

# Caught in the Act: Mary and the Adulteress

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In his contribution to the collection of “Essays in Honour of Tjitze Baarda,” William Petersen presents a compelling study of the famous *pericope adulterae* (PA) in John 7:53-8:11.<sup>1</sup> Petersen first conducts a *tour d’ horizon* of the textual data for John 7:53-8:11 in which he summarizes the “very convincing array of evidence and argumentation” that comprises the “massive, convincing, and obvious” reasons for which scholars almost universally consider the PA to be a later insertion into the Gospel of John.<sup>2</sup> Petersen then confronts the issues of the antiquity of the PA and its relationship to the Gospel of John with fresh evidence in the form of a close literary parallel to the phrase οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε [κατα]κρίνω (“neither do I [condemn] judge you”) in John 8:11 which occurs in the *Protevangelium Jacobi* (*Prot. Jas.*) 16:3 as οὐδὲ ἐγὼ [κατα]κρίνω ὑμᾶς (“neither do I [condemn] judge you two”).<sup>3</sup> But in contrast to his thoroughgoing and comprehensive survey of the MS tradition of the text of John 7:53-8:11, Petersen’s treatment of the *Prot. Jas.* appears to have been influenced by certain questionable secondary sources upon which he relied heavily in formulating his arguments.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the present article is to re-examine the problem of the origins of the PA from a wider range of scholarly opinions on the *Prot. Jas.* (and its hypothetical sources) and to illuminate the relationship between John 8:11 and *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 on the basis of research on the textual and compositional history of the *Prot. Jas.* of which Petersen was not aware when he composed his article.

## The Textual Evidence against the PA

The extant textual evidence that indicates the absence of the PA from the original text of John is divided into four categories: 1) the Greek MS tradition of John, 2) the non-Greek versions, 3) the patristic witnesses, and 4) the apocrypha.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “ΟΥΔΕ ΕΓΩ ΣΕ ΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΝΩ. The *Protevangelium Jacobi*, and the History of the *Pericope Adulterae*,” in *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-canonical* (ed. W. L. Petersen, J. S. Vos, and Henk J. de Jonge; Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1997), 191-221.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-203. Such strong terminology is common among the scholars who have researched the problem of the authenticity of the PA. Cf., e.g., Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2000), 187-89: “The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming” and “the case against its being of Johannine authorship appears to be conclusive.” Bart Ehrman, “Jesus and the Adulteress,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 24, also describes as “overwhelming” the arguments supporting the “scholarly consensus” that “the passage did not originally form part of the Fourth Gospel.” Cf. also Frederick A. Schilling, “The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress,” *ATR* 37 (1955): 91-92, for a summary of earlier opinions on the PA problem.

<sup>3</sup> The brackets in the texts of John 8:11 and *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 denote the identical textual variant found among the MS(S) of both documents. The addition by some witnesses of the prefix κατα to the base verb κρίνω (to judge) strengthens its meaning from “judge” to “condemn.” Cf. *Sayings*, 191, n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See below, pp. 18-19.

<sup>5</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 193-208. Cf. Gary M. Burge, “A Specific Problem in the New Testament Text and Canon: The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 7:53-8:11),” *JETS* (1984): 141, n. 5, for a full bibliography. The most exhaustive study of the PA to date is by Ulrich Becker, *Jesus und die*

## 1) The Greek MS Tradition

Among the canonical books of the New Testament the Greek text of John is exceptionally well attested in the earliest, most authoritative extant MS witnesses. The most ancient Greek MS(S) and non-Greek versions of John, and the patristic references to this gospel almost universally evince the absence of the PA from its earliest text.<sup>6</sup> These include the two earliest witnesses, the papyri Bodmer II (p<sup>66</sup>) of the second or third century and Bodmer XV (p<sup>75</sup>) of the third century, as well as the fourth-century uncial codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus and the fifth-century Washingtonensis.<sup>7</sup> Two of the other major fifth-century codices, Alexandrinus and Ephraemi, also appear not to have contained the PA although their text of John is defective at this point.<sup>8</sup> The only early uncial to contain the PA in its text of John is the fifth- or sixth-century maverick bilingual (Greek and Latin) Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis. But even this witness is minimized by the notoriously problematic nature of the text of Bezae itself<sup>9</sup> and of the MS tradition to which it belongs, of which Bezae is the best representative.<sup>10</sup> Bezae and the eighth-century Codex Basilensis are the only Greek MS witnesses prior to the ninth century that contain the PA in their text of John.<sup>11</sup> Petersen lists thirteen MS(S) of the ninth and tenth centuries in which the PA does occur in the text of John.<sup>12</sup> But Becker points out in detail that most of the uncials that include the PA do so in a manner indicating that

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*Ehebrecherin: Untersuchungen zur Text- und Überlieferungsgeschichte von Joh. 7 53--8 11* (BZNW 28; Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1963); see pp. 8-25, for a comprehensive presentation of the textual evidence.

<sup>6</sup> Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 25, “Die ältesten und wichtigsten griechischen, syrischen, armenischen, georgischen, koptischen und lateinischen Zeugen für den neutestamentlichen Text kennen übereinstimmend die Ehebrecherinperikope nicht.”

<sup>7</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 194; Metzger, *Commentary*, 187; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 9. All dates in this study will be CE unless specified otherwise.

<sup>8</sup> Metzger, *Commentary*, 187, “Codices A and C are defective in this part of John, but it is highly probable that neither contained the pericope, for careful measurement discloses that there would not have been space enough on the missing leaves to include the section along with the rest of the text.”

<sup>9</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, (3d ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 50, states: “No known manuscript has so many and such remarkable variations from what is usually taken to be the normal New Testament text. Codex Bezae’s special characteristic is the free addition (and occasional omission) of words, sentences, and even incidents.”

<sup>10</sup> Metzger, *ibid.*, 51, speaks of “the characteristic freedom of what is called the Western text, of which Codex Bezae is the principal representative.” According to B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988), 122-24, two of the main characteristics of the “Western” text are: 1) “Words, clauses, and even whole sentences were changed, omitted, and inserted with astonishing freedom,” and 2) this text type had “a disposition to enrich the text at the cost of its purity by alterations or additions taken from traditional and perhaps from apocryphal or other non-biblical sources.” For the case against the “so-called ‘Western’ text” see Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, (trans. Erroll F. Rhodes; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1995) 54-55, 67-69, 109-110, 189-90.

<sup>11</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 194.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 10.

its place in their text of John is problematic.<sup>13</sup> MS witnesses to the PA in John proliferate after the tenth century with the spread of the Byzantine text type that eventually formed the basis of the Textus Receptus. But it is significant that the official Constantinopolitan lectionary also omits the PA from its reading of John 7:37-8:12 for the Divine Liturgy of Pentecost Sunday.<sup>14</sup>

## 2) The Ancient Versions and Non-Greek Patristic Witnesses

Much the same situation exists in the ancient translations of John and in the patristic quotations of Johannine texts. In the non-Greek MS tradition, the PA is absent from “the Sahidic and sub-Achmimic versions and the older Bohairic MS(S),”<sup>15</sup> from the Armenian version before 989,<sup>16</sup> from the old Georgian version through the tenth century,<sup>17</sup> and from “the oldest form of the Syriac version.”<sup>18</sup> “The Lucianic text, ancestor of the Byzantine text and traceable to the textual tradition of Antioch back to 300 A. D., does not have it.”<sup>19</sup> Several later Syriac MS(S) contain the PA but in different locations, i.e., in its present position after John 7:52, in the margin, or as an appendix.<sup>20</sup> But there is evidence that the later Syrian readings may derive from Egypt. Some of the later Syriac MS(S) that contain the PA include scholia to the effect that an “Abbot Paul” found the passage in Alexandria.<sup>21</sup> Further support for a possible Alexandrian origin of the Syrian reading of the PA is provided by the earliest Syrian patristic source that references the PA, bishop Mara of Amida. According to an ancient report, Mara fled to Alexandria in the early sixth century; it is thought that he may have derived his text of the PA from Alexandrian MS(S).<sup>22</sup> The absence of the PA from early Syria extends also to the eastern Diatessaronic witnesses.<sup>23</sup> The only two Syrian patristic sources before the twelfth century who even mentioned the PA appear to have known a different version of the story than that preserved in John.<sup>24</sup>

It is within the Latin MS and patristic tradition that one may discern the earliest signs of the acceptance of the PA into the text of John. Although the early Latin writers Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage did not seem to know the PA,<sup>25</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 10-11. The text of the PA is set off by obelisks or asterisks, located in different places in the text of John (or even in Luke), or containing scholia to the effect that the PA is absent from part of the MS tradition.

<sup>14</sup> Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, Appendix, 84.

<sup>15</sup> Metzger, *Commentary*, 187-88; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 21-23.

<sup>16</sup> Even this late MS contains an abbreviated form of the PA, Petersen, *Sayings*, 196; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Metzger, *Commentary*, 188, n. 2; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>19</sup> Schilling, “Story,” 92-93.

<sup>20</sup> Ehrman, “Jesus,” 39, n. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Gwynn, J., *Remnants of the Later Syriac Versions of the Bible* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1909; repr., Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1973), 1. lxxi-lxxii, 41-49; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 200; Gwynn, *Remnants*, 41; Ehrman, “Jesus,” 39, n. 18; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 18-19.

<sup>24</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 200-202.

<sup>25</sup> Burge, “Problem,” 142-43, refers that Tertullian, in *De Pudicitia*, and Cyprian, in his *Epistle*. 55, surprisingly make no reference to Jesus’ interaction with the adulteress in their judicial directions

and the story is also absent from four Vetus Latina MS(S), it is preserved at its present location after John 7:52 in six witnesses of the Old Latin version—one of which is the Latin text of Codex Bezae (see above)—and in Jerome’s Vulgate.<sup>26</sup> It is only the Latin writers, among the non-Greek patristic sources, who make reference to the PA as early as the fourth century CE. Petersen cites five Latin writers of the late fourth and early fifth centuries who demonstrate some degree of knowledge of the PA.<sup>27</sup> The two earliest of these, Pacien of Barcelona and Ambrose of Milan, seemed to know the story of the adulteress but did not expressly state that they knew it from the Gospel of John. Jerome included the PA in his Vulgate and wrote that in his time many Greek and Latin MS(S) contained the story, implying that a considerable number did not.<sup>28</sup> Finally, it is thought that the fourth-century writer Rufinus may have betrayed knowledge of the PA in his Latin translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. Rufinus altered the text of a reference to a story of a woman accused of many unspecified sins (περὶ γυναικὸς ἐπὶ πολλαῖς ἀμαρτίαις)—that was told by Papias ca. 130 and recorded by Eusebius in the fourth century—in such a way that the accused woman was identified more specifically as an adulteress (*de muliere adultera*).<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, since it is in the Latin tradition that the Johannine PA first appears, it is the Latin writers also who first address the problem of the absence of the PA from other parts of the MS tradition. Ambrose of Milan states that certain individuals, presumably Christians, were disturbed because Jesus’ leniency in the story with regards to the sin of adultery could be construed as an enticement to sinful behavior.<sup>30</sup> Augustine of Hippo further develops his mentor’s train of thought by blaming the absence of the PA from some MS(S) on “some who were of slight faith or rather hostile to the true faith”<sup>31</sup> who wanted to expunge from the gospel record Jesus’ seeming laxity towards adultery. The attempt by these two important Latin fathers to justify the absence of the PA from some MS(S)—in addition to the

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for cases of adultery; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 23-24, concurs and further notes that the Latin MS(S) of Northern Africa in the time of Cyprian did not contain the PA.

<sup>26</sup> Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 23; cf. Petersen, *Sayings*, 194-95.

<sup>27</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 198-200; See Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 24-25.

<sup>28</sup> *Adv. Pelag.* ii, 17, *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera* (CCSL 80; Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 76, “In Evangelio secundum Iohannem in multis et Graecis et Latinis codicibus inuenitur de adultera muliere, quae accusata est apud Dominum.” Cf. Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 24; Petersen, *Sayings*, 198-99.

<sup>29</sup> *Hist. eccl.* 3, 39, 17, (GCS 8; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903), 292-93, “simul et historiam quandam subiungit de muliere adultera, quae accusata est a Iudaeis apud dominum. habetur autem in euangelio, quod dicitur secundum Hebraeos, scripta ista parabola.” Cf. Petersen, *Sayings*, 199, n. 33; Ehrman, “Jesus,” 29, n. 26. See also the discussion below, pp. 7-11, on Papias’ important witness to the PA.

