



The Lukan Special Material and the Tradition History of the *Pericope Adulterae*

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Abstract

For nearly a century, scholars have wrestled with the presence of Lukanisms in the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7:53-8:11) even as the manuscript evidence clearly indicates this account was not originally part of the Third Gospel. A comparison of the version of this pericope found in Papias and the *Didascalía* with the pericopae associated with the Lukan special material (or “L source”) reveals remarkable similarities in style, form, and content. In light of these discoveries, we conclude that Papias and the *Didascalía* preserve a primitive form of the *Pericope Adulterae* that was originally part of the L source behind Luke’s Gospel, shedding light on the tradition history of this pericope as well as the nature of L.

Keywords

Pericope Adulterae; Luke; L; dependence; tradition; textual

1. Introduction

The scholarly consensus holds that the story of Jesus and the Adulteress (John 7:53-8:11), often referred to as the *Pericope Adulterae* (henceforth PA), was not originally part of the Fourth Gospel.¹ Despite the vast amount of

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¹ See B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994) 187-189. This consensus is nevertheless (unsuccessfully) challenged from time to time; see, for instance, J.P. Heil, “The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress (John 7:53-8:11) Reconsidered,” *Biblica* 72 (1991) 182-191. For a response to Heil in defense of the consensus, see D.B. Wallace, “Reconsidering “The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress

research done on PA over the last decades, as recently as 2008 a leading PA scholar highlighted the tradition history of the pericope as an area demanding further study.² Among several attempts to delineate aspects of the tradition history of PA, the most dominant proposal remains Bart Ehrman's 1988 landmark article that PA is a conflation of two earlier accounts about Jesus showing mercy to a sinful woman.³ As Ehrman summarizes:

By the fourth century there were actually three extant versions of the PA: (1) the entrapment story in which Jesus freely pardons a sinful woman, known to Papias and the author of the *Didascalia*, (2) the story of Jesus' intervention in an execution proceeding, preserved in the Gospel according to the Hebrews and retold by Didymus in his Ecclesiastes commentary, and (3) the popular version found in MSS of the Gospel of John, a version which represents a conflation of the two earlier stories.⁴

This investigation will proceed on the assumption that Ehrman's thesis is substantially correct, working with the form of the text known to Papias and the *Didascalia* which focuses on an event where Jesus gives undeserved grace to a sinful woman brought before him for judgment.⁵ On account of

Reconsidered," *NTS* 39 (1993) 290-296, for a response to which see J.P. Heil, "A Rejoinder to 'Reconsidering "The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress Reconsidered'" (John 7:53-8.11)," *EgT* 25 (1994) 361-366.

² See C. Keith, "Recent and Previous Research on the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7:53-8.11)," *CBR* 6 (2008) 377-404. Keith, 396, states that "some issues, such as the thesis that PA was not originally in the Gospel of John, appear settled. Others, such as PA's tradition history, need further attention."

³ B.D. Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," *NTS* 34 (1988) 24-44.

⁴ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 37.

⁵ Ehrman's proposal, while receiving the endorsement of M.W. Holmes in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 724-727, has not gone unchallenged. See, e.g., J.I.H. McDonald, "The So-Called *Pericope de Adultera*," *NTS* 41 (1995) 415-427. Keith, "Recent and Previous Research," 387 summarizes three major criticisms: (1) Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17) considers the accounts found in Papias and the *Gospel of the Hebrews* to refer to the same account; (2) Ehrman "overemphasizes" the differences between the two accounts; (3) Ehrman's methodology is wanting on account of its "assumption" that if a reference to an account does not contain a given detail, the original must not have contained that detail. In response, the following points can be made: (1) Eusebius is known to make mistakes, and the evidence on the whole still points to Papias knowing the *Didascalia* form (see Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 726); (2) Even Ehrman concedes that the two accounts are similar enough to have been conflated, yet the setting and action of the two still appear to be mutually exclusive of one another (see "Jesus and the Adulteress," 41-42 n. 46); (3) Again, the issue is not that a detail could be omitted but that the details of the two accounts would be contradictory if placed together. Though this study assumes

its likely geographical provenance, this account will be given the label PA^{EAST}, to distinguish it from the *Gospel of the Hebrews* account preserved by Didymus (PA^{SOUTH}) and the conflation found in Codex Bezae and many subsequent manuscripts of the Fourth Gospel (PA^{JOHN}).⁶

Agreeing with Henry Cadbury and various others over the last century, Ehrman sees a number of Lukan parallels in PA.⁷ Ehrman, though, was the first to note the “particularly striking” fact that every single one of these Lukan parallels must go back to PA^{EAST}. This observation led him to ask a question that has gone unanswered for nearly 25 years: “That the Lukan features of the traditional story of PA are unique to one of our two early accounts [that is, PA^{EAST}] may corroborate our view of its great antiquity. Might they also indicate that this particular story was transmitted by the community standing behind the Third Gospel?”⁸

This paper intends to answer precisely this question by demonstrating a literary relationship between the Lukan special material, traditionally termed the “L source,” and PA^{EAST}. While this paper builds upon and brings together the studies of Ehrman, Kim Paffenroth, and others, it is the first to propose and defend a possible relationship between L and PA. The version of PA known to the author of the *Didascalia*, we will contend, can be identified as a part of Luke’s L source on the basis of significant similarities in style, form, and content. What makes this a particularly thorny problem, however, is that neither L nor PA^{EAST} is extant independently of the documents within which they have been partially subsumed. This is where the work of Ehrman and Paffenroth is particularly helpful.

Ehrman’s model, because the form of PA found in the *Didascalia* is parallel to the majority of PA found in John, this study should prove useful for those who reject some or all of Ehrman’s proposal.

