in the Fourth Gospel.

Broadly speaking, the evidence against the authenticity of the *pericope de adultura* falls into two categories, the external evidence concerning the manuscripts and the internal evidence within the Fourth Gospel itself. Concerning the external evidence, Morris states that "[t]he textual evidence makes it impossible to hold that this section is an authentic part of the Gospel."⁶ Likewise, Craig Keener says that "[t]his passage bears all the marks of an interpolation; thus, despite a few valiant attempts to rescue it for the Fourth Gospel, the vast majority of scholars view it as

⁴ Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John (Revised)* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1995), 779.

⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According To John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1991), 333.

⁶ Morris, 778.

inauthentic here.”⁷ The primary issue concerning the manuscripts is that the earliest omit the pericope, as F. F. Bruce summarizes:

They are missing from a wide variety of early Greek manuscripts from the earliest forms of the Syriac and Coptic Gospels, from several Armenian, Old Georgian and Old Latin manuscripts, and from the Gothic Bible. They constitute, in fact, a fragment of authentic gospel material not originally included in any of the four Gospels. Its preservation (for which we should be thankful) is due to the fact that it was inserted at what seemed to be a not inappropriate place in the Gospel of John or of Luke.⁸

Gerald Borchert likewise summarizes the manuscript evidence:

Our oldest manuscripts of John do not contain this text, and it is conspicuously absent not only from the early eastern Greek texts and versions, such as the Syriac and Coptic, but also no eastern Church Father commenting on John makes any mention of the story during the first nine centuries of the Christian era. In the west during the first three centuries the situation was not much different, though by the fourth and fifth centuries the story found its way into Codex Bezae and into a number of later Greek and old Latin manuscripts. Yet even some of these manuscripts contain sigla indicating the doubtful nature of the pericope’s placement. While the earliest western Church Fathers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian do not mention the pericope, it is found in the works of Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome.⁹

Carson also draws similar conclusions, despite his recognition of the pericope’s inclusion within certain miniscule and other manuscripts:

These verses are present in most of the medieval Greek miniscule manuscripts, but they are absent from virtually all early Greek manuscripts that have come down to us, representing great diversity of textual traditions. The most notable exception is the Western uncial D, known for its independence in numerous other places. They are also missing from the earliest forms of the Syriac and Coptic Gospels, and from many Old Latin, Old Georgian and Armenian

⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John, A Commentary (Volume One)* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), 735.

⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1983), 413.

⁹ Borchert, 369-70.

manuscripts. All the early church Fathers omit this narrative: in comment on John, they pass immediately from 7:52 to 8:12. No Eastern Father cites the passage before the tenth century. Didymus the Blind (a fourth-century exegete from Alexandria) reports a variation on this narrative, not the narrative as we have it here. Moreover, a number of (later) manuscripts that include the narrative mark it off with asterisks or obeli, indicating hesitation as to its authenticity, while those that include it display a rather high frequency of textual variants.¹⁰

From this absence from certain ancient manuscripts, Craig Keener concludes that “...its textual history is suspect; one would hardly expect so many early manuscripts to omit such an important story about Jesus were it in their text.”¹¹

In addition to the problem of certain older manuscripts omitting the pericope, within the manuscripts that include it, it is not always placed at the same point in John, and even sometimes occurs in Luke. F. F. Bruce explains the placement problem within manuscripts containing the pericope:

Among the manuscripts of John which include it, the majority place it between 7:52 and 8:12; others place it after 7:36, after 7:44, or after 21:25. One family of manuscripts (family 13) places it after Luke 21:38. Many of the witnesses which do not contain it mark it with asterisks or daggers, to indicate the uncertainty of its textual attestation.¹²

Leon Morris makes a similar assessment of the manuscript evidence:

It is not attested in the oldest manuscripts, and when it does make its appearance it is sometimes found in other positions, either after verse 36, or after verse 44, or at the end of the Gospel, or after Luke 31:38. It seems clear enough that those scribes who felt it too important to be lost were not at all sure where to attach it.¹³

¹⁰ Carson, 333.

¹¹ Keener, 735.

¹² Bruce, 413.

¹³ Morris, 778-79.