<sup>30</sup> *Apologia David altera*, 1, 1, *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, (CSEL 32; Praegae, Vindobonae, Lipsiae: 1897), 359, “simul etiam non mediocre scrupulum mouere potuit inperitis euangelii lectio, quae decursa est, in quo aduertistis adulteram Christo oblatam eandemque sine damnatione dimissam. Nam profecto si quis ea auribus accipiat otiosis, incontinentium erroris incurrit, cum legit sancti uiri adulterium et adulterae absolutionem, humano propemodum diuinoque lapsus exemplo, quod et homo putauerit adulterium esse faciendum et deus censuerit adulterium non esse damnandum.” Cf. Petersen, *Sayings*, 198, n. 31, for more such references in Ambrose.

<sup>31</sup> *De Conj. Adult.* ii, 7 (PL 40:474) *Sed hoc uidelicet infidelium sensus exhorret, ita ut nonnulli modicae fidei vel potius inimici verae fidei, credo metuentes peccandi impunitatem dari mulieribus suis, illud quod de adulterae indulgentia Dominus fecit, auferrent de codicibus suis, quasi permissionem peccandi tribuerit qui dixit: Jam deinceps noli peccare.*

witness of Jerome above—verifies the existence of this textual problem even in the Latin speaking world of the fourth and fifth centuries which otherwise was so supportive of the presence of this passage in the text of John.

### 3) The Greek Patristic Witnesses

The silence of the Greek patristic tradition on the PA is deafening.<sup>32</sup> The most important early Alexandrian witness to the absence of the PA from the Gospel of John is the third-century father Origen who, in his commentary on this gospel, passes from 7:52 to 8:12 without mentioning the passage.<sup>33</sup> In the fifth century Cyril of Alexandria moves directly from 7:52 to 8:12 in his commentary on John without mentioning the PA,<sup>34</sup> as does Nonnus of Panopolis in his metrical paraphrase of this gospel.<sup>35</sup> These Egyptian witnesses are especially significant in view of the apparent dependence of the later Syrian MS tradition of the PA upon Egyptian MS(S).<sup>36</sup> The absence of the PA from the early Syrian texts of John is confirmed by the Syro-Constantinopolitan father John Chrysostom and Theodore Mopsuestias who ignore the passage in their line-by-line commentaries on this gospel.<sup>37</sup> And what has until only recently been acknowledged as the first certain Greek patristic comment on the PA actually constitutes a clear witness against its authenticity. The twelfth-century writer Euthymius Zigabenus states in his commentary on John that “in the most accurate manuscripts [the story] either is not to be found or is set off by obeli.”<sup>38</sup> In the midst of the otherwise complete silence of the Greek patristic literature, scholars have identified two possible references to the PA among the Greek patristic sources before Zigabenus: 1) a story cited by the fourth-century Alexandrian writer Didymus the Blind,<sup>39</sup> and 2) the comment mentioned above by the early second-century Christian writer Papias that is preserved in Eusebius’ *Hist. eccl.* 3, 39, 16.<sup>40</sup>

#### Didymus the Blind

<sup>32</sup> Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 11-12 discusses “*das Schweigen der griechischen Kirchenväter und Ausleger.*”

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, n. 15; See Ehrman’s refutation, “Jesus,” 40, n. 21, of Becker’s argument, *Ehebrecherin*, 119-24, that Origen may have known of an adulteress story from non-canonical sources. Clement of Alexandria also ignores the PA in his writings, Schilling, “Story,” 93.

<sup>34</sup> Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 12, n. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Burge, “Problem,” 142.

<sup>36</sup> See above, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 12. Cf. p. 3, n. 14 above, Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, appendix, 84, concerning the absence of the PA in the oldest MS(S) of the Byzantine lectionary.

<sup>38</sup> *Comm. Io.* (PG 129:1280D). After quoting John 7:52, Zigabenus writes: χρῆ δὲ γινώσκειν ὅτι τὸ ἐντεῦθεν ἄχρι τοῦ, πάλιν οὖν ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου· παρὰ τοῖς ἀκριβέσιν ἀντιγράφοις ἢ οὐχ εὔρηται ἢ ὠβέλίσται. Διὸ φαίνονται παρέγγραπτα καὶ προσθήκη· καὶ τούτου τεκμήριον τὸ μηδὲ τὸν Χρυσόστομον ὅλως μνημονεύσαι αὐτῶν; Metzger, *Commentary*, 188; Petersen, *Sayings*, 198; Burge, “Problem,” 142; Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, (ed. Francis N. Davey; 2d rev. ed.; London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), 563.

<sup>39</sup> Ehrman’s entire article, “Jesus”; Petersen, *Sayings*, 197-98.

<sup>40</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 196-97; Schilling, “Story,” 93-94; Ehrman, “Jesus,” 29-30; Burge, “Problem,” 143.

Bart Ehrman has investigated a reference to a story in a recently discovered biblical commentary attributed to the fourth-century Alexandrian father Didymus the blind<sup>41</sup> that may indicate the presence of the PA in the copy of John that was used by that father.<sup>42</sup> Didymus wrote that ἐν τισιν εὐαγγελίοις (“in certain gospels”) a woman who had been condemned by the Jews ἐπὶ ἁμαρτίᾳ (“for a sin”) was being sent away λιθοβοληθῆναι (“to be stoned”). When Jesus saw what was happening he said to those who were preparing to stone the woman: “he who has not sinned, let him take up 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.”<sup>43</sup> Obviously Didymus is at least paraphrasing, if not quoting,<sup>44</sup> a story very similar to the canonical PA. But the vagueness of Didymus’ statement that he found this story ἐν τισιν εὐαγγελίοις (“in certain gospels”) leaves in doubt the source from which he derived his version of the narrative.<sup>45</sup> Ehrman maintains that even though Didymus does not specify that he obtained his account of the adulteress from the gospel of John, his use of the story is fully comprehensible only in its present location after John 7:52.<sup>46</sup> Ehrman bases his argument on what he perceives to be an incongruity between the moral of the story itself, when read in isolation, and the moral teaching that Didymus attempts to convey in citing the story for support: “the narrative that Didymus paraphrases . . . shows that sinners *never* have the right to condemn other sinners . . . In contrast to this view, Didymus asserts that sinners *do* have the right of judgment in certain instances.”<sup>47</sup> Ehrman concludes that “this incongruity between the point Didymus

<sup>41</sup> “We now have the good fortune to state that a new discovery has been made which may shed considerable light on the textual history and pre-literary form of the *pericope de adultera*,” Ehrman, “Jesus,” 24; cf. idem, 38, n. 8, for a comprehensive bibliography on the discovery in 1941 of the Toura papyrus documents which contain Didymus’ relevant remarks, and 39, n. 9, on the life and works of Didymus.

<sup>42</sup> Ehrman, “Jesus,” 24-29.

<sup>43</sup> Bärbel Krebber, ed. and trans., *Didymus der Blinde, Kommentar zum Ecclesiastes: kap. 7-8,8* (Band 16, Teil IV in Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen; eds. Ludwig Koenen and Reinhold Merkelbach; Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1972), 88,

φέρομεν οὖν ἐν τισιν εὐαγγελίοις· γυνή, φησὶν, κατεκρίθη ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐπὶ ἁμαρτίᾳ καὶ ἀπεστέλλετο λιθοβοληθῆναι εἰς τὸν τόπον, ὅπου εἰώθει γίνεσθαι. ὁ σωτὴρ, φησὶν, ἑωρακῶς αὐτὴν καὶ θεωρήσας ὅτι ἔτοιμοὶ εἰσὶν πρὸς τὸ λιθοβολῆσαι αὐτήν, τοῖς μέλλουσιν αὐτὴν καταβαλεῖν λίθοις εἶπεν· ὃς οὐκ ἤμαρτεν, αἰρέτω λίθον καὶ βαλέτω αὐτόν. εἴ τις σύνοιδεν ἑαυτῷ τὸ μὴ ἡμαρτηκέναι, λαβὼν λίθον παισάτω αὐτήν. καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμησεν. ἐπιστήσαντες ἑαυτοῖς καὶ γνόντες, ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπεύθυνοι εἰσὶν τισιν, οὐκ ἐτόλμησαν καταπτᾶσαι ἐκείνην.

<sup>44</sup> Ehrman, “Jesus,” 31, Ehrman believes that Didymus has actually preserved two quotations from his original source, ὃς οὐκ ἤμαρτεν, αἰρέτω λίθον καὶ βαλέτω αὐτόν and καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμησεν.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-29. See especially p. 28: “When read in isolation, the PA does not condemn hypocritical condemnation. It instead prohibits *any* judgment of the sins of another. But in its Johannine context the focus of the story is transformed. Now it serves to illustrate John’s opposition to hypocrisy . . . This transformation of the original meaning of the story corresponds to what happens when Didymus retells the story.”

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, “Didymus is apparently concerned to warn his reader not to sin by inappropriately judging another person, i.e. by judging aspects of another’s life that have no bearing on his own. Thus a master should not condemn slaves for their disposition, which is none of his business, but only for their acts of disobedience, which are. Didymus uses the PA, then, to show that since we all are guilty before God, we should not be quick to condemn others, but should react to them only insofar as their actions relate directly to us.”

wants to make with the story of the adulteress and the point conveyed by the story itself suggests that he had found it in its Johannine context.”<sup>48</sup>

Ehrman finds it “easiest to assume what has otherwise seemed probable enough - Didymus found the story in at least some of the copies of the Fourth Gospel located in Alexandria. His retelling of the story, then, would be the earliest evidence of its acceptance into the Gospel of John by Alexandrian scribes.”<sup>49</sup> Dieter Lührmann takes issue with Ehrman’s interpretation and reasserts the conclusions of previous research that Didymus was dependent upon apocryphal sources and not upon the Johannine PA.<sup>50</sup> Restating the evidence for the silence of the Egyptian textual tradition on the PA<sup>51</sup> and for Didymus’ specific references in other contexts to such apocryphal documents as the *Gos. Heb.*, *Gos. Thom.*, and *Gos. Pet.*,<sup>52</sup> Lührmann rejects the identification of Didymus’ story with the Johannine PA<sup>53</sup> and ultimately concludes that the story of the sinful woman in Didymus is a new text of apocryphal Jesus traditions, an earlier form of the PA that was included later in the gospel of John.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, “although the PA does not in itself illustrate Didymus’ contention about executing judgment in a righteous manner, the story does convey exactly this message when placed between John chs. 7 and 8.” Ehrman notes that Jesus is unjustly condemned twice in the seventh chapter of John, first by the Jews in John 7:22-23 for healing a man on the Sabbath and again in John 7:50-52—immediately before the modern location of the PA—where Nicodemus makes the same point to the Pharisees who are condemning Jesus unjustly without allowing him to defend himself as per their law, Μὴ ὁ νόμος ἡμῶν κρίνει τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐὰν μὴ ἀκούσῃ πρῶτον παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ γινῶ τί ποιεῖ; (“Does your law judge a man if it does not first hear from him and knows what he does?”). A saying of Jesus in 7:24 supports this reading of John 7 and Didymus: “Do not judge according to the outward appearance, but judge the righteous judgment.” Ehrman’s contextual argument could be further strengthened by considering the passage immediately following the PA in John 8:12-20, which makes a similar point. Again the Pharisees condemn Jesus, this time on the principle that he bore witness to himself when he asserted in 8:12 that he was the “light of the world.” Jesus answered that he had the additional witness of the “father who sent me,” (8:16) and that according to the Pharisees’ own law “the witness of two men is true” (8:17).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> “*Die Geschichte von einer Sünderin und andere apokryphe Jesusüberlieferungen bei Didymos von Alexandrien*,” *NT 32* (1990): 289-316.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 298, “*Gegen eine Identifikation der von Didymos wiedergegebenen Geschichte mit der Perikope von der Ehebrecherin sprechen neben diesen inhaltlichen auch Erwägungen zur Überlieferung des Textes Joh. 8:3-11 . . . diese Perikope in der ägyptischen Texttradition des Johannesevangeliums eben fehlt.*”

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 292, “*Daß Didymos solche kannte, steht schon von der bisherigen Forschung her außer Frage. Er beruft sich an anderer Stelle auf das Hebräerevangelium als Autorität, und er erwähnt ein Thomas- sowie ein Petrus-evangelium als Apokryphen.*” Lührmann believes that by his use of the term φησὶν Didymus indicates that he was not simply summarizing but was reproducing specific texts, *ibid.*, 292-93. Cf. n. 43 above; Lührmann, 290, reproduces the text with critical apparatus and German translation.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 297, “*Als Zwischenergebnis ist festzuhalten, daß die Geschichte, die Didymos bietet, nicht die Perikope von der Ehebrecherin Joh. 8:3-11 ist.*”

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 312, “*Didymos in Ecclt IV 223, 6-13 eine Geschichte wiedergibt, die weder eine in Handschriften des Johannesevangeliums überlieferte Fassung von Joh. 8:3-11 noch eine bloße Anspielung darauf ist, sondern eine ursprünglichere Form der Perikope von der Ehebrecherin, ein neuer Text apokrypher Jesusüberlieferung, der älter ist als die Fassung, die später in das Johannesevangelium aufgenommen worden ist.*”

### Papias via Eusebius

The earliest Greek patristic witness that has been viewed by some to be an allusion to the Johannine PA technically belongs to the category of the apocrypha. Although the reference is found in the Ecclesiastical History (*Hist. eccl.* 3, 39) of the church father Eusebius, and Eusebius' statement itself is only a citation from a lost work of the early second-century bishop Papias of Hierapolis, the actual source of the story is named by Eusebius as the apocryphal Gospel according to the Hebrews (*Gos. Heb.*). The value of Papias' information is compromised by ambiguities in the details of the story—as it is described by Eusebius—vis-à-vis the PA:

ἐκτέθειται δὲ καὶ ἄλλην ἱστορίαν περὶ γυναικὸς ἐπὶ πολλαῖς ἀμαρτίαις διαβληθείσης ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου, ἣν τὸ καθ' Ἐβραίους εὐαγγέλιον περιέχει.<sup>55</sup>

And [Papias] presents another story concerning a woman who had been accused of many sins before the Lord, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews contains.