⁶ These terms are far from perfect, but they do reflect the likely geographical provenance of the primary attestations to each account of PA in relation to the Mediterranean: the *Didascalia* is generally held to have originated in Syria, perhaps near Antioch. See A. Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum: An English Version* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009) 54-55 who argues for Syria as the place of the sources behind it as well as its final redaction. As for the other account, Didymus was a theologian in Alexandria, and the *Gospel of the Hebrews* was “known and used in Alexandria” (Ehrman, “Jesus and the Adulteress,” 30). Eusebius’ reference to this non-extant apocryphal gospel is found in *Hist. eccl.* 3:39.17.

⁷ Among those who have argued for Lukan authorship of PA: H.J. Cadbury, “A Possible Case of Lukan Authorship (John 7:53-8:11),” *HTR* 10 (1917) 237-244; F. Salvoni, “Textual Authority for John 7:53-8:11,” *ResQ* 4 (1960) 11-15; J. Rius-Camps, “Origen Lucano de la Pericopa de la Mujer Adúltera,” *FN* 6 (1993) 149-176.

⁸ Ehrman, “Jesus and the Adulteress,” 43 n. 60.

Paffenroth's comprehensive monograph detailing the content and nature of the "L material" in the Third Gospel will serve as the baseline for our knowledge of L.⁹ Paffenroth's method was to determine, first, how much the proposed L material differed from Luke's normal style, and, second, the extent to which the L material held together as a unity with internal similarities. Paffenroth discovered both remarkable unity within the proposed L material and consistent dissimilarity from other parts of Luke, leading him to conclude that the material was pre-Lukan.¹⁰ While not without problems or controversy, Paffenroth's study has been well-received and remains the most thorough study of L available today.¹¹

Identifying PA^{EAST} is complicated by the fact that, apart from a brief reference in Papias, the text is only preserved as an apparent quotation in the *Didascalía*, of which the original Greek is no longer extant (only Syriac and Latin translations have survived). Nevertheless, this text can be plausibly reconstructed, as Ehrman has done. In a footnote, he gave two sources of evidence for his reconstruction: "(1) the story loosely paraphrased by the author of the *Didascalía*, and (2) components of the traditional version of the PA that could not have derived from the story attested by Didymus."¹² The second of these points is, of course, more subjective, but is still a logical conclusion of Ehrman's "two-source hypothesis" for PA^{JOHN}.

⁹ There are two major debates concerning the existence and identification of L. First, scholars have disagreed over whether L was originally a written document or a set of oral traditions. Second, scholars have debated the extent to which Luke has redacted or even authored this material. The final section of this paper will attempt to shed light on these questions based on the results of this study.

¹⁰ K. Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus according to L* (JSNTSup 147; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997) 143. To some degree, Paffenroth's argument is both a confirmation and a substantial expansion of an earlier effort by D.M. Parrott to demonstrate the thematic unity of the L parables (D.M. Parrott, "The Dishonest Steward (Luke 16.1-8a) and Luke's Special Parable Collection," *NTS* 37 (1991) 499-515). As with Ehrman's reconstruction of PA^{EAST}, we hope that those who disagree with various details of Paffenroth's work will nevertheless find this study useful and amenable to their own research into the history of PA.

¹¹ C.M. Tuckett, review of K. Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus according to L*, *NovT* 41 (1999) 191-192 is representative; despite finding plenty of room for disagreement, he nevertheless concludes: "Paffenroth has made a strong case for the claim that an L source may have existed. Even if the force of the argument varies at different point (as is inevitable), he is fully justified in raising the questions about the origins of Luke's special material and forcing us all to reconsider older stereotypes."

¹² Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 43 n. 56.

Ehrman's reconstruction of PA^{EAST}, which he declares to be "far more interesting" and likely more authentic than PA^{SOUTH},¹³ is as follows:

The Jewish authorities have caught a woman in committing a grievous sin (adultery?). But rather than put her on trial themselves, they see in her predicament an opportunity to discredit Jesus before the crowds. They bring the woman before him publicly, perhaps as he teaches in the Temple, and set a legal trap for him. The woman has committed a sin for which the Torah prescribes execution by stoning, and Jesus must pronounce judgment. [...] Jesus sees the trap. Stooping down he draws in the dust, considering his options. Suddenly an obvious solution presents itself, a way to escape this ridiculous trap and turn the tables on his Jewish opponents, [leading to his dialogue with the woman].¹⁴

Comparing this reconstruction with what we have in PA^{JOHN}, we note that the only two verses that are incompatible with this reconstruction are John 8:7b and 8:9. As for the former, in which Jesus makes his memorable statement to the Jewish leaders, this line is not only not found in PA^{EAST}, but the reference to stoning makes no sense in the context of an entrapment scene at the Temple. Clearly, John 8:7b derives from PA^{SOUTH}, wherein we find a parallel to this statement of Jesus.¹⁵ John 8:9 can be explained in the same manner: the reference to the Jews' departure is only in PA^{SOUTH} and makes little sense in a controversy scene in which the Pharisees and scribes are waiting for Jesus to make a judgment. The repetitiveness of John 8:8 could then be considered as a narrative seam created when the two stories were conflated into their canonical form; therefore this verse likely does not go back to the original account.

¹³ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 35.

¹⁴ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 35-36.

¹⁵ The account preserved in PA^{SOUTH} merely includes Jesus' dialogue with and challenge to the Jewish leaders (cp. John 8:7), while not including any dialogue between Jesus and the woman. The nature of this more limited account meant that when the two stories were conflated, the more detailed story, PA^{EAST}, "provided the controls for the other" in terms of its setting, plot, and closing apothegm (Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 37). Ehrman translates the relevant text in Didymus (*Comm. Eccl.* 223.6b-13a) thus: "We find, therefore, in certain gospels [the following story]. A woman, it says, was condemned by the Jews for a sin and was being sent to be stoned in the place where that was customary to happen. The saviour, it says, when he saw her and observed that they were ready to stone her, said to those who were about to cast stones, 'He who has not sinned, let him take a stone and cast it.' If anyone is conscious in himself not to have sinned, let him take up a stone and smite her. And no one dared. Since they knew in themselves and perceived that they themselves were guilty in some things, they did not dare to strike her" ("Jesus and the Adulteress," 25).