Likewise, Carson comments on placement issue and concludes that this evidence supports its inauthenticity:

Although most of the manuscripts that include the story place it here (i.e. at 7:53-8:11), some place it instead after Luke 21:38, and other witnesses variously place it after John 7:44, John 7:36 or John 21:25. The diversity of placement confirms the inauthenticity of the verses.¹⁴

In his commentary on John, Andreas Kostenberger summarizes the manuscript evidence against the pericope, as well as its absence from mention by certain early Church Fathers:

1. Its utter absence from all pre-fifth-century A.D. MSS...
2. Its appearance in now fewer than five different places in the MS tradition (after John 7:36, 44, or 52; at the end of John's Gospel; or after Luke 21:38), bearing all the marks of a "bouncing around... 'floating' logion"; one should also note the large number of variants pertaining to the entire pericope, which also suggests an unstable MS tradition;
3. Non-Johannine literary features (see above);
4. The interruption of the narrative flow from 7:52 to 8:12, breaking up the literary unit 7:1-8:59; on a historical level, the setting of 7:53-8:1 suggests most plausibly Jesus' pattern during the week before his passion (cf. Mark 11:11, 19; 13:3; and esp. Luke 21:37);
5. The lack of citation in early patristic writings up to the fourth century (the earliest Greek patristic reference of a variation of this narrative occurring in a commentary by Didymus the blind [d. 398]);
6. The suggested scenario that the pericope passed from its original place in the Gospel according to the Hebrews to John's Gospel (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17, citing Papias).¹⁵

The internal evidence against authenticity tends to focus on the purported use of non-Johannine vocabulary and lack of flow introduced by the pericope. Carson finds conclusive evidence against the pericope in that the vocabulary is non-Johannine: "Finally, even if someone should decide that the material is authentic, it

¹⁴ Carson, 333.

¹⁵ Andreas J. Kostenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2004), 247.

would be very difficult to justify the view that the material is authentically *Johannine*: there are numerous expressions and constructions that are found nowhere in John, but which are characteristic of the Synoptic Gospels, Luke in particular.”¹⁶ Leon Morris also places much weight on the internal issues:

In addition to the textual difficult many find stylistic criteria against the story. While the spirit of the narrative is in accordance with that of the Gospel the language is not Johannine. The passage is too short for this argument to be completely decisive, but for what it is worth it does tell against Johannine authorship. There is also the fact that the passage does not fit well into the context, whereas 8:12 follows naturally after 7:52.¹⁷

Similarly, Keener finds the vocabulary and flow of thought issue persuasive:

Second, it includes elements of non-Johannine vocabulary, some of them significant (‘scribes’ appear only here, and its language is closer to that of the Synoptics). The passage also bears more resemblance to the briefer Synoptic controversy stories than to the normal story in John, though by itself this would not constitute grounds for dismissal. Finally, it seriously interrupts the flow of thought in John’s narrative.¹⁸

In his analysis of the passage, Kostenberger finds that the unique usage of 14 terms suggests non-Johannine authorship, although on closer examination he does not find that evidence standing alone to be sufficient:

Under the head of “Internal Evidence,” identifies 14 words that occur only in 8:1-11 and states: “The pattern is consistent: virtually every verse from 8:1-11 (the sole exception being 8:5) contains words found nowhere else in the Gospel... Moreover, several other words occur only once or twice elsewhere in the Gospel. To this should be added the conspicuous nonoccurrence of standard Johannine vocabulary....”¹⁹

Still, a closer look at the fourteen words used only here in John’s Gospel yields less than conclusive results. First, the subject of

¹⁶ Carson, 333.

¹⁷ Morris, 779.

¹⁸ Keener, 735-36.

¹⁹ Kostenberger, 245.

adultery is not addressed elsewhere in this Gospel, which explains that the verb and noun for 'adultery' are limited to the present context. Second, three closely related verbs describing Jesus' bending down and straightening up account for three additional Johannine *hapex legomena*.... 'Without sin,' too, may be explained as unique to the present context (though see 8:46). Thus, only a few words remain whose presence may be truly significant in suggesting non-Johannine authorship.²⁰

Many commentators also find the pericope to be out of place. F. F. Bruce, for example, states: "In style it has closer affinities with the Synoptic Gospels than with John. One reason for its being placed in this context in John may have been the idea that it served as an illustration of Jesus' words in 8:15, 'I judge no one.'"²¹ Borchert states that the pericope "disrupts the logic of the Johannine Tabernacles argument" and "is hardly Johannine in style or form."²² He concludes that "[i]t is from my perspective a text looking for a context."²³ He even goes a step further and likens the "pericope to be more akin to that of Luke than of John."²⁴ Keener, on the other hand, draws the conclusion that the story merely reflects an oral tradition:

The story may reflect an authentic tradition about Jesus, as many, perhaps most, scholars think; although a few have attributed the passage to an origin in Luke... most scholars are probably right that it stems from oral tradition. In any case, probably bears no other direct relationship with the rest of the Fourth Gospel.²⁵

In any event, according to Kostenberger, in view of all of the evidence, the majority view of scholars today is to regard the pericope as a later addition: "Thus,

²⁰ Kostenberger, 246.