The relevance of the Papias/Eusebius reference for the origins of the PA has been assessed variously by scholars. Petersen values the Papias/Eusebius witness as the earliest Greek patristic reference to a story of a sinful woman, but considers its identification with the Johannine PA to be “ambiguous.”<sup>56</sup> Against the scholars who in varying degrees view the Papias/Eusebius statement as an allusion to the PA,<sup>57</sup> Petersen himself identifies four “rather obvious reasons for not doing so”: 1) the complete lack of any direct quotation or paraphrase from the PA in the text of the Papias/Eusebius reference, 2) a general congruency and specific verbal similarities between the reference and the “Anointing at Bethany” story in Luke 7:36-50, 3) the discrepancy between the many unspecified sins of the woman in the Papias/Eusebius account and the “single instance of adultery” specified in the Johannine PA, and 4) the language and context of Eusebius' description of the story that leaves it unclear as to whether he himself or Papias was the source of the information that the story of the sinful woman was found in the *Gos. Heb.*<sup>58</sup> Among the scholars who reject any connection between the Johannine PA and the Papias/Eusebius reference are Schilling and A. F. J. Klijn. Schilling readily acknowledges the antiquity and importance of the *Gos. Heb.* and Papias' statement, but dismisses the reference as a “false clue” in the quest for answers to the authorship, date, and purpose of the

<sup>55</sup> Greek text from Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblestiftung, 1976), 531.

<sup>56</sup> *Sayings*, 197.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 26; cf. Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 93, n. 7.

<sup>58</sup> *Sayings*, 197.

PA.<sup>59</sup> Klijn also expresses a negative opinion of the Papias/Eusebius reference to the PA by including the story in his category of “Spurious and Doubtful Texts.”<sup>60</sup>

In their argumentation for rejecting the identification of the Papias/Eusebius reference with the Johannine PA, Petersen, Schilling, and Klijn all emphasize the similarities between the Papias/Eusebius text and the story of a woman accused of many sins contained in Luke 7:36-50. Thus it is not even certain that the story referred by Eusebius is the PA now found in John, but could just as easily be a reference to the Lucan story.<sup>61</sup> Klijn notes that there are two canonical stories of encounters between Jesus and a sinful woman—Luke 7:36-50 and the PA in John—but he excludes the Lucan story from consideration as the source of the PA on the grounds that in the particular passage where Eusebius is summarizing Papias’ reference, Eusebius is speaking of traditions found in texts that he himself knows. Klijn argues cogently that Eusebius would not be referring to “a story known to Papias which was part of the canonical Gospels.”<sup>62</sup> He asserts that “there is reason to suppose that it is John 7,53-8,11 that is meant” by Eusebius even though the PA “was certainly not yet part of the New Testament known to Eusebius or his readers.”<sup>63</sup> Klijn agrees with Petersen that the woman in the Johannine episode “was not accused of many sins but of only one, viz. adultery;” but Klijn views this discrepancy as mitigated by variant readings from the MS(S) of the *Prot. Jas.* that demonstrate the existence of more than one version of the story of the adulteress, some speaking of a single sin and some of more than one.<sup>64</sup> Unable to reach a conclusion about the source of the Papias/Eusebius story, Klijn leaves open the possibility that Eusebius may have known of the PA from another source, such as a Jewish-Christian gospel that was “known to him by name only,” i.e., the *Gos. Heb.*<sup>65</sup>

The foremost scholar who does “interpret this [Eusebius/Papias] reference as an allusion to the Johannine *pericope adulterae* (or some *Ur*-form of it)”<sup>66</sup> is Becker who proposes several reasons for associating the two passages:<sup>67</sup> 1) Rufinus has in mind the Johannine PA in his Latin translation of Eusebius’ *Hist. eccl.* (ca. 403) in which he renders a woman ἐπὶ πολλαῖς ἀμαρτίαις (“of many sins”) specifically as a

<sup>59</sup> “Story,” 93-94, “That he [Papias] knew this book [*Gos. Heb.*] cannot with confidence be inferred from Eusebius’ statement, for he merely says that the same story circulated in both writings . . . So, this trail to Papias and the Gospel according to the Hebrews has led nowhere at all.”

<sup>60</sup> Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 17; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 116-19. See below, pp. 10-11, for Ehrman’s and Lührmann’s opposition to this connection.

<sup>61</sup> This possibility is supported by the location of the PA after Luke 21:38 in the MS(S) of the Farrer group, Petersen, *Sayings*, 194, n. 14, and by the placement of the PA immediately after the reading for Luke 21:12-19 in the Byzantine lectionary MSS, Ernest C. Colwell and Donald W. Riddle, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Lectionary Text of the Gospels* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1933), 19. Cf. ΘΕΙΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΙΕΡΟΝ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ, (6<sup>th</sup> ed.; Phoenix: Venice, 1883), 27.

<sup>62</sup> *Jewish-Christian*, 117.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 119. See discussion below on the *Gos. Heb.*

<sup>66</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 197, cf. n. 26.

<sup>67</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 98-99.

*muliere adultera* (“adulterous woman”),<sup>68</sup> 2) several MS(S) and texts explicitly refer to the PA but do not specify the type of sin of which the woman is accused,<sup>69</sup> and 3) the phrase διαβληθείσης ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου (“accused to the Lord”) in Eusebius seems to match the scenario of the Jewish legal process described in John’s PA.<sup>70</sup> Becker joins Schilling and Klijn (see above) in rejecting the notion that Eusebius’ sinful woman is not the Johannine adulteress but the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet in Luke 7:36-50.<sup>71</sup> Among the reasons given by Becker for his position are: 1) Eusebius knows the Lucan passage in other contexts, and 2) since Luke 7:36-50 forms its own section in the Eusebian Gospel Canons and Eusebius mentions it, he would not refer to it again as a separate story in Papias’ work.<sup>72</sup> R. Schnackenburg—who considers the PA to be a “non-Johannine interpolation” that “does not belong to the original fabric of John’s gospel”<sup>73</sup>—sees several agreements between the PA and the story contained in Luke 7:36-50.<sup>74</sup> Although he finally accepts Becker’s assessment, Schnackenburg takes Becker to task for not emphasizing sufficiently the Lucan character of the PA: “Becker is probably right when he rejects (pp. 70-1) the often-made suggestion of a Lucan origin for the passage, but its close relationship to the Lucan tradition, both in style and content, remains undeniable.”<sup>75</sup>

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 93, “*Es ist keine Frage, daß Rufin bei seiner Übersetzung die Geschichte von der Ehebrecherin, wie sie uns in Joh 7 53 ff. überliefert ist, vor Augen hatte.*” Cf. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 117, n. 149: “It is out of the question that Rufinus is thought to have a better knowledge of this passage.”

<sup>69</sup> Greek MS(S) D and minuscule 1071, the Syro-Palestinian lectionary, two Dutch MS(S) of the Diatessaron, and the early third-century Syrian apocryphal *Didascalia*. *Ehebrecherin*, 95-96, “*In allen diesen Texten wird, wie in unserem Eusebzitat, nie ausdrücklich von der spezifischen Sünde der Frau gesprochen, obwohl es keinem Zweifel unterliegt, dass in jedem Falle die Ehebrecherinperikope gemeint ist.*”

<sup>70</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 96-98. Becker cites the use of technical legal terminology (διαβάλλεσθαι + ἐπὶ) and the presence of features characteristic of court proceedings in the Johannine PA: the appearance of Jesus as a judge in a legal hearing, the entrance of witnesses as accusers, the members of the court seated in a semi-circle with the accused in the middle, Jesus’ initial call for the penalty of stoning, and his final enunciation of the verdict as the presiding judge. Becker finds further confirmation of this judicial parallel in what he considers to be the earliest known exegete of the PA, the late second-, early third-century *Didascalia apostolorum* (see discussion below) that contains an account of the PA in which the elders specifically transfer their power of judgment over the sinful woman to Jesus: ἐτέραν δὲ τινα ἡμαρτηκυῖαν ἔστησαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ θέμενοι τὴν κρίσιν ἐξῆλθον, *ibid.*, 126. Cf. 98, “*Ohne Zweifel wird bei diesem ältesten uns bekannten Exegeten unserer Geschichte, wie auch im Eusebzitat, diese juristische Seite auffällig betont, und man geht wohl nicht zu weit, wenn man in dieser Übereinstimmung einen gemeinsamen Zug der ältesten Auslegen erkennen zu können glaubt: Im Mittelpunkt steht der Christus iudex.*”

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-70.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 98. “*Aber die Erzählung aus Lc 7 36 ff. scheidet schon deshalb von vornherein aus, weil Euseb sie nachweislich kennt. Sie bildet einen eigenen Abschnitt innerhalb seiner Kanones und wird in seiner Schrift ‘Über die Theophanie’ (180, 24), wenn auch nur sehr am Rande, erwähnt. Es wäre deshalb für Euseb ein Leichtes gewesen, in der Erzählung des Papias die Szene von Lc 7 36 ff. wiederzuerkennen—einer besonderen Erwähnung in seinem Geschichtswerk hätte es dann nicht bedurft.*”

<sup>73</sup> *The Gospel According to John*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1980, 2. 162.

<sup>74</sup> *Gospel*, 2:480, n. 105. “The unjohannine style of the whole pericope is so obvious that we may forego detailed demonstration; Becker gives a thorough treatment, *op. cit.* pp. 44-74, which also brings out the close relationship to the Lucan style.”

<sup>75</sup> *Gospel*, 2:163; 480, n. 106. Cf. Ehrman, “Jesus,” 28-29.

Ehrman and Lührmann<sup>76</sup> also specifically reject Becker's association of the Papias/Eusebius reference with the PA in John. Ehrman's analysis of the witness of Eusebius begins with the assertion that Eusebius' labeling of the story in Papias as ἄλλην ἱστορίαν<sup>77</sup> ("another story") indicates that "Papias did not simply allude to an already familiar story but narrated the account in full."<sup>78</sup> Although he agrees with most scholars that "it is not clear from Eusebius's statement whether *Papias* had found the story in the Gospel according to the Hebrews or whether Eusebius himself had,"<sup>79</sup> Ehrman determines that "while the syntax of the sentence allows for either possibility, the context suggests that it was Eusebius who made the identification."<sup>80</sup> In support of this position Ehrman argues that Papias' stated preference for oral, as opposed to written, tradition<sup>81</sup> "suggests that his story of Jesus and the adulteress derived from the reports of the 'elders' rather than from a written Gospel" and that "Eusebius otherwise relates only those traditions that Papias had drawn from such oral sources."<sup>82</sup> Ehrman concludes that "Papias probably learned the story of Jesus and the adulteress through early Christian tradents, and Eusebius recognized it as the story found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews."<sup>83</sup> Lührmann is critical of Ehrman in many respects,<sup>84</sup> but is in essential agreement with him that the story of the sinful woman referred by Eusebius as being from the *Gos. Heb.* is the same as that known to Didymus.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4) The Apocrypha

After appropriately demonstrating the dismal lack of support for the PA in the first three categories of witnesses, i.e., the Greek MS(S), versions, and patristic references, Petersen rightly points out that the oldest evidence for the PA lies in the fourth category, the non-canonical documents of early Christianity.<sup>86</sup> But as the quest for the origins of this enigmatic story reaches back in time from the patristic to the apocryphal categories of early Christian literature, the trail divides into two paths, one leading to Egypt and the *Gos. Heb.* via the Papias/Eusebius tradition, and the other leading to Syria, the *Didascalia apostolorum*, and the *Prot. Jas.*

#### The Gospel According to the Hebrews

<sup>76</sup> "Geschichte," 305, "Euseb konnte aber die Perikope von der Ehebrecherin Joh. 8:3-11 wohl gar nicht als Teil des Johannesevangeliums kennen, und er konnte sie deshalb auch nicht vergleichen mit dem, was er bei Papias las."