Some of this reconstruction, Ehrman concedes, is based on logical deduction. While we can be relatively certain that several verses (8:3-7a, 10-11) are derived from PA^{EAST} because of clear parallels between the two, the argument for 8:2 (“Early in the morning he came again to the temple and all the people came to him”) is more indirect. Given Ehrman’s reconstruction, if PA^{JOHN} clearly takes place in the Temple courts, a setting that is incompatible with PA^{SOUTH}, then it *must* derive from PA^{EAST}.¹⁶ While the text of the *Didascalía* does not give these details, the fact that the *Didascalía* is referencing this story in passing could explain why only the most important details of the story are retold. And though these details are not explicitly given in PA^{EAST}, nevertheless “the details of this setting fit perfectly in the story preserved in Papias and the *Didascalía*.”¹⁷ As such, we can be confident that John 8:2 is to be connected to PA^{EAST}. John 7:53-8:1 could arguably be connected to PA^{EAST} by an extension of the same reasoning, but the existence of other options for explaining the presence of these verses (e.g., as a narrative seam) necessitates distinguishing these verses from the ones that we can be nearly certain derive from PA^{EAST}.

In summary, this leaves us with John 8:2-7a and 8:10-11 as the basic outline of PA^{EAST}.¹⁸ When just these verses are read, the account reads as a

¹⁶ C. Keith, “The Initial Location of the *Pericope Adulterae* in Fourfold Tradition,” *NovT* 51 (2009) 209-231 is representative of scholars who are skeptical of arguments from style and therefore propose a third option: later scribal imitation. As he writes, “The assumption behind arguments from style is that a later scribe would not have been able to mimic an earlier author’s style, and therefore that strong similarity suggests the same author. There is, however, no reason why an astute later scribe could not have copied an earlier style” (211). Keith makes it sound commonplace for scribes to have crafted their own Gospel material and to have successfully inserted it into canonical texts. The only other lengthy examples of Gospel interpolations are the longer endings of Mark, and scholars almost universally hold that these pericopae are vastly different from Markan style. The burden of proof is on Keith and others in his camp to demonstrate that scribes were in fact able not only to mimic a canonical author’s style but also to convince others to include their additions into the sacred texts. While Keith correctly points out that stylistic evidence cannot *prove* anything about the history of PA, all historical reconstruction is ultimately a statement of what is *probable* given all the data at hand. For a defense of identifying a given author’s style in light of modern text theory, see A. Denaux, “Style and Stylistics: With Special Reference to Luke,” in *Studies in the Gospel of Luke: Structure, Language and Theology* (Tilburg Theological Studies 4; Berlin: Lit, 2010) 329-347.

¹⁷ Ehrman, “Jesus and the Adulteress,” 43 n. 60.

¹⁸ This outline closely approximates the slightly more conservative outline of Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 741-742 which gives 8:3b-6 and 8:10-11 as elements parallel to the *Didascalía* form. Holmes notes that 8:7b and 8:9a were likely derived from the form known to

single coherent controversy dialogue with a concluding apothegm by Jesus, just as we have in the Synoptics (see section on form below). Having established the parameters of our investigation, we now turn to the question of the presence of Lukanisms in PA.

2. The Nature of Lukanisms in PA

This section evaluates Ehrman's claim that all of the clearly identifiable Lukanisms in PA must have derived from the account preserved in PA^{EAST}, and then considers the significance of this claim when it is measured against the extent to which features representative of other Gospels are present in PA^{JOHN}. At least seven Lukanisms are identifiable in PA^{JOHN}.¹⁹ Each of these will be defended as a true Lukanism, and then an assessment will be made about whether or not the Lukanism goes back to PA^{SOUTH} or PA^{EAST} based on the above reconstruction of those accounts.

1. The noun ὄρθρος (8:2), referring to dawn, is a uniquely Lukan word (Luke 24:1; Acts 5:21).²⁰ This detail helps establish the setting in the Temple and is in a verse we have established goes back to PA^{EAST}.

2. The verb παραγίνομαι (8:2) is a favorite term of Luke's. It occurs 28 times in Luke-Acts (eight occurrences in the Third Gospel), compared to only three times in Matthew and once each in Mark and John. The only other instance of this verb being followed by εἰς and an accusative of place is in Acts 9:26.²¹ The verb describes Jesus coming into the Temple and is in a verse associated with PA^{EAST}.

3. The phrase πᾶς ὁ λαός (8:2) is used primarily in Luke (15 times in Luke-Acts, only once in Matthew, and never in Mark or John). The word λαός is a true Lukan favorite (the term is used 84 times in Luke-Acts, out of 142 NT uses; compare with 14 uses in Matthew, two uses in Mark, and two in John).²²

Didymus and the *Gospel of the Hebrews*; he does not, however, follow Ehrman in attempting to deduce the origin of the other verses.

¹⁹ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 43 n. 60 notes only items 1-3 and 5, but one senses he was not aiming to be comprehensive.

²⁰ A. Denaux and R. Corstjens, *The Vocabulary of Luke: An Alphabetical Presentation and a Survey of Characteristic and Noteworthy Words and Word Groups in Luke's Gospel* (Biblical Tools and Studies 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2009) 444 judge the phrase ὄρθρος to be "characteristic of Luke."

²¹ For this detail, see Salvoni, "Textual Authority," 13.

²² Denaux and Corstjens, *Vocabulary of Luke*, 486 judge the phrase πᾶς ὁ λαός to be "characteristic of Luke."

The mention of the crowd continues to establish the scene at the Temple and is in a verse related to PA^{EAST}.

