

## Concerning the Text of the *Pericope Adulterae*

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The information offered below is based on Maurice A. Robinson's complete collation of 1,389 MSS that contain the Pericope, John 7:53 - 8:11.<sup>1</sup> I attempted to establish a profile of readings for each of the three main groups of MSS, **M**<sup>5,6,7</sup> (as in the apparatus of the H-F Majority Text). I take it that the smaller groups are all mixtures based on the big three. This paper presents the results, along with my interpretation of their significance.

### **M**<sup>7</sup> Profile

7:53	01	απηλθεν
8:1	02	Ιησους δε
8:2	03	(βαθεως) = omit
8:2	04	παρεγενετο
8:2	05	προς αυτον
8:3	06	προς αυτον
8:3	07	επι
8:3	08	κατειλημμενην
8:3	09	εν μεσω
8:4	10	λεγουσιν
8:4	11	(πειραζοντες)
8:4	12	ταυτην ευρομεν
8:4	13	επαυτοφωρω
8:4	14	μοιχευομενην
8:5	15	ημων Μωσης
8:5	16	λιθοβολεισθαι
8:5	17	(περι αυτης)
8:6	18	κατηγοριαν κατ
8:6	19	μη προσποιουμενος
8:7	20	ερωτωντες
8:7	21	ανακυψας
8:7	22	προς αυτους
8:7	23	τον λιθον επ αυτη βαλετω
8:9	24	και υπο της συνειδησεως ελεγχομενοι
8:9	25	εως των εσχατων
8:9	26	μονος ο Ιησους
8:10	27	και μηδενα θεασαμενος πλην της γυναικος
8:10	28	αυτη
8:10	29	εκεινοι οι κατηγοροι σου
8:11	30	ειπεν δε αυτη ο Ιησους
8:11	31	κατακρινω
8:11	32	και απο του νυν

**Comment:** This is a single, clear-cut, unambiguous profile/mosaic, as defined by 127 MSS—there is no internal variation among them. This contrasts dramatically with **M**<sup>6</sup> and **M**<sup>5</sup>, and I suppose with the lesser groups (though I haven't checked them). As given below, it is possible to come up with a profile for both **5** and **6**, for purposes of distinguishing them from each other and from **7**, but they have so much internal variation that I see no way to come up with an archetype that is objectively defined. The profile above defines the archetypical text of **M**<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 240 MSS omit the PA, 64 of which are based on Theophylact's commentary. Fourteen others have lacunae, but are not witnesses for total omission. A few others certainly contain the passage but the microfilm is illegible. So, 1389 + 240 + 14 + 7(?) = about 1650 MSS checked by Robinson.

**M<sup>6</sup> Profile**

7:53	01	απηλθεν / απηλθον
8:1	02	**και ο Ιησους δε / και ο Ιησους
8:2	03	**βαθεως / βαθεος
8:2	04	**ηλθεν ο Ιησους
8:2	05	προς αυτον
8:3	06	(προς αυτον) / προς αυτον
8:3	07	επι
8:3	08	κατειλημμενην
8:3	09	εν τω μεσω / εν μεσω
8:4	10	**ειπον
8:4	11	(πειραζοντες) = omit
8:4	12	ταυτην ευρομεν
8:4	13	επαυτοφωρω / -φορω / -φορωσ
8:4	14	μοιχευομενην / -νη
8:5	15	ημων Μωσης / υμων Μωσης / Μ. ενετ. ημιν / Μωσης
8:5	16	**λιθαζειν
8:5	17	(περι αυτης) / περι αυτης
8:6	18	κατηγοριαν κατ
8:6	19	(μη προσποιουμενος) / μη προσποιουμενος
8:7	20	ερωτωντες / επερωτωντες
8:7	21	αναβλεψας / ανακυψας
8:7	22	**αυτοις
8:7	23	**λιθον βαλετω επ αυτην
8:9	24	(και υπο της συνειδησεως ελεγχομενοι) / και υπο της συνειδησεως ελεγχομενοι
8:9	25	εως των εσχατων
8:9	26	ο Ιησους μονος / μονος
8:10	27	** (και μηδεν θεασαμενος πλην της γυναικος)
8:10	28	**ειδεν αυτην και ειπεν
8:10	29	** (αυτη) γυναι
8:10	30	(εκεινοι) / (εκεινοι οι κατηγοροι σου) / (που εκεινοι οι κατηγοροι σου)
8:11	31	ειπεν δε αυτη ο Ιησους
8:11	32	κατακρινω
8:11	33	πορευου και απο του νυν / πορευου απο του νυν και