<sup>77</sup> *Hist. eccl.* 3, 39, 17.

<sup>78</sup> "Jesus," 29.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 119, n. 157, for the position that "this information was not given by Papias himself."

<sup>80</sup> "Jesus," 29.

<sup>81</sup> *Hist. eccl.* 3, 3, 4, οὐ γὰρ τὰ ἐκ τῶν βιβλίων τοσοῦτόν με ὠφελεῖν ὑπελάμβανον ὅσον τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης.

<sup>82</sup> "Jesus," 29.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>84</sup> See above, p. 7; cf. "Geschichte," 291, n. 11, 298, 301, 308.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 307, "Mir scheint jedoch die Hypothese begründet genug, daß die Geschichte von der Sünderin bei Didymos jene Geschichte aus dem Hebräerevangelium ist, auf die Euseb sich bezieht."

<sup>86</sup> *Sayings*, 202-203.

The important role played by the apocryphal *Gos. Heb.* in the pursuit of the origins of the PA is clear from its identification by Eusebius as the source of Papias' story about a sinful woman. But Becker, attempting to associate the PA more closely with the gospel of John, argues against Eusebius' direct knowledge of the *Gos. Heb.* in connection with the PA.<sup>87</sup> For Becker, the reports about the *Gos. Heb.* in the *Hist. eccl.* are but "hearsay" because he considers Eusebius to be dependent upon other sources for information about the *Gos. Heb.* According to Becker even the title itself is hardly more than a collective name for traditional Jewish-Christian material that Eusebius took over from Clement of Alexandria and Origen.<sup>88</sup> In Becker's analysis, Papias is the earliest witness to the PA; Eusebius read about the pericope in Papias' *Exegesis of the Dominical Sayings* and thought that the *Gos. Heb.* was Papias' source for this passage.<sup>89</sup> Ehrman, however, successfully challenges Becker's contention that Eusebius knew the *Gos. Heb.* only from non-canonical Jewish-Christian traditions. Ehrman cites several instances in the *Hist. eccl.* where Eusebius refers to the *Gos. Heb.* as a literary work:<sup>90</sup> 1) in *Hist. eccl.* 3, 25, 5, Eusebius states that the *Gos. Heb.* is not canonical but that Jewish Christians take a particular delight in it,<sup>91</sup> 2) in *Hist. eccl.* 3, 27, 4, Eusebius says that the *Gos. Heb.* is the only gospel used by the Ebionites,<sup>92</sup> and 3) in *Hist. eccl.* 4, 22, 8, Eusebius reports that Hegesippus used the *Gos. Heb.* along with other, unwritten, Jewish traditions.<sup>93</sup> The evidence of these passages supports Ehrman's contention (see above) that Eusebius recognized Papias' story of the sinful woman from the document he knew as the *Gos. Heb.*

Cumulatively the attestations to the existence of the *Gos. Heb.* by the early Egyptian ecclesiastical writers Clement of Alexandria,<sup>94</sup> Origen,<sup>95</sup> and Didymus<sup>96</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 100-101; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 11.

<sup>88</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 101, "Euseb den Titel τὸ καθ' Ἑβραίου εὐαγγέλιον bei Clemens Alexandrinus und Origenes schon festgefügt vorgefunden und so übernommen hat. Er kann deshalb für ihn kaum mehr als ein blosser Sammelname für judenchristliche Traditionsstoffe sein."

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 103, "Papias (±125) ist der älteste Zeuge für die Perikope von der Ehebrecherin. In seinen λογίων κηφριακῶν ἐξηγήσεις hat Euseb sie gelesen. Dabei war er der Ansicht, des Papias Quelle für diese Perikope sei das Hebräer-Evangelium gewesen."

<sup>90</sup> Ehrman, "Jesus," 40, n. 28.

<sup>91</sup> ἤδη δ' ἐν τούτοις [τοῖς νόμοις] τινὲς καὶ τὸ καθ' Ἑβραίου εὐαγγέλιον κατέλεξαν, ὧ μάλιστα Ἑβραίων οἱ τὸν Χριστὸν παραδεξάμενοι χαίρουσιν.

<sup>92</sup> οὗτοι δὲ τοῦ μὲν ἀποστόλου πάμπαν τὰς ἐπιστολάς ἀρνητέας ἠγούντο εἶναι δεῖν, ἀποστάτην ἀποκαλοῦντες αὐτὸν τοῦ νόμου, εὐαγγελίῳ δὲ μόνῳ τῷ καθ' Ἑβραίου λεγομένῳ χρώμενοι, τῶν λοιπῶν σμικρὸν ἐποιούντο λόγον·

<sup>93</sup> ἐκ τε τοῦ καθ' Ἑβραίου εὐαγγελίου καὶ τοῦ Συριακοῦ καὶ ἰδίως ἐκ τῆς Ἑβραϊδος διαλέκτου τινὰ τίθησιν, ἐμφαίνων ἐξ Ἑβραίων ἑαυτὸν πεπιστευκέναι, καὶ ἄλλα δὲ ὡς ἐξ Ἰουδαϊκῆς ἀγράφου παραδόσεως μνημονεύει.

<sup>94</sup> *Strom.*, 2, 9, 45, ἢ κὰν τῷ καθ' Ἑβραίου εὐαγγελίῳ "ὁ θαυμάσας βασιλεύσει" γέγραπται "καὶ ὁ βασιλεύσας ἀναπαήσεται; 5, 14, 96, Οὐ παύσεται ὁ ζητῶν, ἕως ἂν εὕρη· εὐρῶν δὲ θαμβηθήσεται, θαμβηθεὶς δὲ βασιλεύσει, βασιλεύσας δὲ ἐπαναπαήσεται.

<sup>95</sup> *Comm. on Jn.* 2, 12, 'Εαν δὲ προσιῆται τις τὸ καθ' Ἑβραίου εὐαγγέλιον, ἔνθα αὐτὸς ὁ σωτὴρ φησιν· "Ἄρτι ἔλαβέ με ἡ μήτηρ μου, τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, ἐν μιᾷ τῶν τριχῶν μου καὶ ἀπῆνεγκέ με εἰς τὸ ὄρος τὸ μέγα Θαβώρ", ἐπαπορήσει, πῶς "μήτηρ" Χριστοῦ τὸ διὰ τοῦ λόγου γεγεννημένον "πνεῦμα ἅγιον" εἶναι δύναται; *Hom. on Jer.* 15, 4, "Οἶμοι ἐγώ, μήτηρ, ὡς τίνα με ἔτεκες;" τίνα λέγει μητέρα; οὐκ ἐν γυναιξὶ δύναται καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν λέγειν καὶ τὴν Μαρίαν; εἰ δὲ τις παραδέχεται τὸ "ἄρτι ἔλαβέ με ἡ μήτηρ μου τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ ἀπῆνεγκέ με εἰς τὸ ὄρος τὸ μέγα τὸ

suggest that this apocryphal gospel was known generally and exclusively in Egypt as early as the second century.<sup>97</sup> The seven fragments of the *Gos. Heb.* that have survived<sup>98</sup> contain a life of Jesus that seems to have been a combination of pre-canonical Christian material and Hellenistic Jewish ideas from traditions in the LXX.<sup>99</sup> Of particular interest is the prominent role played in this document by James the Just, who is depicted, not only as the leader of early Jewish Christianity in Jerusalem,<sup>100</sup> but also as being present at the last supper and as the recipient of an individual, personal appearance by the resurrected Jesus who even breaks communion bread with his brother.<sup>101</sup> Ambiguous statements by the ancient witnesses to the *Gos. Heb.* have made it difficult to distinguish this document from the other early Jewish-Christian gospels,<sup>102</sup> and have caused intriguing questions to be raised about a possible relationship between the *Gos. Heb.* (and by association the PA) and the *Gos. Thom.*<sup>103</sup> Becker's case in favor of this possibility is categorically

Θαβῶρ" καὶ τὰ ἑξῆς, δύναται αὐτοῦ ἰδεῖν τὴν μητέρα.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Gronewald (with A. Gesché), ed. and trans., *Didymus der Blinde, Psalmenkommentar: Kommentar zu Psalm 29-34* (Band 8, Teil III in Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen; eds. Ludwig Koenen and Reinhold Merkelbach; Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1969), 198, καὶ ὁ Θωμᾶς λέγεται καὶ Δίδυμος. καὶ πολλάκι γέ εἰσιν τοιαῦται διωνυμῖαι· τὸν Μαθηταῖον δοκεῖ ἐν τῷ κατὰ Λουκᾶν Λεὺν ὀνομάζειν. οὐκ ἔστιν δὲ αὐτὸς ἀλλὰ ὁ κατασταθεὶς ἀντὶ τοῦ Ἰούδα. ὁ Μαθητῆς καὶ ὁ Λεὺς εἰς διώνυμοί εἰσιν. ἐν τῷ καθ' Ἑβραίους εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦτο φαίνεται. Cf. Ehrman, "Jesus," 30.

<sup>97</sup> Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, "The Gospel of the Hebrews," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (rev. ed.; ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Eng. trans. ed. Robert McLachlan Wilson; Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 1:172-78; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 31-33; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1950; repr. 1975), 112; J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>98</sup> Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 36-40; texts and commentary on 47-55, 79-86, 98-102; Vielhauer, "Hebrews," 177-78.

<sup>99</sup> Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 37; cf. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (eds. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971; repr., Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1996); trans. of second German edition of *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (ed. Georg Strecker; BHT 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964) 51-53. The *Gos. Heb.* is independent of the canonical gospels, but includes New Testament themes such as the baptism and resurrection of Jesus, Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 39; Vielhauer, "Hebrews," 172-76. The *Gos. Heb.* is described as a Jewish-Christian wisdom gospel made up of mythological syncretistic-gnostic elements.

<sup>100</sup> In this respect, the *Gos. Heb.* is in accord with Gal. 2; Acts 15; 21:18f., and Hegesippus via Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2, 23, 4-18.

<sup>101</sup> Fragment 7, Vielhauer, "Hebrews," 178; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 79-86.

<sup>102</sup> For the confusion between the three generally recognized Jewish-Christian gospels, the *Gos. Heb.*, the *Gos. Eb.*, and the *Gos. Naz.*, see Bauer, *Orthodoxy*, 51; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 1-12; Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, "Jewish-Christian Gospels," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (rev. ed.; ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Eng. trans. ed. Robert McLachlan Wilson; Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 1:134-53; William L. Petersen, "A New Testimonium to a Judaic-Christian Gospel Fragment from a Hymn of Romanos the Melodist" VC 50 (1996): 105.

<sup>103</sup> Particularly tantalizing is Eusebius' statement in *Hist. eccl.* 3, 39, 14 (cf. 4, 7), that Papias' Λογίων Κυριακῶν Ἐξηγήσεως (*Exegesis of the Dominical Logia*) contained first-hand "reports on the words of the Lord" (τῶν τοῦ Κυρίου λόγων διηγήσεις) from Aristion and traditions from John the elder. This text is immediately followed, first, in *Hist. eccl.* 3, 39, 15-16, by the famous quotations of Papias on the origin and character of the Gospel of Mark and on the Λόγια of Jesus that were composed by Matthew in Hebrew and interpreted by ἕκαστος ("each one") as he was able, Aland, *Synopsis*, 531, and second, in *Hist. eccl.* 3, 39, 17, by Eusebius' reference to Papias' story of an

rejected by Ehrman.<sup>104</sup> Lührmann, however, assuming a mediating position on this issue, identifies the *Gos. Thom.* in question, not as the famous Coptic text from Nag Hammadi, but as a Manichean document of the same name.<sup>105</sup> Lührmann's position effectively neutralizes the Papias/Eusebius reference as a witness to the PA, thus leaving to the *Didascalia Apostolorum* the distinction of being the earliest witness to the story of the adulteress.