4. The description of a person sitting and teaching (καθίσας ἐδίδασκεν, 8:2) is primarily Lukan. There are only two other times in which the verbs καθίζω and διδάσκω are collocated in the same verse (Luke 5:3; Acts 18:11).²³ This again sets the scene at the Temple and is found in a verse associated with PA^{EAST}.

5. The present active infinitive κατηγορεῖν (8:6) is used exclusively in Luke-Acts (Luke 6:7; 23:2; Acts 24:2; 24:19; 28:19). In fact, the entire phrase ἵνα ἔχωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ closely parallels Luke 6:7, which reads ἵνα εὔρωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ.²⁴ The attempt of the scribes and Pharisees to trap and accuse Jesus fits only in the context of PA^{EAST} and is found in a verse we have established as part of PA^{EAST}.

6. The phrase ἀπὸ τοῦ νόου (8:11) occurs elsewhere only in Luke (1:48, 5:10, 12:52, 22:18, 22:69).²⁵ It occurs in Jesus' statement to the woman, which is found only in PA^{EAST} and is in a verse assigned to PA^{EAST}.

7. The postpositive δέ is repeated throughout PA^{EAST} (nine instances, compared to only one in the verses derived from PA^{SOUTH}). Δέ is Luke's favored conjunction, as he often substitutes it for τε and καί in his redaction of Mark.²⁶

In summary, of the seven Lukanisms in PA^{JOHN}, all seven appear in contexts and verses that we have associated with PA^{EAST}. No Lukanisms were found in John 8:7b-9, which were identified with PA^{SOUTH} and the work of the conflator. Thus, this more thorough analysis confirms Ehrman's claim that "it is particularly striking that *all* of these Lukan parallels must have derived from [PA^{EAST}]."²⁷ In particular, the majority of these Lukanisms are found in details that establish the setting in the Temple courts, a setting which Ehrman has rightly demonstrated is part of the original framing of PA^{EAST}. In other words, "The details of this setting fit perfectly in the

²³ These verbs occur in Matt 5:1 and 5:2, respectively, and therefore could be considered a third example of this category. Luke's collocation of these words is consistently tighter than the example in Matthew, however.

²⁴ R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966) 1:333.

²⁵ Denaux and Corstjens, *Vocabulary of Luke*, 65 judge this phrase to be "characteristic of Luke."

²⁶ H.J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (HTS 6; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920) 142-144.

²⁷ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 43 n. 60.

story preserved in Papias and the Didascalia, but not at all that found in Didymus.”²⁸

Ehrman assumes the significance of these Lukanisms, but he does not demonstrate the full weight of their existence. Without comparing them to syntactical and stylistic features in PA that appear to fit the other Gospels, we have no way of knowing if the presence of seven Lukanisms in PA^{JOHN} is unusual or not.

Apart from general parallels to other controversy stories in Matthew and Mark, no viable syntactical or stylistic “Mattheanisms” or “Markanisms” have been defended in scholarly literature.²⁹ More serious, however, is the issue of Johannine characteristics. John Paul Heil recently suggested that there are in fact four “linguistic links” between words or stylistic features in this passage and John’s Gospel,³⁰ but D.B. Wallace has demonstrated that “what Heil fails to prove is either that they are unique to John or that they are real parallels.”³¹ In contrast with this paucity of evidence for other supposed characteristics shared with other Gospels, the seven Lukanisms detailed above are both exclusively (or characteristically) Lukan and directly parallel to other examples in the Third Gospel. To suggest that a scribe could have so thoroughly imitated elements of Luke’s style and then inserted the pericope into John’s Gospel defies belief.³²

At this point, we can draw two conclusions with a fair amount of certainty. First, PA^{JOHN} exhibits a significantly high number of Lukanisms that decisively indicate that this pericope has far more in common with Luke’s Gospel than with any other Gospel. Second, all of these Lukanisms must be derived from PA^{EAST}. Ehrman was thus correct to conclude that “the Lukan features of the traditional story of the PA are unique to one of our two early

²⁸ Ehrman, “Jesus and the Adulteress,” 43 n. 60.

²⁹ Note, for instance, the unusual proposal of J. Rius-Camps, “The Pericope of the Adulteress Reconsidered: The Nomadic Misfortunes of a Bold Pericope,” *NTS* 53 (2007) 379-405, who argues that PA was originally part of Mark and was picked up by Luke in his redaction of Mark, but that both of these accounts were “eradicated” from these Gospels. Rius-Camps does not, however, argue on the basis of stylistic Markanisms. For a rebuttal, see Keith, “Initial Location,” *passim*.

³⁰ Heil, “Adulteress Reconsidered,” 183-185.

³¹ Wallace, “Reconsidering,” 292. Keith, “Recent Research,” 382 cites Heil’s linguistic links to Johannine style to assert “PA demonstrates as strong linguistic connections with Johannine material as it does with Synoptic material,” yet he seems to have been unaware of Wallace’s rebuttal of these links; Wallace’s article does not appear in the bibliography of Keith’s paper.

³² See note 16 above.

accounts.”³³ Now we take up Ehrman’s challenge to identify what we have termed PA^{EAST} with a specific community behind Luke’s Gospel. As will be demonstrated below, the startling degree of similarity between PA^{EAST} and Luke’s L material strongly suggests that the “L community,” whatever that may have been, stood behind this particular story.³⁴ The evidence will be broken down into three sections, following the layout of Paffenroth’s book: style, form, and content. While different readers will no doubt find each of these arguments more or less persuasive than others, our contention is that “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Admittedly, these kinds of arguments cannot *prove* anything about the history of PA, but together they support a theory concerning what is *probable* given all the data at hand.

