

TEXT CRITICAL ANALYSIS – JOHN 7:53-8:11
ADAM SZABADOS

The story of the adulteress woman in John 7:53-8:11 has been an integral part of the various Bible translations that relied on the Byzantine/Majority Text, but most modern Bible translations (that do not follow the TR) somehow indicate to the readers that the originality of the passage is highly problematic. The *external* textual evidence does not favor the inclusion of the passage in the reconstructed text. Most highly regarded manuscripts of the gospel of John do not have the pericope. It is missing from both papyri that would otherwise cover chapters 7 and 8 of John (p⁶⁶, p⁷⁵ – p⁶⁶ is especially significant, since it is from cca. 200), it is missing from the prestigious uncials \aleph and B, and from many other uncials and minuscules of wide geographical circulation (A, C, L, N, T, W, Δ , Θ , Ψ , 0141, 053, 0211, 22, 33, 157, 565, 1230, 1241, 1242, 1253, 1333, 1424, 2193). It is not included in the earliest Syriac and Coptic versions of John, and is missing from some Armenian and Old Georgian versions, too. The Byzantine tradition supports the inclusion (E, F, G, H, K, M, U, Γ , Π), and it has the support of the Western uncial manuscript D as well. The church fathers are divided. Evidence for the existence of the pericope comes from the Latin Fathers Ambrosiaster, Ambrose, Pacian, Rufinus, Jerome and Augustine, and the Apostolic Constitutions, but no Greek Church Father before the twelfth century mentions it, and even then Zigabenus comments that accurate copies of the gospel did not contain it (see Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 220). Some manuscripts place the passage after 7:36 (ms. 225), after 7:44 (several Georgian mss.) or after 21:25 (1, 565, 1076, 1570, 1582). One manuscript (f₁₃) places it after Luke 21:38! It appears that the Western and the Byzantine traditions were more prone to include the pericope, but the overwhelming majority of early testimonies and the best manuscripts would not support this tradition.

The *internal* evidence does not seem to be conclusive on either side. Given the size of the section, we can assume that the inclusion (or exclusion) of the narrative was not a scribal error but an intentional change. A scribe could have added the passage because he wanted to include a piece of oral tradition into the gospel. He could just as well expunge it from the gospel because it did not fit his theological convictions. Some argued that for the scribe the story “was liable to be understood in a sense too indulgent to adultery” (Metzger, 221). But one can also argue for the harmony between the pericope and the rest of John’s gospel. John 3:17 states that “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” The rebuke against self-righteous Jews in the narrative is in harmony with Jesus’ heated conversations with them both in chapter 7 and in chapter 8. There seems to be no good reason for any scribe to arbitrarily exclude the passage from the gospel. The inclusion of the passage in other parts of John (and in Luke!) however supports the view that the pericope probably existed as an oral tradition independent from John’s gospel.

In light of the external and the internal evidences, we can conclude that John 7:53-8:11 is most likely not part of the original gospel of John. The *external* evidence is strongly against the inclusion of the passage in the gospel. The earliest and most widespread manuscript evidence knows of a gospel that does not have the story of the adulteress woman. The *internal* evidence supports the external evidence, since it is easier to explain the inclusion of the story than its exclusion. On the other hand, even if 7:53-8:11 was not part of the original autograph, it does not follow that the story was a later invention. The scribe(s) who first included it in the gospel(s) could strongly believe in the authenticity of the account.

TEXT CRITICAL ANALYSIS – MARK 16:9-20

ADAM SZABADOS

There are four known endings of Mark's gospel. **1)** The one that came to us through the Majority Text is a longer ending (9-20). This reading is supported by the Byzantine tradition of the Textus Receptus, and a number of uncials and minuscules of all three (Byzantine, Alexandrian, Western) traditions (like A, C, D, K, X, W, Δ, Θ, Π, Ψ, 099, 0112, f¹³, 28, 33). The majority of the lectionaries support this longer reading, and there is early patristic support for it, too: Irenaeus, the Diatessaron, possibly Justin Martyr, Asterius, the Apostolic Constitutions, Didymus, Epiphanius, Marcus Eremita, Nestorian, Ambrose, Augustine. **2)** Jerome knew an extended version of the longer ending, preserved in one Greek manuscript. **3)** The two oldest manuscripts (Ⲁ and B) lack verses 9-20, and so does 304, the Synaitic Syriac manuscript, many Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (9th, 10th c.). Some Church Fathers give evidence for the absence of these verses from the original version of Mark. Eusebius and Jerome attest that the verses were absent from almost all Greek copies that they were familiar with, and the Alexandrian Fathers (Clement and Origen) showed no knowledge of the existence of the passage, either. Several manuscripts that contain the passage have scribal notes that indicate suspicion about its Markan origin. **4)** The fourth ending is a shorter ending of two sentences: "But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation." There is only one witness that ends with this shorter ending (it^k), all other witnesses of this shorter ending *also* have verses 9-20 (L, Ψ, 099, 0112; the Old Latin k, the margins of the Harclean Syriac, and several Bohairic and Sahidic manuscripts). The external evidence gives strongest support to 1), the longer (but not extended) ending, and to 3), the complete omission of any verses after 16:8. Of the two, 1) has the more widespread evidence geographically (all three traditions), numerically, and in terms of variety (manuscripts, lectionaries, Fathers). However, 3) has the support of the two best manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

The internal evidence does not support 2) because its language is foreign to the language of Mark, and has even "an unmistakable apocryphal flavor" (Metzger, 125). The shorter ending of 4) also differs from the simple Markan tone. The problem with the longer ending 1) is similar: it has several words that do not appear elsewhere in Mark, and it does not connect easily to verse 8. The trouble with 3) is that it ends too abruptly, which would be a rather strange ending to the gospel, leaving doubt in the readers' minds about the resurrection of Jesus. Although the UBS committee found the internal evidence against 1) weighty, I find the internal evidence against 3) significant, too.

When we weigh the external and internal evidences, we are facing a difficult decision. There are strong external evidences for both the shortest and the longer ending, and there are internal evidences against both of them. Moreover, the existence of both versions can be explained by the priority of the other (a scribe added an ending to a gospel that seemed unfinished to him; the ending was broken off from an early copy of the gospel and it was then copied without it). The fact that Ⲁ and B both omit the longer ending is a weighty, but not conclusive evidence. The support of the TR reading appears to me to have as much if not more weight than the strong but thin witness of the two earliest codices. As long as we have more light on this issue, I would leave 16:9-20 in the printed Bibles as the ending of the gospel of Mark.