²¹ Bruce, 413.

²² Borchert, 369.

²³ Borchert, 369.

²⁴ Borchert, 370.

²⁵ Keener, 736.

scholarship has, almost universally, regarded the pericope as a later insertion for, in Peterson's words, 'reasons [that] are massive, convincing and obvious.'"²⁶

Notwithstanding this seeming mountain of scholarship against the authenticity of the passage, it does have its defenders. Robert Lightner, for example, argues in favor of the passage:

Some do not believe John 7:53-8:11 is really a part of John's original Gospel. This is because some ancient manuscripts do not include these verses. They conclude therefore that these verses were added by a well-meaning copyist. However, there are several internal and external arguments that have been made for believing the passage is an authentic part of John's Gospel. There is every reason to believe that the same Pharisees involved at the close of chapter 7 are the ones Jesus debated in 8:13-21. Also, early church fathers considered the passage in question as authentic.²⁷

And even the opponents of the passage's authenticity must admit the evidence is not one-sided. Kostenberger, for example, states: "There even appears to be counterevidence suggesting possible Johannine authorship of the pericope. A case in point is the almost identical wording of 6:6 and 8:6...."²⁸ And perhaps one of the most outspoken in favor of the passage, Zane Hodges wrote:

In some ways the problems centering around the *pericope de adultera* are unique to New Testament criticism. To begin with, there is an almost classic division between the documentary witnesses. Ranged against the pericope are virtually all of the most ancient Greek manuscripts, which are favored by modern scholarship, along with an impressive array of versionary and patristic data. On the other hand, the evidence for the existence of this story seems very early and the passage is actually found in very large majority of the surviving

²⁶ Kostenberger, 247.

²⁷ Robert P. Lightner, *Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Eugene: Resource Publications 2007), 65.

²⁸ Kostenberger, 246.

manuscripts while there are also ancient attestations from both versions and fathers.²⁹

Opponents have argued that the evidence from the ancient manuscripts has its problems. Hodges asserts—with citations to several other scholars—that most textual variants were introduced prior to A.D. 200, but that the ancient Greek texts omitting the pericope are to be dated close to or after A.D. 200:

It is clear from this that the evidence for omission is both considerable and very old. On the other hand, it should not be inferred that any of these witnesses predate the appearance of the pericope in John's Gospel. If, as indicated above, the problem must have originated earlier than A.D. 200 - perhaps much earlier- none of the surviving witnesses reach back that far. P66 and P75 are easily the oldest texts and stand precisely on the borderline being discussed (ie: the beginning of the third century), but among the available Greek copies these are the sole representatives of the third century. For the second and first centuries there are no survivors at all (in this part of the book) among the undoubtedly very numerous texts in Greek which must have existed for John's Gospel.³⁰

His point is well taken, namely that a post A.D. 200 text omitting the pericope could just as well evidence a copyist's improper removal as it might evidence the pericope not being part of the original. Moreover, most of the evidence comes from manuscripts that are Egyptian in origin, and therefore they do not reflect a random sampling of all manuscripts that were created in the time period:

It is one of the chief fallacies of the modern textual criticism that the surviving Greek Manuscript evidence is sometimes treated as if it were truly representative of what did or did not exist among the nonsurviving text which have long since perished. But this is as unscientific as it could possibly be. In the case being considered, P66 and P75 *alone* represent the third century and both are of Egyptian provenance. Furthermore, the only two witnesses from the fourth century (the famous vellum manuscripts, Aleph and B) are also of

²⁹ Zane Hodges, "Problem Passages in the Gospel of John Part 8: The Woman Taken in Adultery," <http://adultera.awardspace.com> (accessed on 10/23/2011).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Egyptian origin. Thus, for 200 years – between A.D. 200 and 400 – the data consists of four texts, all Egyptian. That this could represent, by any stretch of the imagination, an adequate "random sample" for the era in question, would be a far-fetched and untenable proposition. Indeed, it would be hazardous in the extreme to generalize at all even about the state of things in Egypt. The most that could safely be said that *it is possible* that between A.D. 200 and 400 more manuscripts were written in Egypt without the pericope than were written with it. But even here, as any statistician would know, the inference merits little confidence.³¹