3. A Comparison of L and PA^{EAST}

3.1. *Similarities in the Style of L and PA^{EAST}*

A point by point comparison of Paffenroth’s conclusions regarding the style of L with that of PA^{EAST} highlights a number of surprising similarities. Specifically, the use of the historical present and of the dative following verbs of speech are prominent in both L and PA^{EAST}, but not in Luke.³⁵

1. *Conjunctions.* In his monograph on L, Paffenroth demonstrated that Luke was not fond of the conjunctions καί and ἔνα, often replacing or omitting them in his redaction of Mark.³⁶ The L pericopae, on the other hand, exhibit a statistically significant number of these conjunctions. While PA^{EAST} does contain four instances of καί and one of ἔνα, this is not enough evidence to substantiate our hypothesis.

2. *Prepositions.* Paffenroth found that Luke preferred to use πρὸς + accusative (99 times in Luke and 52 times in Acts), and not the simple dative, after a verb of speaking. Luke has, in his redaction of Mark and Q, changed

³³ Ehrman, “Jesus and the Adulteress,” 43 n. 60.

³⁴ Before getting to the evidence below, it stands to reason that if PA^{EAST} had to be associated with any source for Luke’s Gospel, it would most likely be L. As there is no Synoptic parallel to PA, redaction from Mark or Q (or Matthew, if the Farrer hypothesis is held) is out of the picture, leaving us with some source unique to Luke. The question of how PA^{EAST} can contain features that are characteristic of both the Lukan material and L, which is defined by its differences from normal Lukan features, is one to which we will return below.

³⁵ Note that here and throughout, only the verses held to have derived from PA^{EAST} will be considered (8:2-7a and 8:10-11).

³⁶ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 86-88.

such datives to *πρός* + accusative 28 times. Yet in the L material, the dative after a verb of speaking occurs 40 times, more than twice the number of instances found in the rest of Luke's Gospel.³⁷ Turning to PA^{EAST}, we discover that in all three instances where a verb of speaking is used to introduce direct discourse, a dative follows: λέγουσιν αὐτῷ (8:4), εἶπεν αὐτοῖς (8:7), and εἶπεν αὐτῇ (8:10). This syntax is so consistently characteristic of L rather than of Luke's normal style that we judge this to be a very strong argument for identifying PA^{EAST} with the L source.

3. *Numerals.* Paffenroth found that slightly less than half of all the pericopae identified as L material contained cardinal numbers, a frequency much higher than in passages redacted from Mark and Q, in which Luke often omitted numbers.³⁸ No numerals exist in PA^{EAST}, though this is not statistically problematic.³⁹

4. *Verbs.* Paffenroth argues that Luke had a strong aversion to the historical present; of the 151 uses of the historical present in the Markan material that Luke used in his Gospel, Luke retained only one. Paffenroth concludes, "Its appearance five times in L pericopae is therefore remarkable."⁴⁰ Amazingly, PA^{EAST} contains not one but two examples of the historical present, ἄγουσιν (8:3) and λέγουσιν (8:4). As with the syntax following verbs of speaking, this is a construction that had a place in L but was anathema to Luke's style. This constitutes strong evidence that PA^{EAST} should be considered part of the L material and not a distinctly Lukan composition.

In summary, two of the four categories Paffenroth analyzed in regards to style, namely datives after verbs of speaking and the historical present, yield very strong evidence in favor of PA^{EAST} having originated from the L source and not Luke's own hand. The other two categories, it should be noted, do not provide negative evidence for our hypothesis; given the small sample size we are working with, it is extraordinary to have even two categories provide such intriguing parallels. The stylistic evidence of PA^{EAST}, therefore, demonstrates a high enough level of similarity with that of the L material to posit a relationship with the L material.

³⁷ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 88-89 notes that there are only 18 instances of the dative after a verb of speaking in Luke.

³⁸ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 89-90.

³⁹ The only usage of numerals in PA^{JOHN} is in PA^{SOUTH}, where εἰς appears twice in 8:9, albeit in what appears to be a set idiom (εἰς καθ' εἰς).

⁴⁰ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 90.

3.2. Similarities in the Form of L and PA^{EAST}

Scholars have traditionally had a difficult time identifying the form of PA^{JOHN}.⁴¹ Commonly argued forms include a pronouncement story, a controversy story, and even a “Tale,” which was uniquely put forward by Dibelius.⁴² Part of the confusion has resulted from uncertainty regarding the central conflict and apothegm of the pericope. If, however, PA^{JOHN} is a conflation of two different accounts, the overlap between form categories can be accounted for. Examining just PA^{EAST}, which brings the conflict with the scribes and Pharisees to the forefront, we can agree with Ehrman that it is a controversy dialogue, much like others in the Synoptic tradition, in which Jesus escapes a trap and shows compassion to a sinner.⁴³

Paffenroth identified several formal characteristics that are both common to the various forms represented in the L material and also contrast with how Luke normally presents those forms. Specifically, however, we are interested in the four characteristics especially prominent in L’s controversy and pronouncement stories: dialogue, questions, contrasting characters, and minor characters prominent. After examining these characteristics, we will then demonstrate that all four of them are also clearly identifiable in PA^{EAST}.

1. *Dialogue.* Of Paffenroth’s 26 L pericopae, 19 of them (irrespective of their forms) contain dialogue and/or monologue.⁴⁴ This is significant because Luke often omits or truncates Markan dialogue.⁴⁵ In particular, there is an unusually high frequency of monologue and dialogue between Jesus and other characters in the L pericopae that Paffenroth classifies as biographical apothegms and controversy stories, such as the back-and-forth

⁴¹ Keith, “Recent Research,” 386 has a good summary of this discussion and concludes that “final resolution on this issue evades the collective grasp of scholars.”

⁴² M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935) 98, 165. For a pronouncement story, see V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1935; repr. 1960) 83-84; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 2:169. For a controversy story, see A.T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005) 528; W.L. Petersen, “ΟΥΔΕ ΕΓΩΣΕΕ [ΚΑΤΑ]ΚΡΙΝΩ: John 8:11, the *Protevangelium Iacobi*, and the History of the Pericope Adulterae,” in *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-Canonical: Essays in Honor of Tjitze Baarda* (ed. W.L. Petersen, J.S. Vos and H.J. de Jonge; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 191-221; cf. 206.