### The *Didascalia Apostolorum*

Before the publication of Petersen's article scholars generally agreed that, given the ambiguity of the Papias/Eusebius reference and its connection to the *Gos. Heb.*, the oldest independent witness to the Johannine form of the PA was the early Greek church order known as the *Didascalia apostolorum*.<sup>106</sup> Becker regards the *Didascalia* as the one document above all others that allows the origins of the PA to be fixed in time and space with some certainty. Accepting the general opinion of the *Didascalia* as an early third-century Syrian document, Becker views the PA as the product of an environment in which various Jewish and Jewish-Christian groups existed in close contact—but also in sharp disagreement—with each other.<sup>107</sup> Both Ehrman<sup>108</sup> and especially Lührmann<sup>109</sup> consider the *Didascalia apostolorum* to be

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adulteress with its specific attribution to the *Gos. Heb.* The close proximity of this series of passages encourages speculation that Aristion—who was known personally by Papias, and who, together with John the elder, is described by Papias as τοῦ Κυρίου μαθητᾶι (“disciples of the Lord”)—may have been one of these interpreters of the Λόγια, since apparently he was involved in the editing and transmission of early gospel materials. Cf. Conybeare's speculation on Aristion's literary activities with respect to the PA, “Verses,” 409-14.

<sup>104</sup> Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 145-50, argues for this connection from a marginal note in the eleventh-century Greek minuscule MS 1006 which states concerning John 7:53-8:11: τὸ κεφάλαιον τοῦτο τοῦ κατὰ Θωμᾶν εὐαγγελίου ἐστίν (“this chapter is of the gospel according to Thomas”); cf. Ehrman, “Jesus,” 40, n. 25: “Becker's claim . . . that at one time or another the Nag Hammadi GTh probably did contain the story must be considered nothing short of remarkable.” See also Vielhauer and Strecker, *Apocrypha*, 1, 173, on the relationship between the *Gos. Heb.* and the *Gos. Thom.*

<sup>105</sup> “Geschichte,” 310, “Mit der Perikope von der Ehebrecherin Joh. 8:3-11 verbindet sich gelegentlich der Hinweis, sie stamme aus einem Thomas evangelium. Damit kann nicht das in koptischer Sprache ganz, griechisch teilweise erhaltene Thomasevangelium aus Nag Hammadi gemeint sein, in dem sich nichts auch nur entfernt Verwandtes findet. Es hat aber wohl bei den Manichäern ein anderes Thomasevangelium gegeben”; cf. his appendix, *ibid.*, 312-16.

<sup>106</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 202-203, n. 45. Cf. Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 124-26, for more extensive bibliography and parallel texts of the extant versions of this document.

<sup>107</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 124-26, “Man neigt heute allgemein dazu, sie in der ersten Hälfte des 3. Jh. Entstanden zu denken. . . Als Entstehungsort nimmt man mit guten Gründen Cöelesyrien oder vorsichtiger den Bereich zwischen Antiochien und Edessa an, die Heimat verschiedener judenchristlicher und jüdischer Gruppen, mit denen die Gemeinde der Didaskalia im engen Kontakt, aber auch in scharfer Auseinandersetzung lebte. Hier ist also zu Beginn des 3. Jh. die Ehebrecherinperikope bekannt gewesen.”

<sup>108</sup> “Jesus,” 32, “the only other exposition of the PA in a source that predates its incorporation into an extant MS of John: the *Didascalia apostolorum*.”

<sup>109</sup> “Geschichte,” 310-11, “Der früheste Beleg für die Perikope von der Ehebrecherin Joh. 8:3-11 wäre also die Didaskalia aus dem 3. Jhdt., nicht Papias.” Burge, “Problem,” 143, also cites the *Didascalia* and the Papias/Eusebius reference as the only two sources that support the antiquity of the PA; he concludes that “the only certain eastern witness of antiquity comes from the Syrian *Didascalia*.”

the earliest reliable witness to the PA, but assess differently its significance within the history of the adulteress tradition. Ehrman maintains that originally the PA existed in two different forms stemming from two separate traditions; a third form came into being later as a conflation of the first two.<sup>110</sup> He views as inauthentic the first form, which originated in the Egyptian *Gos. Heb.* and was used by Didymus.<sup>111</sup> But Ehrman has a high opinion of the antiquity and authenticity of the second form of the PA, which he associates with Papias and the Syrian *Didascalia apostolorum*.<sup>112</sup> Noting the “radical divergences” of the version of the PA in Didymus from that in the *Didascalia*, Ehrman resurrects the hypothesis of Theodor Zahn who “used some of these differences to argue that the *Didascalia* preserves an early pre-literary form of the PA.”<sup>113</sup>

The difference of opinion between Ehrman and Lührmann on the history of the PA is attributable, at least partly, to their divergent assessments of the value of the witness of the *Didascalia*. Ehrman’s interpretation of the canonical PA as the conflation of two earlier versions of the story of the adulteress is founded upon his more positive appraisal of the *Didascalia*.<sup>114</sup> Lührmann, however, rejects Ehrman’s identification of the story found in the *Didascalia* as a distinct version of the PA.<sup>115</sup> Lührmann agrees with Ehrman in accepting the connection between the versions of the PA found in Didymus and the *Gos. Heb.* as related by Eusebius.<sup>116</sup> But he disagrees with Ehrman’s positive estimation of the authenticity and antiquity of the underlying tradition of this adulteress story. Whereas to Ehrman this version of the story “appears to be very ancient and has as good a claim to authenticity as any of its Synoptic parallels,” Lührmann views the story found in Didymus and the *Gos. Heb.*, not as a variant, but as an earlier and more original version of the PA.<sup>117</sup> Lührmann believes that this story underwent a revision in the second half of the

<sup>110</sup> “Jesus,” 34-38.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, “Despite its resemblances to certain traditions found in the Synoptic Gospels, this account does not bear the marks of historical authenticity. The scene appears contrived and Jesus’ words have an unrealistically immediate and striking effect.”

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, Ehrman asserts that this story, unlike the first, “bears a close resemblance to the controversy dialogues of the Synoptic traditions” and “has a decided air of authenticity.”

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 33 and 41, n. 43. Ehrman is indebted to Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Johannes (Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 4)*; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1908) 712-18, for his own theory of two earlier versions of the PA, although he does not accept all the details of Zahn’s argument; cf. *ibid.*, 716, “Es würden hiernach zwei von einander unabhängige Kanäle der Tradition zu unterscheiden sein. Der eine führte den Stoff aus der mündlichen Tradition der jüdischen Christenheit Palästinas in das HE der Nazaräer und von da zum Vf der *Didasc.*; der andere aus den mündlichen Erzählungen der “Jünger des Herrn” in der Provinz Asien in das Werk des Papias und wahrscheinlich aus diesem an die Stelle zwischen Jo 7, 52 und 8, 12 und dadurch schließlich zur allgemeinen Kenntnis der Christenheit.” See “Jesus,” 41-42, n. 42, for Ehrman’s criticism of Becker’s rejoinder to Zahn (*Ehebrecherin*, 128-30); and 34, n. 46, for Ehrman’s arguments against suggestions that the PA found in the *Didascalia* is merely a paraphrase of the canonical story.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38, “The scope and content of the traditional account suggest that when the two earlier stories were conflated, one of them - that represented by the *Didascalia* - provided the controls for the other.”

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 301, “Daher erlaubt der Text nicht den Rückschluss, daß es eine Fassung gegeben habe, die nur den Dialog mit der Frau enthielt.”

<sup>116</sup> See above, n. 85.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 311, “die Geschichte aus dem Hebräerevangelium, die Didymos zitiert, ist nicht eine Variante, sondern eine Vorform davon.”

second century<sup>118</sup> and later came to be included in the gospel of John.<sup>119</sup> Lührmann objects that Ehrman's association of the PA with Didymus and the *Gos. Heb.* via the Papias/Eusebius reference would effectively relegate the Didymus story to that of a secondary version.<sup>120</sup> Lührmann asserts that Didymus' story itself does not represent a direct "Vorlage" of the Johannine PA but shows that the canonical PA had a previous history and developed through more intermediate stages.<sup>121</sup>

### The *Pericope Adulterae* and the *Protevangelium of James*

Petersen criticizes Ehrman and Lührmann, and indeed all previous scholarly attempts to reconstruct the history of the PA, for proceeding "on the assumption that the oldest evidence for the story (excluding the ambiguous Papias/Eusebius report) is the third-century *Didascalia apostolorum*; in doing so, they have ignored or dismissed the most ancient evidence for the *pericope adulterae*."<sup>122</sup> Petersen's "most ancient evidence" for the PA is the *Prot. Jas.* in which occurs a nearly exact parallel to a phrase in John 8:11, "neither do I [condemn] judge you." *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 reads, "neither do I [condemn] judge you [two]."

<i>Prot. Jas.</i> 16:3	οὐδὲ ἐγὼ [κατα]κρίνω ὑμᾶς
John 8:11	οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε [κατα]κρίνω

The relevant phrase in *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 differs from its Johannine counterpart only in substituting the second person plural form of the personal pronoun ὑμᾶς ("you two") for the second person singular form σε ("you") in the Johannine verse, and in displacing the personal pronoun from its position before the verb [κατα]κρίνω in John 8:11 to its location after the same verb at the end of *Prot. Jas.* 16:3. Within the context of John 8:11 these words are being spoken to the adulteress, whereas in *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 they are directed at Mary and Joseph who were likewise under suspicion of adultery. Petersen regards this parallel phrase in the *Prot. Jas.* as evidence of the antiquity of the Johannine version of the PA: "We are driven to conclude that some sort of dependence exists between the *Protevangelium* and the *pericope adulterae*."<sup>123</sup>

Petersen conducts a critical survey of the history of scholarly disregard for the *Prot. Jas.* in which he takes to task a series of researchers who either ignored

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, "Joh. 8:3-11 ist daher wohl erst in der zweiten Hälfte des 2. Jhdt.s. als Neufassung der älteren Geschichte entstanden."

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 312, "Didymus . . . eine Geschichte wiedergibt, die weder eine in Handschriften des Johannesevangeliums überlieferte Fassung von Joh. 8:3-11 noch eine bloße anspileung darauf ist, sondern eine ursprünglichere Form der Perikope von der Ehebrecherin, ein neuer Text apokrypher Jesusüberlieferung, der älter ist als die Fassung, die später in das Johannesevangelium aufgenommen worden ist."

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 301, "Die Geschichte bei Didymos gar keine Rolle mehr spielt, sondern lediglich als eine sekundäre Fassung behandelt wird."

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 302, "Der neue Fund [Didymus] zeigt hingegen, daß die Perikope von der Ehebrecherin Joh. 8:3-11 eine Vorgeschichte gehabt hat, auch wenn wir mit dieser Fassung nicht eine direkte "Vorlage" vor uns haben. Würde man überlieferungsgeschichtlich fragen, müssten mehrere Zwischenstufen angenommen werden."