To this problem is added the possibility of dependence between some of the manuscripts omitting the pericope.³²

More can be said, however, regarding the primacy given by the majority today to the Greek manuscripts that omit the pericope. Dean John Burgon argues that Codex A is improperly cited as evidence when, in fact, it is missing two leaves that might have contained the passage.³³ Moreover, the L and Delta manuscripts leave a vacant space after John 7:52, indicating the copyists' awareness of manuscripts placing the pericope thereafter.³⁴ Moreover, Darrell Sutton argues that the lectionaries translating from the Greek, even those predating the two oldest Greek manuscripts that are relied upon by modern scholarship for rejecting the *pericope de adultera*, contain references to the passage: "But in the Coptic, Amharic, Armenian, Arabic, early Persian and others the 'bad woman' is there."³⁵ Sutton further notes: "In my authorized Syriac version used in the East there is a note in Aramaic which translated says: 'This story is not in the Peshitta text.' But there are

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Dean John Burgon, "The Causes of Corruption of the Traditional Texts of the Holy Gospel," <http://adultera.awardspace.com> (accessed on 10/23/2011).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Darrell Sutton, "A Note to Professor Harris," <http://adultera.awardspace.com> (accessed on 10/23/2011).

older Greek MSS in which it is found. Particularly, the text called 'Jerusalem.' To my knowledge, we do not even have this text classified or published.”³⁶

Regarding the purported lack of reference by Church Fathers, Burgon lists several Christian writings that refer to the pericope, including Jerome (385), Ambrose at Milan (374), Augustine (396), Pacian (370), Faustus the African (400), Rufins at Aquileia (400), Chrysologus at Ravenna (433), Sedulius (434), Victorius of Victoriunus (457), Vigilius of Tapsus (484), Gelasius (492), Cassiodorus and Gregory the Great.³⁷ Further, the passage is found in several translations, including the Bohairic (15 of 38 copies), the Ethiopic (5th century), the Palestinian Syriac (5th century), the Georgian (5th or 6th century), the Armenian (4th or 5th century), and Codex D.³⁸ According to Jerome, “in the Gospel according to John in many manuscripts in both Greek and Latin, is found the story of the adulterous woman who was accused before the Lord.”³⁹ As Hodges observes, “Equally famous is the observation of Augustine (ca. 430) to the effect that ‘certain persons of little faith, or rather enemies of the true faith, fearing I suppose, lest their wives should be given impunity in sinning, removed from the manuscripts the Lord’s act of forgiveness toward the adulterous, as if He who had said, ‘sin no more’ had granted permission to sin’.”⁴⁰ Hodges summarizes the evidence thus:

On the other hand the Old Latin manuscripts which contain it are more numerous than those omitting it, and Jerome in the fifth century, included the passage in the Vulgate. The so-called Palestinian Syriac version (fifth century) contains it, as do certain manuscripts of the

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Bergon, note 33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Hodges, note 29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Harclean Sryiac, the Armenian, and the Bohairic. The Ethiopic version, dated by some in the fourth century and by others in the sixth or seventh century, likewise contains the pericope.⁴¹

As demonstrated above, the evidence of omissions in early Greek texts and from certain Church Fathers has been fairly answered by other scholars. I think the evidence from these sources, when carefully scrutinized, is simply not strong enough one way or the other to be dogmatic. But in view of the historical acceptance of the pericope up until the 1800s, the burden is on the opponents, and it is a burden they have not yet met. And as Kostenberger himself conceded, the supposed use of non-Johannine vocabulary is also inconclusive. What remains, and arguably what tips the scale unless and until further manuscript evidence might be discovered to shed additional light on the subject, is how the pericope fits within the flow of John 7 and 8.

Many of the scholars that reject the authenticity of the passage under consideration assert without argument that the passage does not fit well. But in fact, the passage provides an excellent transition between what precedes it in chapter 7 and what follows in chapter 8. In chapter 7, Jesus is supposed to be arrested, but is not. The chapter ends with the chief priests and Pharisees discussing the problem of Jesus and Nicodemus interceding:

7:45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? 46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. 47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? 48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? 49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. 50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) 51 Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? 52 They answered and

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. 53 And every man went unto his own house.