⁴³ Ehrman, “Jesus and the Adulteress,” 36 gives Mark 12:12-17, Mark 2:23-28, and Luke 7:36-50 as similar forms.

⁴⁴ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 98-99, 115.

⁴⁵ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 99 n. 17 provides eleven examples of this phenomenon.

dialogue between Jesus and Peter in Luke 7:40-47 and between Jesus and Martha in Luke 10:40-42.⁴⁶ Similarly, PA^{EAST} contains a dialogue between Jesus and the woman (John 8:10-11). Jesus' dialogue with the woman thus parallels a distinctive feature of the L controversy stories.

2. *Questions.* Paffenroth notes that 17 of the 26 L pericopae contain questions; this is again unusual, for as with dialogue, Luke tends to omit questions in his redactional activities, particularly rhetorical ones.⁴⁷ On the other hand, L's Jesus is fond of asking rhetorical questions, particularly in the L controversy stories (7:42; 7:44; 13:2; 13:4).⁴⁸ As for PA^{EAST}, besides the question asked of Jesus (not unusual for a controversy story), this pericope also features Jesus asking the woman two rhetorical questions (8:10). This very specific characteristic of Jesus' speech prominent in the L controversy stories is also featured in PA^{EAST}, providing further evidence of the similarities between the two.

3. *Contrasting Characters.* The literary device of contrasting characters (often between righteous and unrighteous people) is so common in all of the L material that it is in fact a prominent, defining narrative device of the L material.⁴⁹ Among the L controversy stories, the contrast between Simon and the woman in 7:36-39 is particularly noteworthy.⁵⁰ PA^{EAST} features the contrasting characters of the woman and the Jewish religious leaders trying to stone her. Startlingly, the direction of the "righteousness gap" between the adulterous woman and the supposedly righteous Jewish leaders is inverted from Jesus' perspective, leading to the "punch" so characteristic of these L stories. Thus, the contrasting characters in PA^{EAST} are typical of L's literary style.

4. *Minor Characters Prominent.* Another literary feature found in the controversy stories in L is the prominence that these pericopae give to minor characters. Often these minor characters are highlighted with both physical description and a record of their words, something that even more

⁴⁶ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 99-100, 112-116.

⁴⁷ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 100 n. 21 provides ten examples of this phenomenon.

⁴⁸ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 112-113.

⁴⁹ Parrott, "The Dishonest Steward," 510. See also Paffenroth's statement that this characteristic "transcends formal categories" (*According to L*, 110).

⁵⁰ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 113 n. 93 also gives the contrast between "murdered Galileans and other Galileans" and "those who died and others in Jerusalem" in Luke 13:1-5 as an additional pair of examples within the L controversy stories.

clearly contrasts with Luke's propensity to omit details.⁵¹ The amount of "narrative color" in Luke 7:37-38 is a good example of this. Looking at PA^{EAST}, we note that the account provides the detail that the woman was made to stand in front of her accusers, providing color and drama to the situation by keeping the woman at the literal center of attention. The woman is also given an expanded role on account of her words being recorded as part of the story. The prominence and detail given to the woman in PA^{EAST} is characteristic of the style of L.

In conclusion, we have found that all four of the features Paffenroth has identified as distinctive of these forms in the L material are also found in PA^{EAST}. This is either an extremely unlikely level of coincidence or it is in fact an additional layer of evidence for our thesis. Specifically, we have found consistent parallels with the story of the woman who anointed Jesus at the Pharisee's house (Luke 7:36-47): both pericopae feature the L characteristics of dialogue, questions, contrasting characters, and prominent minor characters. It is logical to infer that both are from the same source.⁵²

3.3. *Similarities in the Content of L and PA^{EAST}*

Finally, we turn to the degree of shared content or thematic considerations between the L material and PA^{EAST}. Paffenroth admits that many themes in the L pericopae are not unique to that material, but are instead often very similar to those of the Gospel in general. Nevertheless, two observations may be made regarding peculiar similarities between the thematic content of PA^{EAST} and of L.

1. *Women.* Both Luke and L are characterized by an emphasis on stories involving women.⁵³ However, Paffenroth points out a startling "peculiarity"

⁵¹ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 112-113. On Luke's tendency to omit details, cf. Cadbury, *Style of Luke*, 79-83, and Taylor, *Formation*, 208, in which Taylor concludes that Luke, in his redaction, tends to shorten accounts, replace direct speech with indirect, delete personal and place names, and remove superfluous details.

⁵² Given the extensive parallels between the two, one might be forgiven for thinking that perhaps PA^{EAST} and Luke 7:36-47 speak of the same woman! D. F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (ed. P.C. Hodgson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 409-412 notes the parallels and concludes, perhaps beyond what the evidence allows, that Luke 7:36-47 was a conflation of PA and the story of the woman who anointed Jesus in Matt 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 as part of a broader process of conflation between different traditions involving Jesus and sinful women.

⁵³ A frequently made observation about Luke's Gospel as a whole is the Evangelist's literary technique of "pairing" a story about a man with a similar story about a woman, resulting

of the L stories about women in that “none of the women in the L pericopae are attached to any man, neither father nor husband. This runs contrary to what we would have expected in a work from the patriarchal culture of the first century, in which a woman’s identity is tied to her male protector.”⁵⁴ These anonymous women include the woman Jesus healed on the Sabbath (13:10-17), the persistent widow (18:2-8), and the sinful woman who anointed Jesus at the Pharisee’s house (7:36-47).

The woman caught in sin at the center of the action of PA^{EAST} is, like these other women, anonymous and not attached to any man (note that the man with whom she had sinned is nowhere to be found in this scene). She is introduced simply and anonymously as a *γυνή* (John 8:3). Her characterization is thus very similar to that of the other women in the L pericopae (notably including, again, the woman in Luke 7:36-47).