**Comment:** I checked the **M<sup>6</sup>** MSS from the **XI** century (over 80) and to my surprise no two of them had an identical mosaic of variants. No matter what contrastive set one uses as a basis (e.g. βαθε~~ως~~ X βαθε~~ος~~), as soon as you look down the roster of other variants the MSS wander back and forth, producing a bewildering array of variation, shifting alliances, or whatever. If all the centuries are checked, there will presumably be a few small groups wherein the member MSS share identical mosaics, but no single definitive profile for **M<sup>6</sup>** will emerge (in contrast to **M<sup>7</sup>**). If there is no single profile, then there is no objective way to define / establish / reconstruct an archetype for **M<sup>6</sup>**. Without a definable archetype, **M<sup>6</sup>** is not a viable candidate for the original form of the Text. However, the ten variants marked by \*\* do distinguish **M<sup>6</sup>** from both **M<sup>5</sup>** and **M<sup>7</sup>**, forming its 'backbone'. But two of the ten, plus another fourteen, have internal variation (besides a variety of further variation not recorded in this list). The individual MSS meander around the plethora of internal (within the group) variation in a bewildering manner, all of which diminishes the credibility of the group. I take it that **M<sup>6</sup>** reflects Alexandrian influence.

**M<sup>5</sup> Profile**

7:53	01	**επορευθη / επορευθησαν
8:1	02	Ιησους δε

8:2	03	(βαθεως) = omit
8:2	04	παρεγενετο
8:2	05	** (προς αυτον)
8:3	06	προς αυτον
8:3	07	**εν
8:3	08	**καταληφθεισαν
8:3	09	εν μεσω
8:4	10	λεγουσιν
8:4	11	**πειραζοντες
8:4	12	**αυτη η γυνη
8:4	13	**κατεληφθη / ειληπται / κατειληπται
8:4	14	επαυτοφωρω / -φορω
8:4	15	**μοιχευομενη
8:5	16	**Μωσης ημιν
8:5	17	λιθοβολεισθαι
8:5	18	(περι αυτης)
8:6	19	**κατηγορειν
8:6	20	μη προσποιουμενος
8:7	21	ερωτωντες
8:7	22	ανακυψας
8:7	23	προς αυτους
8:7	24	**επ αυτην τον λιθον βαλετω
8:9	25	και υπο της συνειδησεως ελεγχομενοι
8:9	26	** (εως των εσχατων)
8:9	27	μονος ο Ιησους
8:10	28	και μηδενα θεασαμενος πλην της γυναικος
8:10	29	αυτη / αυτη γυναι
8:10	30	εκεινοι οι κατηγοροι σου
8:11	31	**ειπεν δε ο Ιησους
8:11	32	**κρινω / κατακρινω
8:11	33	και

**Comment:** Setting aside the splits in #1,13,14,29,32 there is a group of MSS with this profile. There is an equally large group that changes *εγραφεν* to *κατεγραφεν* in verse 6 and changes *πρωτος* to *πρωτον* in verse 7. Both of these groups have a core of MSS that have a ‘perfect’ profile, except that both groups split on *-φωρω/-φορω*. Both groups have ‘fuzzy’ edges with numerous MSS showing various degrees of variation. There is a large number of mixed MSS, clustering around several roughly defined mosaics. Also there is a three-way split in variant #24, plus a fourth lesser variant (205 MSS x 191 x 104 x 21). However, the variants with \*\* do distinguish **M**<sup>5</sup> from both **M**<sup>6</sup> and **M**<sup>7</sup>, forming its ‘backbone’, although there is internal variation in three of them, besides #24. There is further internal variation not recorded in this list. **M**<sup>5</sup> is not as ‘squishy’ as **M**<sup>6</sup>, but not as solid as **M**<sup>7</sup>. I take it that **M**<sup>5</sup> reflects Latin influence. In any event, it looks to be scarcely possible to establish a single archetype for **M**<sup>5</sup>, which it must have to be a viable candidate for the original form of the Text. Evidently the original form is the ultimate archetype.