This episode comes on the heels of Jesus' public proclamation on the last day of the feast—by quoting from Isaiah 55—of his being Messiah, which itself follows after much focus earlier in the chapter on the public's assessment of whether Jesus is the Messiah and on the Jewish leadership. When Jesus is not arrested, the leadership is angry and Nicodemus intercedes on the basis of the law. Namely, Nicodemus argues that Jesus should not be convicted without a fair trial. And it is the proper application of the Law that is at issue in the pericope. As Lightner comments, "The specific occasion or setting for the story about this woman's encounter with Jesus came after Nicodemus reminded his Pharisee-friends that they were violating their law by rushing to judge Jesus."⁴²

There is no question in the pericope that the woman is guilty. The point, however, is that the Jewish leadership wishes to trap Jesus, and in particular to demonstrate that he will not uphold the law and therefore his claims of being the Messiah fail. As Lightner confirms:

The truth is they brought her to Jesus with ulterior motives. As was so often the case, they wanted to trick and trap Jesus. They wanted desperately to prove to the people He was not the One He claimed to be, Israel's Messiah and the world's Savior. In other words, they were using the woman as a means of finding fault with Jesus.⁴³

While much has been made of John's unique use here of the term "scribes," as Lightner argues, it perfectly fits the context of what is occurring in the passage:

⁴² Lightner, 66.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

It is significant and interesting that the Pharisees brought scribes with them. This is the only time John mentions them in his Gospel. The scribes were the ones who copied the law and also taught it to the people. No doubt, they were brought along to strengthen their case against Jesus.⁴⁴

As it turns out, however, it is the Pharisees and scribes that do not uphold the Law. Jesus never denies what the Law requires of a convicted adulteress, namely execution by stoning. Instead, Jesus does two things that link the story to what had already occurred in chapter 7 and what follows in chapter 8. Probably, the great import of this passage is often lost by the preoccupation on what Jesus wrote on the ground. But if that were important the passage would have indicated what was written. If Jesus wrote words, the dust blew them away long ago and that is simply not the focus. Rather, the focus is on Jesus stooping down to write with his “finger.” According to Exodus 31:18: “And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” The point Jesus first makes concerns his authority to opine on the Law—namely, he is the author of it and knows precisely what it says about adultery. This is a subtle claim of deity, which transitions well to Jesus’ more explicit “I AM” statements in the balance of John 8.

Next, Jesus demonstrates his superior knowledge of the Law when he says: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” (John 8:7) It is remarkable in the passage that the woman was caught in the very act, and yet the man is absent. They have all participated in this sin, and perhaps they are also guilty of this same sin apart from the entrapment. The Law was clear that two witnesses

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

were required, but the witnesses must not be guilty of the same sin for which they are testifying. (e.g., Deuteronomy 19:15) Jesus knows that the only valid witness against the woman is himself, for all the others are not qualified as witnesses. Thus, rather than skirting the Law, Jesus enforces it. He does not condone her sin nor fane a lack of knowledge, but indeed says to her after the illegitimate witnesses leave, “go, and sin no more.” Jesus’ handling of the law validates his Messianic claims and reflects back on what has occurred in John 7.

I have endeavored to demonstrate that the evidence from early manuscripts and Church Fathers can be fairly answered, at least sufficiently that the evidence is not strongly enough against the authenticity of the pericope that it should be abandoned as scripture. The majority of modern scholarship obviously disagrees, although according to Borchert, the majority position is still that the story is canonical: “For most in the church, Protestants (including the present writer) and Roman Catholics alike, this pericope is regarded as being fully canonical.”⁴⁵ Other commentators are less kind. D. A. Carson states that “modern English versions are right to rule it off from the rest of the text (NIV) and to relegate it to a footnote (RSV).”⁴⁶ And Kostenberger denies the pericope’s canonicity and admonishes that it should not be preached: “...proper conservatism and caution suggest that the passage be omitted from preaching in the churches.”⁴⁷ For me, the issue remains open to further evidence, but I think the present state of the evidence is not dispositive and the passage itself does not interrupt the flow of John 7 – 8, but

⁴⁵ Borchert, 369.

⁴⁶ Carson, 333.

⁴⁷ Kostenberger, 248.

rather, it provides a meaningful transition. For these reasons, the *pericope de adultera* should for now be considered as an original part of the Fourth Gospel, as it has largely been considered throughout Church history.