<sup>122</sup> *Sayings*, 203.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

completely or misinterpreted the evidence of this apocryphon in their search for the origins of the PA.<sup>124</sup> After attesting that none of the over forty major commentaries in English, French, German, and Dutch that he consulted even mention the parallel between *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 and John 8:11, Petersen credits F. C. Conybeare as the first scholar to comment on this connection.<sup>125</sup> But, after Conybeare, Petersen finds little to praise in the efforts of other scholars who commented on this parallel. A. Meyer, whose “negative appraisal sets the tone for subsequent scholarship,” dismisses the possibility of a *Prot. Jas./John* connection because he “presumes the point under investigation (*viz.*, that John did not originally contain the *pericope adulterae*).”<sup>126</sup> Meyer’s flawed reasoning is reproduced by H. Bakels, who exhibits an “obvious reluctance” to accept any dependence of the *Prot. Jas.* on John because he has concluded *a priori* that the PA was not originally part of John. Bakels denies the *Prot. Jas./John* link, according to Petersen, because he erroneously dates John around 125 and the *Prot. Jas.* before the year 100.<sup>127</sup> These earlier scholars who wrote before the advent of form criticism are partially excused by Petersen, but not so W. Michaelis. Michaelis did live in the age of form criticism but still rejected any connection between John 8:11 and the *Prot. Jas.* with a single terse, unsupported remark, “no connection” (“*kaum Zusammenhang*”).<sup>128</sup> Petersen asks, “‘Kaum’? One wonders what is required for ‘Zusammenhang,’ if not the virtually verbatim literary parallel and form-critical congruity between the two sources!”<sup>129</sup>

But Petersen reserves his most severe criticism for Becker who gives short shrift to the possibility of a relationship between the Johannine PA and the *Prot. Jas.* in his monograph which is dedicated entirely to the story of the adulteress.<sup>130</sup> Becker does make use of form criticism to analyze the John/*Prot. Jas.* parallel and succeeds in identifying three “points of congruity” between the two texts.<sup>131</sup> However, although acknowledging a certain similarity (“*eine gewisse Ähnlichkeit*”)

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-210.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 208. In his investigation of certain passages—including the PA—that were excluded from the earliest Armenian copies of the New Testament, “On the Last Twelve Verses of Mark’s Gospel,” *The Expositor*, fifth series (1895): 405-406, Conybeare observes that only one ancient Armenian MS(S), the Edschmiadzin codex of 989, contains the PA in its traditional location following John 7:52. Conybeare also notes, *ibid.*, 416, that the Edschmiadzin codex does not contain the concluding words of Jesus—“neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more”—that are found in the ending of the “ordinary text” of John 8:11. Within the context of this discussion Conybeare observes that Jesus’ statement also occurs in the *Prot. Jas.* where “almost the same words are addressed by the priest to Joseph and Mary, when he is acquitted of the charge of having neglected to guard the virgin committed to his keeping, and she the charge of having lost her purity.” Petersen does not blame Conybeare for failing to pursue this connection because his purpose was to examine the ending of the gospel of Mark and not the PA.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-209, Petersen summarizes Meyer’s faulty logic: “The literary parallel to John 8:11 in the *Protevangeliem* need not be taken as evidence of the presence of the *pericope adulterae* in John, because “*ursprünglich*” [originally] the *pericope adulterae* was not part of John,” *Protevangeliem des Jacobus in Handbuch zu den neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*, (ed. E. Hennecke; Tübingen: Mohr, 1904), 124.

<sup>127</sup> *Sayings*, 209, with bibliography for Bakels in n. 64.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, with bibliography for Michaelis in n. 65.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 117-119.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 118; Petersen, *Sayings*, 209, n. 66.

in the scenario of the two stories, Becker rejects the three “points of congruity” as insufficient proof of the use of the PA by the author of the *Prot. Jas.*<sup>132</sup> Petersen accuses Becker of rendering the John/*Prot. Jas.* link superfluous by attempting “to dilute his own form-critical findings” with the “purely rhetorical argument” that the *Prot. Jas.* has the theme of the innocent, defamed woman in common with the Susanna story in the apocryphal additions to the Old Testament book of Daniel and with other unspecified “popular narratives.”<sup>133</sup> Petersen ends his survey of scholars who ignored or misinterpreted the John/*Prot. Jas.* parallel with Lührmann, who is worthy of reproach because he “was aware of the *Protevangelium*’s evidence, but dismissed it,”<sup>134</sup> and, perhaps more importantly, because he “dismissed it, referring the reader to Becker’s argumentation.”<sup>135</sup>

By discounting “the fallacious logic of Meyer,” “the erroneous dating of the *Protevangelium* by Bakels,” and “Becker’s purely rhetorical argument,” Petersen “is left with only one substantive argument against dependence [of the *Prot. Jas.* on John], and that is Becker’s assertion that use of John in the *Protevangelium* is ‘nicht nachweisbar’ [not demonstrable].”<sup>136</sup> Becker’s “one substantive argument” against the *Prot. Jas./John* connection becomes the only obstacle to Petersen’s developing position in favor of this connection and with a further inclination towards a closer association of the PA with John itself. In support of this position Petersen calls to witness a second possible parallel between the *Prot. Jas.* and John.<sup>137</sup> The texts in question are John 20:25, in which the apostle Thomas<sup>138</sup> will not believe that the other apostles saw the risen Jesus unless he puts his finger in the holes made by the nails in Jesus’ hands, and *Prot. Jas.* 19:3, in which Salome also will not believe that Jesus’ mother remained a virgin after giving birth unless she physically examines her as well. In both cases the doubters, Thomas and Salome, respectively, utter the identical Greek phrase, ἐὰν μὴ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου (“unless I put my finger”), to declare that they must perform a digital examination of their subject before they will believe. Petersen rightly observes that the “literary parallelism is . . . beyond dispute,” but he still must determine “whether this passage is genuinely part of the *Protevangelium* and, if so, if there are any textual variants which might affect its use as a parallel for John 20:25.”<sup>139</sup>

<sup>132</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 118, “Um einen Beweis für die Benutzung der Ehebrecherinperikope im Protevgl. Jakobi zu führen, reichen diese Parallelen freilich nicht aus.”

<sup>133</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 210; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 118, “Die Szene aus dem Protevgl. Jakobi motivgeschichtlich in einen ganz anderen Zusammenhang gehört. Das Motiv der unschuldig verleumdete Frau hat das Protevgl. Jakobi mit der Susanna-Geschichte, dem apokryphen Zusatz zu Daniel, und anderen volkstümlichen Erzählungen gemeinsam.”

<sup>134</sup> *Sayings*, 207, n. 60.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 210; cf. “Geschichte,” 311, n. 103, “Die in A. 12 gennante Parallele Protevangelium Jacobi 16, 3 kann nicht als Zitat betrachtet werden; vgl. Ulrich Becker.”

<sup>136</sup> *Sayings*, 210; cf. Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 119, “Eine Benutzung des vierten Evangelisten im Protevgl. Jacobi nicht nachweisbar ist.”

<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Sayings*, 211, n. 70, for a list of previous publications that make note of this parallel.

<sup>138</sup> See discussion below for some interesting references to a possible connection between the PA and the Thomas tradition.

<sup>139</sup> *Sayings*, 212.

While Petersen is certainly justified in criticizing scholars for neglecting the *Prot. Jas.* in their reconstructions of the history of the PA,<sup>140</sup> his own approach to the *Prot. Jas.* has a similar effect. Even as he is stating his case in favor of the *Prot. Jas.* as an important early witness to the PA, Petersen minimizes the significance of its witness by conducting his analysis of the relationship between the *Prot. Jas.* and John within the constraints of the “received” scholarly understanding of the place of the *Prot. Jas.* in ancient Christian literature. Petersen confines his examination of this important parallel within the parameters of the “*communis opinio*” that “the *Protevangelium Jacobi* is an apocryphal Christian romance, dating from the second half of the second century.”<sup>141</sup> Petersen validates this date and character of the *Prot. Jas.* by citing exclusively and without question the very source that has been most influential in establishing that consensus of opinion, Émile de Strycker’s *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques*.<sup>142</sup> By accepting de Strycker’s date for the *Prot. Jas.* Petersen in effect “moves back the date for the first reference to the [PA] story from the third century (the date of the *Didascalia apostolorum*) to the second half of the second century—or between fifty and one hundred years earlier.”<sup>143</sup> But by subscribing to de Strycker’s dating, as well as to his position on the *Prot. Jas.* in general, Petersen renders himself unable to conduct a fresh, unbiased assessment of the relevance of the *Prot. Jas.* that could appreciably inform his own attempt to reconstruct the earliest history of the PA.<sup>144</sup>

Had Petersen judged de Strycker by the same stringent standards that he applied to the other scholars who investigated the problem of the PA, his work would be even more valuable. But instead, his acceptance of, and adherence to, de Strycker’s interpretations leads Petersen into the same “*a priori* reasoning” that he finds so reprehensible in Meyer.<sup>145</sup> Commenting on the similar literary technique by which the two Johannine parallels were added to the *Prot. Jas.*, Petersen observes: “In each case, a few words of direct speech have been lifted from passages which are now part of John—and only known through John—and are inserted into the mouths of different people—but in situations which are form-critically identical—in the *Protevangelium*.”<sup>146</sup> Petersen explains his statement:

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-21.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 204. See Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 117, “um die Mitte des 2. Jh., auf jeden Fall vor 200 entstanden,” and n. 1, “Das ist *communis opinio* der neueren Forschung,” with bibliography.

<sup>142</sup> (*Subsidia Hagiographa* 33; Brussels, 1961). Petersen, *Sayings*, 204, n(n). 48, 49.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-208. Petersen thus advances his argument for the antiquity and originality of the story; cf. 214, “By now it should be clear that we can trace the existence of certain constitutive elements of the Johannine *pericope adulterae*—including οὐδὲ ἐγώ σε [κατα]κρίνω—to the last half of the second century, if not earlier.”

<sup>144</sup> Ironically, at the beginning of his analysis of the compositional and textual status of verse 16:3 within the *Prot. Jas.* as a whole, Petersen seems to be aware of the insufficiency of de Strycker’s critical edition of the Greek text of the *Prot. Jas.* While investigating a variant reading for the text of *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 among the Greek MS(S) Petersen finds a discrepancy between de Strycker’s 1961 edition, which is generally considered to be the standard critical Greek text of the *Prot. Jas.*, and C. von Tischendorf’s 1876 critical text, *Evangelia apocrypha* (Leipzig 1876, 2ed.; repr. Hildesheim 1966). The reading κατακρίνω (“condemn”) for κρίνω (“judge”) in the eleventh-century MS “E” (Paris, Bib. Nat., 1468) is noted in Tischendorf’s critical apparatus of the *Prot. Jas.* text (p. 31) but is absent from de Strycker’s apparatus. Petersen declares: “I trust in Tischendorf,” *Sayings*, 205, n. 50.

<sup>145</sup> See above, p. 17, n. 126.

<sup>146</sup> *Sayings*, 213-14.

We must also clarify our claim that the passage is ‘only known through John’: what we mean is that, in the late second century, when the Protevangelium was being composed, there is no other known source from which the “digital examination” might be derived. Similarly for the clause “Neither do I judge you”: it is uniquely Johannine among the gospels, canonical or non-canonical.<sup>147</sup>

In other words, according to Petersen’s “*a priori* reasoning,” John must be the source of the two parallel quotations in the *Prot. Jas.* because it is earlier than the *Prot. Jas.* which was written in the late second century. The *Prot. Jas.* could not have been the source of the quotations in John because the *Prot. Jas.* was written in the late second century.

To attempt to define the literary relationship between two ancient documents before the date and compositional history of the individual documents themselves have been firmly established is an exercise in futility and methodologically unsound. Conversely, to consider the possible presence of redactional activity in an ancient document or underlying sources—each with its own author, date, provenance, and purpose—not only is a methodological desideratum, but would significantly expand the parameters of the investigation. Petersen has demonstrated the existence of a literary relationship between the parallel passages in the *Prot. Jas.* and John, but this relationship need not necessarily apply only to these documents in their present form as complete gospels. Since all of the passages in question occur in sections of their respective documents whose authenticity has been challenged,<sup>148</sup> it would be prudent to examine the passages from the perspective of the particular context in which they occur. And although it is beyond our purpose to become entangled in the complexities of the compositional problem of the *Prot. Jas.*, it seems appropriate to broaden our investigation of the relationship between the *Prot. Jas.* and the PA so as to include scholarly opinions from the entire critical tradition on the composition of this apocryphon—both before and after the influential work of de Strycker—until such time as its compositional history is more firmly established.

## The Compositional Problem

When he addresses the compositional issue of the authenticity of verse 16:3 within the *Prot. Jas.*, Petersen again exhibits the influence of de Strycker. Petersen’s assertion that “the section [of the *Prot. Jas.*] with this passage [16:3] is universally regarded as part of the oldest layer of the work,”<sup>149</sup> is validated by a reference to de Strycker. To Petersen, “universally regarded” means: “on the source criticism of the Protevangelium, see de Strycker, *La forme*, pp. 6-13 (with bibliography and summary of earlier studies).”<sup>150</sup> The qualification, “with bibliography and summary of earlier studies,” implies that de Strycker’s word is final and scholarly work on

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 76.

<sup>148</sup> See the discussion below on the compositional problem.