2. “*The Gospel of the Outcast.*” Such is the name that T.W. Manson gave to the L material in Luke 15-19 because “there is in this section a great concentration of teaching, chiefly in the form of parables, whose purpose is primarily to demonstrate God’s care for those whom men despise and condemn.”⁵⁵ Manson notes two characteristics of these chapters: first, that “this Divine love for the unloved and unlovable is, indirectly, the condemnation of the harsh and censorious attitude taken towards these unfortunates by more righteous folk”; and second, “that even from the most unpromising people there can be a genuine response to kindness and understanding.”⁵⁶

These statements could just as easily have been written to describe the content of PA^{EAST}. The vivid picture of Jesus’ compassion in this story is no doubt why it has been called “the most popular story in the Gospels.”⁵⁷ Many scholars, including Brown and Schnackenburg, have related the

in Luke’s Gospel containing more stories about women than any other Gospel. Luke has likely taken over this literary pattern from Mark and Q, but it is nevertheless most prominent in his Gospel. For more, see M.R. D’Angelo, “Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View,” *JBL* 109 (1990) 441-461.

⁵⁴ Paffenroth, *According to L*, 126.

⁵⁵ T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus: As Recorded in the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. Luke Arranged with Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM, 1937) 282. Paffenroth, *According to L*, 159 uses “The Gospel of the Outcast” as the title for the entirety of the L material.

⁵⁶ Manson, *Sayings of Jesus*, 282.

⁵⁷ Keith, *Literacy of Jesus*, 1-2.

picture of Jesus in PA with Luke's portrait of Jesus.⁵⁸ The tone and tenor of this pericope is entirely consistent with that of L. On account on its emphases on an anonymous, unattached woman and the display of Jesus' mercy and compassion to a sinner, PA^{EAST} more closely parallels the content of L's "Gospel of the Outcast" than any other portion of the Jesus tradition, canonical or otherwise.

In short, we must conclude that in terms of style, form, and content, PA^{EAST} so closely resembles the L material that PA^{EAST} almost surely would have been part of an original L source. We may at this time make one final observation that provides a certain measure of "external" evidence for this conclusion: both L and PA^{EAST} share a provenance in Syro-Palestine. Given the story's presence in the *Didascalia*, Brown argues for early Palestinian origins for the bulk of PA, suggesting that at the very least the story was known in Syria as early as the second century.⁵⁹ Now, having identified the same account with the L source, we can argue for its existence in Palestine in the middle of the first century.⁶⁰ Given the closeness in location and time of these two sources, a single line of transmission from L to the *Didascalia* is not difficult to imagine. Future research could examine further similarities between these two ancient sources.

4. Implications for Understanding PA and L

Having shown that the Lukan features of the "canonical" PA are unique to one of our two early accounts (PA^{EAST}) and that these features have strong parallels to characteristics of the L material, we can now draw several conclusions about the tradition history of PA and one concerning the nature of L.

First, we can affirm the essential historicity of the event recorded in PA to the extent that it is preserved in the *Didascalia*, since identifying the account with the L source places it into the middle of the first century. Indeed, despite the fact that PA does not appear in a Greek manuscript until Codex Bezae (fifth century), most scholars have maintained that much of the account does in fact go back to the historical Jesus. "Earmarks of historical veracity" can be found, for instance, in the lack of detail

⁵⁸) Brown, *John*, 1:336 notes that PA's "succinct expression of the mercy of Jesus is as delicate as anything in Luke." See also Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:169.

⁵⁹) Brown, *John*, 1:335.

⁶⁰) For the dating and provenance of L, see Paffenroth, *According to L*, 155.

regarding what Jesus wrote on the ground and the mildness of Jesus' closing remark to the woman, which could be construed as the Lord being soft on sin.⁶¹ Regarding Jesus' attitude toward the woman, Schnackenburg writes that it "accords perfectly with all that is certain about the figure of the 'historical Jesus' as it emerges from the synoptic gospels."⁶² Finally, as Ehrman notes, Jesus' "absolute and free pardon of a heinous sin" in this passage could hardly have been invented later in church history, with its emphasis on penance and repentance.⁶³ The scholarly consensus that PA must have some basis in history is strengthened by identifying John 8:2-7a and 8:10-11 with the L source, as it indicates that those verses should be considered to be as historically reliable as anything else preserved in L.

Second, we are at last in a position to answer the question Ehrman posed more than two decades ago: might the presence of Lukanisms in PA^{EAST} suggest that the story was first transmitted by the community standing behind the Third Gospel?⁶⁴ It turns out Ehrman's intuition was correct, insofar as one accepts that there was a physical community behind the L source. If there was such a community, Paffenroth's hypothesis that it was comprised of Palestinian Jewish-Christians who saw Jesus as an authoritative, powerful teacher and healer is likely close to the mark. Even if such a community did not exist, we could still accept a modification of Ehrman's claim by concluding that the story of PA was first transmitted *as part of a source* standing behind the Third Gospel.

Third, combining the results of this study with the insights of other recent work on PA, we can put forward a plausible textual history of this pericope. As Ehrman suggested, the version of PA we have termed PA^{EAST} "must have circulated in Syria and Asia Minor, where Papias and the author of the Didascalia both heard it."⁶⁵ Where, though, did the account originate, and why was it in circulation outside of the canonical Gospels? Identifying PA^{EAST} with L provides a potential solution. The story of Jesus' confrontation with the Jewish leaders at the Temple concerning the fate of a woman caught in sin was preserved by some of the first Jewish Christians in Palestine, who incorporated it with other similar stories about Jesus in

⁶¹ B.M. Metzger and B.D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (4th ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 319-320.

⁶² Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:170.

⁶³ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 36.

⁶⁴ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 43 n. 60.