### Unambiguous **M**<sup>7</sup> (f<sup>35</sup>) representatives = 245 MSS

a) Perfect match (core representatives)—**XI**: 35,83,547,1435; **XII**: 510,768,1046,1323,1329,1489,1490,2296,2367,2382; **XIII**: 128,141,147,154,167,170,204,361,553,676,685,696,757,825,897,1072,1251,1339,1400,1461,1496,1499,1550,1551,1576,1694,2284,2479,2510; **XIV**: 18,55,66,201,246,363,386,402,415,480,586,645,758,763,769,781,789,797,824,845,867,928,932,938,960,986,1023,1075,1092,1111,1117,1119,1133,1146,1189,1236,1328,1390,1482,1488,1492,1493,1548,1560,1572,1584,1600,1619,1620,1628,1633,1637,1650,1659,1667,1688,1698,1703,2261,2355,2407,2454,2503,2765,2767; **XV**: 955,958,962,1003,1180,1250,1508,1625,1636,1648,1686,1713,2131,2554; **XVI**: 1596,1652,2496,2636,2806 = 127 MSS

- b) Major subgroup: in 8:4 it has *επαυτοφρω* (only change)—**XII**: 660,1145,1224; **XIII**: 479,689,691,940,1334, 1487,1501,1601,2584,2598; **XIV**: 189,290,394,521,890,959,1025,1165,1234,1445,1462,1476,1543,1559,1614, 1618,1622,1634,1657,1658,2309,2399,2466,2621,2689; **XV**: 285,961,1017,1059,1132,1158,1247,1649,1656, 2204,2221,2352,2692; **XVI**: 1680,1702,2255; **XVII**: 1700 = 55 MSS
- c) Minor subgroup: in 8:9 it has *κατεληφθη* (only change)—**XIII**: 155,2520; **XIV**: 588,1185; **XV**: 1617; **XVI**: 1088 = 6 MSS
- d) Minor subgroup: in 8:7 it has *τον λιθον βαλετω επ αυτην* (only change)—**XII**: 1199; **XIV**: 953,1020,1147; **XV**: 1389 = 5 MSS
- e) Other MSS with a single change—**XII**: 520,1401,2122,2322; **XIII**: 2647; **XIV**: 1095,1503,2273,2508; **XV**: 575,2673; **XVI**: 1030; **XVII**: 2136,2137,2497 = 15 MSS

+2) MSS with two changes: b) + c)—**XII**: 1453,2559; **XV**: 1131; **XVIII**: 1325  
 b) + d)—**XII**: 387,1813; **XIII**: 1552  
 b) + e)—**XII**: 2260; **XIV**: 1599,1638,1544  
 b) + odd—**X**: 1166; **XIV**: 952,978,1062; **XVI**: 1591,2714  
 d) + e)—**XIII**: 1477,1497; **XIV**: 1181,1248; **XVI**: 2635  
 2 odd—**XI**: 1314,1384; **XIV**: 2265; **XV**: 1116,1348

} = 27 MSS

+3) MSS with three changes: b) + c) + odd—**XII**: 105; **XVI**: 2715  
 b) + d) + e)—**XIV**: 806  
 b) + d) + odd—**XII**: 353; **XIII**: 966  
 b) + e) + odd—**XV**: 664  
 b) + 2 odd—**XII**: 2632; **XV**: 56; **XVI**: 61  
 + 3 odd—**XV**: 58

} = 10 MSS

**Comment:** b) and c) differ from a) only in a similar sounding vowel, while variants 8 and 14 involve a single letter. There is a small sub-group (with fuzzy edges) based on variants 17,20,29. There is a larger, fuzzier group that has variants 1,16,17,28,29 as sort of a basis, with 9,19 on the fringes, and then further variation. There are 40-50 MSS with varying amounts of mixture added to an **M**<sup>7</sup> base. Actually, I believe that **M**<sup>7</sup> was the base from which the creators of **M**<sup>5</sup> and **M**<sup>6</sup> (and all other groups) departed.

**Interpretative comment:** The progressive ‘purification’ of the stream of transmission through the centuries (from a Byzantine priority perspective) has been recognized by all and sundry, their attempts at explaining the phenomenon generally reflecting their presuppositions. From my point of view the evident explanation is this: All camps recognize that the heaviest attacks against the purity of the Text took place during the second century. But “the heartland of the Church”, the Aegean area, by far the best qualified in every way to watch over the faithful transmission, simply refused to copy the aberrant forms. MSS containing such forms were not used (nor copied), so many survived physically for over a millennium. Less bad forms were used but progressively were not copied. Thus the surviving IX century uncials are fair, over 80% Byzantine, but not good enough to be copied (when the better MSS were put into cursive form). Until the advent of a printed text, MSS were made to be used. Progressively only the best were used, and thus worn out, and copied. This process culminated in the XIV century, when the Ottoman shadow was advancing over Asia Minor, but the Byzantine empire still stood. But by the beginning of the XV century, even though Constantinople didn’t actually fall for 45 years, the future was dark and people became preoccupied with survival. It appears to me that the greatest purity is found in the XIV century, and then begins to fall off in the XV, falling more in the XVI and into the XVII. So, in my view special attention should be given to the **XIV** century MSS, for by then only the best tradition was being copied, in the main.