<sup>149</sup> *Sayings*, 205.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 52.

the composition of the *Prot. Jas.* after de Strycker can be ignored.<sup>151</sup> And when Petersen turns his attention to *Prot. Jas.* 19:3 he places this verse also in the “oldest stratum” of the document and accepts its authenticity as well. He justifies this conclusion with the highly subjective—and otherwise unsubstantiated—claim that “the main aim of the work is to establish Mary’s virginity *post partum*—for which this examination provides the definitive proof.”<sup>152</sup> While it is evident that one of the major themes of the *Prot. Jas.* is the undefiled purity of Mary throughout her life,<sup>153</sup> it is by no means certain that the establishment of Mary’s *post partum* virginity was “the main aim of the work.”<sup>154</sup> H. R. Smid speaks definitively to this issue after a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the purpose of the *Prot. Jas.*<sup>155</sup> Smid identifies a wide variety of objectives in this apocryphon which he categorizes as apologetic, dogmatic, and biographical “aspects” of its purpose; he finds that “these three are so entangled that it is impossible to say which of these is the main aspect.”<sup>156</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Petersen’s approach to the *Prot. Jas.* is typical of most scholars who have written on this document after de Strycker. Cf. this writer’s comments on de Strycker’s influence, “Dating the Protevangelium of James: The Justin Martyr Connection,” *SBL Seminar Papers, 1994*, (SBLSP 33; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1994), 415-434. This article was unknown to, or ignored by, Petersen.

<sup>152</sup> *Sayings*, 212.

<sup>153</sup> The *Prot. Jas.* was instrumental in spreading the tradition of the perpetual virginity of Mary in subsequent centuries. Cf. Ernst Benz, “Die Heilige Höhle in der alten Christenheit und in der östlich-orthodoxen Kirche,” *ErJb*, 22 (1954): 365-432; Émile Amann, *Le Protévangile de Jacques et Ses Remaniements Latins* (Les Apocryphes du Nouveau Testament; Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1910), 109-169.

<sup>154</sup> This issue is obscured by the considerable ambiguity displayed by many scholars—including de Strycker—in their use of technical terminology to characterize Mary’s theological “virginity”: *ante partum* (before giving birth), *in partu* (in giving birth), and/or *post partum* (after giving birth). De Strycker himself does not mention the *post partum* virginity of Mary when he specifies her “*ante partum*” and “*in partu*” virginity as the special concerns of the *Prot. Jas.*, “*La défense et illustration de la sainteté exceptionnelle de Marie, vue sous l’angle particulier de la pureté, et plus spécialement encore de la virginité ante partum et in partu*,” “*Le Protévangile de Jacques: Problèmes critiques et exégétiques*,” SE III [=TU 88] (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 354; Amann, *Protévangile*, 31, considers the “*idée capital*” of the *Prot. Jas.* to be the retention by Mary of her virginity in conceiving and giving birth to the Savior, “*Vierge en concevant le Sauveur, Marie n’a point perdu en le mettant au monde le glorieux privilège de la virginité, telle est l’idée capital du Protévangile de Jacques*”; cf. J. C. Plumpe, “Some Little-known Early Witnesses to Mary’s *virginitas in partu*,” *TS* 9 (1948): 570. Other scholars clearly distinguish the *post partum* virginity of Mary: E. Cothenet, “*La thèse centrale du livre, c’est la virginité de Marie ante partum, in partu, post partum*,” *Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplement 8*, ed. Louis Pirot, (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928-), 1381-82, A. Meyer, *Protevangelium des Jacobus in Neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*, (ed. E. Hennecke; Tübingen und Leipzig: Mohr, 1924), 85, “*Die Absicht des ursprünglichen Erzählers geht darauf, die makellose Reinheit der Jungfrau Maria von haus aus und namentlich ihre Jungfräulichkeit auch nach der Geburt festzustellen*,” followed by Benz, *Höhle*, 367.

<sup>155</sup> *Protevangelium Jacobi: A Commentary* (Apocrypha Novi Testamenti 1; trans. G. E. van Baaren-Pape; Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Comp. N. V., 1965), 14-20, under the title: “*The author’s aim: glorification of the Virgin Mary*,” *ibid.*, 18, “The Virgin Birth is a very important theme in P.J., but is not the author’s only contribution to Mariology.”

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 14. According to Smid, *ibid.*, 18-19, the Virgin Birth of Mary is only one of six themes in the dogmatic aspect of the *Prot. Jas.* alone. Smid’s finding that the *post partum* virginity of Mary is only one of numerous themes of the *Prot. Jas.* contradicts Petersen’s argument that bases the authenticity of *Prot. Jas.* 19:3 on the acknowledgment of Mary’s *post partum* virginity as “the main aim” of this apocryphon.

But it is Michel Testuz who places the purpose of the *Prot. Jas.* in its proper perspective by associating it with the compositional problem of this document.<sup>157</sup> Testuz views *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 and 19:3 as belonging to two originally separate sources of the *Prot. Jas.*, each having its own purpose. According to Testuz, the purpose of *Prot. Jas.* 19:3—to prove the *post partum* virginity of Mary<sup>158</sup>—is more developed, and therefore later, than that of 16:3, which is to demonstrate her perfect purity.<sup>159</sup> Testuz wrote before the publication of de Strycker’s work, which was responsible for turning the attention of the scholarly world away from earlier compositional theories that held the *Prot. Jas.* to be a compilation of several pre-existing sources.<sup>160</sup> Before de Strycker, Adolf Harnack’s three-document theory of the composition of the *Prot. Jas.* held sway among scholars.<sup>161</sup> Harnack considered the *Prot. Jas.* to be a combination of three originally separate parts (“*drei zusammengearbeitete Theile*”): 1) *Prot. Jas.* 1-17, the Γέννησις Μαρίας (“Nativity of Mary”), including the conception, birth, and early life of Mary, 2) *Prot. Jas.* 18-20, the *Apocryphum Josephi*, relating to the birth of Jesus and the virginity of Mary “*in partu et post partum*,” and 3) *Prot. Jas.* 22-24, the *Apocryphum Zachariae*.<sup>162</sup> From the standpoint of Harnack’s scheme, the development of Mary’s sexual status from *ante partum* purity in *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 (in the Γέννησις Μαρίας) to *post partum* virginity in 19:3 (in the *Apocryphum Josephi*) highlights a major difficulty in Petersen’s assignment of both passages to a single “oldest layer” or “oldest stratum” of the *Prot. Jas.* Such discrepancies usually betray the presence of redactional activity.

This seemingly trivial terminological distinction between Mary’s *ante partum* and *post partum* virginity actually is quite important, not only for our present study, but for the history of early Christian thought in general. This distinction is precisely the point at which early Christian Mariology begins to advance beyond the concepts contained in the canonical Gospels. Matt 1:18-25, which is thought to be the earliest extant Christian narrative of the birth of Jesus, is concerned primarily with Mary’s sexual status before the nativity itself. This passage verifies her sexual purity at the

<sup>157</sup> *Papyrus Bodmer V: Nativité de Marie* (Cologny-Genève: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1958). Testuz was the editor of the diplomatic *editio princeps* of this complete third-century papyrus of the Greek text of the *Prot. Jas.*

<sup>158</sup> *Nativité*, 16-17, “Dans le passage qui suit (chap. XVII a XX), l’auteur entreprend de démontrer un autre point: la virginité de Marie a subsisté après la naissance de Jésus”; Testuz argues cogently that “Le titre de notre apocryphe: Nativité de Marie, ne convient plus à cette seconde partie, ainsi que nous l’avons déjà relevé, et ce fut un des indices qui conduisit les commentateurs à juger que le récit de ces chapitres constituait à l’origine un fragment séparé.”

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, “Dans la première partie de ce récit. L’auteur veut démontrer la pureté parfaite de Marie.”

<sup>160</sup> See de Strycker’s overview of scholarly discussion on the compositional unity of the *Prot. Jas.* in *La forme*, 6-13, and 392-404, for de Strycker’s own contribution to the discussion.

<sup>161</sup> *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius* (2 vols.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1904): 598-603. Cf. de Strycker, *La forme*, 11, “Cette prise de position de Harnack eut une influence décisive. Depuis lors, c’est à peine si une voix isolée s’est élevée pour défendre l’unité du Protévangile. Un bon nombre d’auteurs se rallia à la thèse des trois documents.” Cf. n. 5 for bibliography.

<sup>162</sup> *Chronologie*, 600, “1) die Geschichte der Empfängnis, Geburt und des Lebens der Maria bis zu dem Moment, wo die kanonischen Texte einsetzen. 2) Geschichte der Geburt Jesu, erzählt von Joseph, also ein Apocryphum Josephi, 3) ein Apocryphum Zachariae.” Harnack was unclear as to the place of ch(s). 21 and 25 in his scheme, but apparently thought that all three parts of the *Prot. Jas.* were combined before the middle of the fourth century, *ibid.*, 602-603, “Die Zusammenarbeitung der Stücke ist vor der Mitte des 4. Jahrh. erfolgt.” Cf. de Strycker, *La forme*, 11.

time of her conception of Jesus by citing the famous passage in Isaiah 7:14: “a virgin will conceive and bear a son.”<sup>163</sup> But this prophetic quotation is both preceded and followed by statements that could be taken to insinuate that Mary and Joseph had sexual relations after the birth of Jesus. In Matt 1:18 Mary became pregnant πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν αὐτούς (“before they [Mary and Joseph] came together”), while Matt 1:25 declares that Joseph received Mary as his wife and οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως οὗ ἔτεκεν υἱόν (“did not know her until she gave birth to a son”).<sup>164</sup> Both texts refer only to the *ante partum* time period but are phrased in such a way that they at least leave open the possibility, if not imply, that Mary only remained a virgin until she gave birth to Jesus. This reading of the Matthean texts seems to be confirmed by Luke 2:7 which states that Mary ἔτεκεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον (“gave birth to her first-born son”).<sup>165</sup> If Jesus was Mary’s “first-born son,” other sons must have followed. This is supported by Mark 6:3 which names Jesus’ four brothers—James, Joses, Judas, and Simon—and mentions, without naming, at least two sisters as well.<sup>166</sup>

Since the canonical tradition seems to know only the *ante partum* virginity of Mary, any chronological extension of her sexual inactivity beyond the time of Jesus’ birth to include the birth process itself (*in partu*) and its aftermath (*post partum*) is a significant development over the canonical representation of her virginity.<sup>167</sup> If we allow, on the one hand, Harnack’s three-document compositional theory, according to which the two *Prot. Jas./John* parallels are found in two originally independent documents—the *Γέννησις Μαρίας* and the *Apocryphum Josephi*—and if, on the other hand, we give credence to the associated observation of Testuz that the *ante partum* Mariology of the *Γέννησις Μαρίας* was amplified by the addition of the *Apocryphum*

<sup>163</sup> Matt 1:23, ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν.

<sup>164</sup> ἕως οὗ is generally taken to mean “until” when following a negative “before.” These interpretations are based on a straightforward reading of the original texts. For an account of the immense literature on this topic, much of which is driven by confessional concerns, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (New York : Doubleday, 1993).

<sup>165</sup> A significant portion of the later MS tradition of Matt 1:25 appears to have been influenced by Luke 2:7. Cf. Metzger, *Commentary*, 8, “The Textus Receptus, following C D\* K W most minuscules *al*, inserts τὸν before υἱόν and adds αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον (*her firstborn son*) from Lk 2.7.” W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison observe most appropriately: “had Matthew held to Mary’s perpetual virginity (as did the second-century author of *Prot. Jas.* 19.3-20.2), he would almost certainly have chosen a less ambiguous expression—just as Luke would have avoided ‘first-born son’ (2.7).” *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 1:219.

<sup>166</sup> οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τέκτων, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς Μαρίας καὶ ἀδελφὸς Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωσήτου καὶ Ἰούδα καὶ Σίμωνος; καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν αἱ ἀδελφαὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς πρὸς ἡμᾶς; It is interesting that in spite of being the earliest known witness to the virgin birth, Matt not only reproduces Mark’s list of Jesus’ four brothers, but refers to “all” Jesus’ sisters, implying that there were more than two; cf. Matt 13:55-56 οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ τέκτονος υἱός; οὐχ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ λέγεται Μαρὶὰμ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ Ἰακώβος καὶ Ἰωσήφ καὶ Σίμων καὶ Ἰούδας; καὶ αἱ ἀδελφαὶ αὐτοῦ οὐχὶ πάσαι πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἰσιν; cf. the detailed study on the relatives of Jesus by Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990).

<sup>167</sup> This, of course, is predicated on the acceptance of the canonical Mariological concept of virginity as being chronologically earlier than that of non-canonical documents such as the *Prot. Jas.*

*Joseph*<sup>168</sup> with its focus on Mary's *virginitas post partum*, the *Prot. Jas.* emerges as a unique primary witness to the apparent progressive "dogmatization" of Mariology in early Christian thought. By this interpretation of the texts, the Γέννησις Μαρίας is the original source document of the *Prot. Jas.* since it shares the earlier *ante partum* Mariology of the canonical nativity stories of Matt and Luke, whereas the addition of the *Apocryphum Josephi* to the Γέννησις Μαρίας coincides with the augmentation of Mary's *virginitas* from *ante* to *post partum* which was taking place in the second century. The Harnack-Testuz reconstruction is more compatible with what seems to be the historical development of early Mariology than Petersen's concept of a single "oldest stratum" that contains both of the *Prot. Jas./John* parallels. The analysis of Petersen, based upon de Strycker's idea of a unitary *Prot. Jas.*, does not account for the discrepancy between the two texts.