⁶⁵ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 35.

what has come to be known as the L source. Luke therefore had access to this pericope (and perhaps even reworked it; see below) while writing his Gospel but chose not to include it, perhaps because it had little new to offer.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the story continued to be transmitted in the early church, having been recorded by Papias and the author of a source behind the *Didascalia*, at which time the account was written down in these sources. Given the similarities between this account and another account about Jesus' encounter with a woman accused of sin, referenced in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and Didymus, the two stories were at some point conflated into one.⁶⁷

As for how this conflation entered the text of the Fourth Gospel, Chris Keith's recent proposal provides a much more satisfactory explanation than the influential "suppression" theory that has lately fallen on hard times.⁶⁸ Keith has argued that PA's insertion must be explained "from the unique offering of PA to the canonical or proto-orthodox image of Jesus—the attribution of the skill of writing."⁶⁹ As Keith documents, the pagan world was critical of early Christianity on account of the illiteracy of many of its adherents; Jesus' exalted status was suspect on account of his humble origins. Thus PA, as the only mention of Jesus' ability to write anywhere in the tradition, was a likely candidate for insertion into the Gospels.⁷⁰ Given the preceding context of John 7, in which the Jewish leaders have challenged Jesus' authority on account of his lack of formal education (John 7:15), the interpolator who placed PA at this juncture effectively "counters that Jesus not only evinces the highest form of training in the Hebrew Scriptures, but that his level of access to Torah proves his superiority to Moses, thereby confirming his status as the only person in the gospel qualified to

⁶⁶ Luke had already included several confrontation stories (e.g., 5:17-26; 6:1-11; 20:1-8, 20-26, 27-40). Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 38 has rightly pointed out that this version is far less interesting than the conflated version, which shames the woman's accusers such that even "Jesus' antagonists are forced to concede the truth of Jesus' teaching of love and mercy even to the most grievous of offenders."

⁶⁷ Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," 37.

⁶⁸ This view was classically formulated by H. Riesenfeld, "The Pericope *de adultera* in the Early Christian Tradition," in *The Gospel Tradition: Essays by Harald Riesenfeld* (Fortress: Philadelphia, 1970) 95-110. For arguments against this theory, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 189; C. Keith, *The Pericope Adulterae, the Gospel of John, and the Literacy of Jesus* (NTTSD 38; Leiden: Brill, 2009) 214-219.

⁶⁹ Keith, *Literacy of Jesus*, 223.

⁷⁰ Keith, *Literacy of Jesus*, *passim*.

judge righteously.”⁷¹ The dislocation of PA to other locations in the Gospels (for instance, after John 7:36 in MS 225, after John 21:25 in MS 1, 565, 1076, 1570, and 1582, and after Luke 21:38 in *f*¹³) can then be explained by the influence of the lectionary system in combination with the confusion resulting from the many early manuscripts of John’s Gospel that did not have PA.⁷²

Finally, this study has implications for our understanding of L. As we have seen, PA^{EAST} contains both clearly identifiable Lukanisms *and* elements that appear to be more typical of L than normal Lukan style. This seems to confirm the view of Goulder and Goodacre that L has received enough of Luke’s creative touches to say that “the L material is the substantial handiwork of the evangelist.”⁷³ However, the presence of decidedly non-Lukan features in this pericope favors Goodacre’s claim, against Goulder, that believing much of L was from Luke’s own hand need not imply that Luke did not use sources for his special material.⁷⁴ When Goodacre speaks of Luke “transforming” material from a source by adding “characteristically Lukan features,” he could, it seems, just as easily be describing the phenomena at work in PA.⁷⁵ Particularly if L were an oral tradition, Luke’s unusual amount of reworking this material could be explained. The evidence of PA suggests that the L material was not entirely created by Luke nor was it entirely preserved without redaction by Luke; rather, Luke has thoroughly reworked traditional material. The fact that four of the seven Lukanisms in PA^{EAST} are in John 8:2 suggests that Luke’s editorial hand is most noticeable in what would be his introduction to the tradition he received.

⁷¹ Keith, *Literacy of Jesus*, 160.

⁷² Keith, *Literacy of Jesus*, 130-139. For a defense of the view that the lectionary system caused the displacement of PA from its “original” location in John 7:53-8:11 because it interrupts the feast lesson for Pentecost, see M.A. Robinson, “Preliminary Observations Regarding the *Pericope Adulterae* Based upon Fresh Collations of Nearly All Continuous-Text Manuscripts and All Lectionary Manuscripts Containing the Passage,” *FN* 13 (2000) 35-59.

⁷³ M.S. Goodacre, *Goulder and the Gospels: An Examination of a New Paradigm* (JSNTSup 133; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996) 366.

⁷⁴ Goodacre, *Goulder*, 282.

⁷⁵ Goodacre, *Goulder*, 283, speaking particularly of Luke’s redaction of Matthew and L, where he sees Luke as more “creative” in his redaction of these sources, whereas he is more “conservative” with Mark.

5. Conclusion

More than 25 years after Bart Ehrman first proposed that the form of the *pericope de adultera* found in the *Didascalia* went back to a community behind the Third Gospel, this article has demonstrated a relationship between that account and the Lukan special material. Not only do all of the proposed Lukanisms in PA derive from this account, but there are significant similarities between the two in terms of their style, form, and character. This led us to draw several conclusions regarding the tradition history of PA and the nature of L. While only further manuscript discoveries could prove such a thesis, this study suggests that, at the least, PA's relationship to the Third Gospel and the L source behind it is worthy of continued study. While we can heartily agree with Petersen's statement that "the more one delves into the puzzle of the origins of the *pericope de adultera*, the more one sees how difficult it is to cut the knot cleanly," it is our hope that this article has made progress in loosening some of that knot.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Petersen, "ΟΥΔΕ ΕΓΩ ΣΕ [ΚΑΤΑ]ΚΡΙΝΩ," 220.