### Righting a Century-old Wrong

When Hermann von Soden identified **K**<sup>f</sup> and proclaimed it to be a revision of **K**<sup>x</sup> made in the **XII** century, he rendered a considerable disservice to the Truth and to those with an interest in identifying the

original wording of the NT Text. Within the Majority Text vineyard, both Zane Hodges and Maurice Robinson have been adversely affected by that idea.

Maurice Robinson recently gave me the opportunity to work with his collation of 1,389 MSS that contain the Pericope—this work of his is a highly significant contribution to the field of NT textual criticism; it totally supercedes von Soden’s work on these verses, giving us a virtually complete picture of the facts of the case (the picture Soden painted was seriously misleading). Of the three major groups, **M**<sup>5,6,7</sup>, only **M**<sup>7</sup> (alias **K**<sup>r</sup>, but that I now call **f**<sup>35</sup>, throughout the NT) has an unambiguous profile, making it possible to posit its exact original or archetypal form (which in my view makes it the only viable candidate for preserving the Original Text).

Upon consulting the list of MSS that make up **M**<sup>7</sup>, we find four ‘perfect’ representatives plus two more from the **XI** century, and one from the **X**, and even a lectionary (139) from the **X**! It follows that **K**<sup>r</sup> existed already in the **X** century and thus could not have been created in the **XII**. Consider what Robinson himself concluded as a result of collating all those MSS:

However, contrary to this writer’s earlier speculations, the extensive collation of the PA MSS has conclusively demonstrated that cross-comparison and correction of MSS occurred only *rarely* and *sporadically*, with little or no perpetuation of the corrective changes across the diversity of types represented [italics his, also below].

.....  
 Since this is the case, the phenomenon of the relatively unified Byzantine Textform *cannot* be explained by a “process” methodology, whether “modified” or not. . . .

Based upon the collated data, the present writer is forced to reverse his previous assumptions regarding the development and restoration/preservation of the Byzantine Textform in this sense: although textual transmission itself is a process, it appears that, for the most part, the lines of transmission remained separate, with relatively little mixture occurring or becoming perpetuated. . . .

Certainly, all the types of PA text are distinct, and reflect a long line of transmission and preservation in their separate integrities. . . .

.....  
 It thus appears that the Byzantine minuscule MSS preserve lines of transmission which are not only independent but which of necessity had their origin at a time well before the 9<sup>th</sup> century. . . . The lack of extensive cross-comparison and correction demonstrated in the extant MSS containing the PA precludes the easy development of any existing form of the PA text from any other form of the PA text during at least the vellum era. The early uncials which contain the PA demonstrate widely-differing lines of transmission, but not all of the known lines. Nor do the uncials or minuscules show any indication of any known line deriving from a parallel known line. The 10 or so “texttype” lines of transmission remain independent and must necessarily extend back to a point long before their separate stabilizations occurred—a point which seems buried (as Colwell and Scrivener suggested) deep within the second century.<sup>2</sup>

If “the 10 or so ‘texttype’ lines of transmission remain independent and must necessarily extend back to a point . . . which seems buried . . . deep within the second century,” then **M**<sup>7</sup> (**K**<sup>r</sup>/**f**<sup>35</sup>) must date to the second century. I agree. Dating to the second century, and being the only group with an unambiguously defined profile, I have no hesitation in declaring that **M**<sup>7</sup> preserves the original wording. After over a millennium of copying by hand there are well over a hundred perfect copies (for the PA)—surely an eloquent testimony to the divine preservation of the Text!

<sup>2</sup> “Preliminary Observations regarding the *Pericope Adulterae* based upon Fresh Collations of nearly all Continuous-Text Manuscripts and over One Hundred Lectionaries”, presented to the Evangelical Theological Society, Nov., 1998, pp. 11-13. However, I have received the following clarification from Maurice Robinson: “I would request that if my name gets cited in regard to your various **K**<sup>r</sup> or **M**<sup>7</sup> articles that you make it clear that I do not concur with your assessment of **K**<sup>r</sup> or **M**<sup>7</sup>. This is particularly the case with the “Preliminary Considerations regarding the *Pericope Adulterae*” article; it should not be used to suggest that I consider the **M**<sup>7</sup> line or **K**<sup>r</sup> text to be early. This would be quite erroneous, since I hold with virtually all others that **K**<sup>r</sup>/**M**<sup>7</sup> are indeed late texts that reflect recensional activity beginning generally in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (perhaps with 11<sup>th</sup> century base exemplars, but nothing earlier).” [Assuming that he was sincere when he wrote that article, I wonder what new evidence came his way that caused him to change his mind—his language there is certainly plain enough.]