As was shown above, Petersen himself seems to presuppose the existence of redactional activity in the *Prot. Jas.* by referring to the compositional level of this document, which contains both of the parallels in question, as the "oldest layer" or "oldest stratum." Petersen does not elaborate upon these terms; nor does he pursue their serious implications for the question at hand. At the very least, "oldest layer" and "oldest stratum" imply the existence of substantial earlier material in the *Prot. Jas.* that predates the final composition of the document which Petersen—following de Strycker—believes to have occurred in the late second century. But if these terms signify a complete original source that was later combined with additional materials to form the *Prot. Jas.* as we know it today, then these additional materials may have included anything from minor editorial embellishments and canonical gospel texts to more extensive documents such as the *Apocryphum Josephi* and the *Apocryphum Zachariae*. It is very difficult to distinguish between the "oldest layer" or "oldest stratum" of a second-century document and a pre-existing source that formed the basis of that document. But Petersen himself, even as he argues for the dependence of the *Prot. Jas.* on John, mentions an alternative interpretation of the evidence. He states that the possible dependence of *Prot. Jas.* 19:3 on John 20:25 "suggests that (unless one wishes to posit a common, pre-Johannine source) the author of the *Protevangelium*—pace Becker—both knew and used the Gospel of John."<sup>169</sup> The concept of a "pre-Johannine source" as a rationalization for the common material shared by the *Prot. Jas.* and John, although too limited in scope, is a step in a direction that could lead to a more satisfactory explanation of the parallels.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Harnack himself, who is credited with this "classical" formulation of the compositional theory of the *Prot. Jas.*, considers the Γέννησις Μαρίας to be later than the *Apocryphum Josephi*, *Chronologie*, 601.

<sup>169</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 213.

<sup>170</sup> The constraints of de Strycker's model of a late second-century unified *Prot. Jas.* prevented Petersen from exploring this important clue. His characterization of this hypothetical source as "pre-Johannine" reflects a frame of reference that is limited to three documents: John, the *Prot. Jas.*, and this source. And it is only his passing rhetorical allusion to the possibility of no dependence between John and the *Prot. Jas.* which gives him the opportunity to postulate this *tertium quid*—the "pre-Johannine source"—to account for the parallels between the two works. Petersen describes this source in Johannine terms because a late second-century unified *Prot. Jas.* is barred *a priori* from consideration as a factor in the formative stages of the canonical gospel literature.

Harnack's three-source compositional theory of the *Prot. Jas.* allows a wider range of potential explanations for the *Prot. Jas./John* parallels than does the unified *Prot. Jas.* concept of Petersen-de Strycker. More sources mean more opportunity for contacts between these sources. It is conceivable that the parallels in question could have resulted from liaisons between the source documents that originally contained the four individual passages in these parallels before they were incorporated into John and the *Prot. Jas.* The feasibility of such interactions is greatly enhanced, first, by the obvious literary correspondence between the passages in question, *Prot. Jas.* 16:3/John 8:11 and *Prot. Jas.* 19:3/John 20:25, and second, by the strong arguments that have been made for the independent origin of the stories in which they occur—the Γέννησις Μαρίας, the *Apocryphum Josephi*, the PA, and the “doubting Thomas” episode (John 20:24-29), whose authenticity within the Gospel also is disputed.<sup>171</sup> The prospect of all four passages in our two parallels being from originally discrete narratives hardly inspires confidence in the possibility of a relationship between the *Prot. Jas.* and John in their present form. With this relationship in doubt, it seems reasonable to consider the pre-Johannine and pre-*Prot. Jas.* level of composition and the possibility that contacts between the passages may have occurred in earlier times and in different environments. However, the task of linking these source documents with each other on the basis of the parallel passages that they share is complicated by significant textual problems that plague some of the individual passages in question.<sup>172</sup> The textual status of the second parallel will be addressed first since it was referred by Petersen only in support of the possible *Prot. Jas./John* connection suggested by the first parallel.

<sup>171</sup> Ernst Haenchen views John 20:24-29 as “a later insertion into the source” that was used by the evangelist to form the Gospel of John, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (ed. R. W. Funk with Ulrich Busse; trans. R. W. Funk; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) 2:60. Haenchen cites John 20:24-29 and the PA as two of his four best examples supporting the composite nature of the Gospel of John; the other two, the opening prologue with its “Hymn to the Logos,” and chapter 21, are widely regarded as later accretions to the text, *ibid.*, 1:76-77. Rudolf Bultmann describes John 20:24-29 (together with Luke 24:36-43) as “late apologetic formulations,” *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 289, but seems ambivalent as to its origin: “We must not regard it as impossible that the source itself already contained this story. Admittedly it can only have been a secondary appendix, even for the source; for in vv. 19-23 the continuation in vv. 24-29 is not presupposed, though certainly the latter fragment does presuppose the former,” *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, J. K. Riches; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971). Robert Fortna, “*The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor*” (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 187-200, also considers “the all-important and crowning Johannine episode of questioning Thomas (20:24-29),” *ibid.*, 214, to be “4E’s [the evangelist’s] addition and possibly creation,” 200; cf. Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 3:328-35. Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 69-126, presents a thorough and insightful discussion of the “doubting Thomas” story among the New Testament resurrection narratives, and describes the “second group appearance for the benefit of Thomas . . . his demands, confession and dominical rebuke” as “innovations of the author” in his “recasting of the character of an historical disciple,” *ibid.*, 99. For the case against the independence of this passage see Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI* (AB 29A; Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1977) 2:1031-33.

<sup>172</sup> But on the other hand, these textual problems pose interesting questions relative to the larger issues affected by our study, such as the history of early Mariology, the date and redactional history of the *Prot. Jas.* and its status among the Christians of the first two centuries, and the relationship of the *Prot. Jas.* to John and to the Johannine PA.

## The Textual Problem

Petersen's analysis of the textual evidence for the *Prot. Jas.* 19:3/John 20:25 parallel is problematic. On the basis of data from de Strycker's critical apparatus, Petersen asserts that the "explicit Johannine parallel," ἐὰν μὴ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου ("unless I put my finger"), is "the text found in the oldest MS of the *Protevangelium* (Bodmer Papyrus 5; fourth cent.), and most other early manuscripts."<sup>173</sup> By "most other early manuscripts" Petersen appears to be referring to "most" of the eleven MS(S)—other than P. Bodmer V—that he lists in his footnote 75.<sup>174</sup> But of the MS witnesses that he lists, only two, D and F<sup>b</sup> (both from the eleventh cent.), agree with P. Bodmer V.<sup>175</sup> The other nine MS(S) cited by Petersen contain readings that differ in varying degrees from what he assumes to have been the original text of *Prot. Jas.* 19:3, the "explicit Johannine parallel."<sup>176</sup> Two of these nine MS(S), G (twelfth cent.) and H (fifteenth-seventeenth cent.), follow Bodmer V but read χεῖρα<sup>177</sup> ("hand") for δάκτυλον ("finger").<sup>178</sup> The remaining seven of these witnesses exhibit readings that differ substantially from ἐὰν μὴ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου ("unless I put my finger"): three MS(S), A (tenth-fourteenth cent.), C (tenth cent.), and E (eleventh cent.), read ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω ("unless I see [I will not believe]");<sup>179</sup> four MS(S), B (twelfth-thirteenth cent.), I (thirteenth to fourteenth cent.), L (sixteenth cent.), and R (c. 1600), read ἐὰν μὴ ἐρεύνησω ("unless I examine [her nature]"). Thus it appears that the textual data provided by Petersen himself contradicts his position in favor of the originality of the P. Bodmer V text; "most other early manuscripts"—in fact nine of the eleven referred by Petersen himself—present readings that do not support the "explicit Johannine parallel" found in P. Bodmer V and MS(S) D and F<sup>b</sup>.

This conclusion is reinforced by the witnesses of over a hundred additional Greek MS(S) of the *Prot. Jas.* that are not included in the critical editions of either Tischendorf or de Strycker.<sup>180</sup> Of these, only seven agree with P. Bodmer V, D, and

<sup>173</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 212. It is interesting that while de Strycker minimizes the importance of the text of this papyrus, *La Forme*, 377-92, Petersen bases his argument for the *Prot. Jas.*/John connection in large part on the authenticity of this reading of P. Bodmer V.

<sup>174</sup> *Sayings*, 212.

<sup>175</sup> The dates provided by Petersen for these MS(S) are ultimately derived from de Strycker. See below, n. 181, for an alternative date for MS F<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>176</sup> Throughout his discussion of the variant readings for *Prot. Jas.* 19:3 Petersen assumes that the text of this verse as contained in P. Bodmer V is the original and that the variant readings present in the remaining MS(S) are alterations of it.

<sup>177</sup> H reads χεῖραν. Petersen's error here may be at least partly due to a misleading notation in de Strycker's critical apparatus, *La Forme*, 158, where MS(S) Z (P. Bodmer V), D, Fb, G, and H are listed as supporting the reading "εαν μη βαλω... αυτης (cum var.)." It is only below this notation that de Strycker specifies that "cum var." includes the G and H reading χεῖρα instead of δάκτυλον.

<sup>178</sup> The Latin and Georgian versions generally also follow P. Bodmer V, although one of the two Latin MS(S) cited by de Strycker, *La Forme*, 158, as Lat<sup>b</sup> agrees with H and G.

<sup>179</sup> The Ethiopic and Syriac traditions support this reading as well. See below for a discussion of the erroneous reading of MS C by de Strycker-Petersen.

<sup>180</sup> This information was gleaned from two unpublished doctoral dissertations of Duke University, Boyd L. Daniels, "The Greek Manuscript Tradition of the *Protevangelium Jacobi*" (Ph.D. diss., The Duke University Graduate School, 1956), a massive three-volume listing of variant readings from

F<sup>b</sup>.<sup>181</sup> But a total of ninety-three witnesses, a number of which are older than those characterized by Petersen as “most other early manuscripts,” differ more or less substantially from the “explicit Johannine parallel.”<sup>182</sup> Five of these support the text of G and H, χείρα (“hand”) for δάκτυλον (“finger”).<sup>183</sup> MS C, however, an important tenth-century copy, appears to have been included in this group mistakenly by Petersen—following de Strycker. C appears in the edition of Tischendorf as the best example of a group of eighteen of the new MS(S) that—instead of ἐὰν μὴ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου (“unless I put my finger”)—read ἐὰν μὴ κατανοήσω (“unless I observe [that a virgin gave birth]”).<sup>184</sup> This reading was not represented in de Strycker’s apparatus. Absent from the editions of both de Strycker and Tischendorf is a cluster of twenty-one of the new MS(S) that display variations of ἐὰν μὴ σημειώσωμαι αὐτὴν (“unless I take note of her”).<sup>185</sup> Finally, the text ἐὰν μὴ ἐρευνήσω τὴν φύσιν αὐτῆς (“unless I examine her nature”) of MS(S) B, I, L, and R is supported by a group of

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eighty-six unpublished Greek MS(S), and George Themelis Zervos, “Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Genesis Marias (Protevangeliū Jacobi): The Greek Manuscripts” (Ph.D. diss., The Duke University Graduate School, 1986), a similar listing of readings from forty-five more MS(S) of the *Prot. Jas.* that were not available to Daniels. These rudimentary statistics are based solely upon the specific terms used in the MS(S) to describe Salome’s examination of Mary (“βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου,” “κατανοήσω,” “σημειώσωμαι,” and “ἐρευνήσω”). They do not reflect itacisms, spelling errors, and minor syntactical variations. It must also be kept in mind that the witness of these MS(S) may be mitigated by the existence of yet undefined familial relationships among them.

<sup>181</sup> One eleventh-, two twelfth-, one thirteenth-, one fifteenth-, and two sixteenth-century MS(S). MS F<sup>b</sup> is placed in the ninth century by Daniels in accordance with the opinion of his mentor, Kenneth W. Clark, “Tradition,” 64.

<sup>182</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 213, views these variant readings as evidence of “the tendency of history . . . to move away from such a direct demand for a digital gynecological examination of the Mother of God.” According to this “logic of the variants,” later scribes would have modified or even eliminated the reference to the “offensive digital examination” in *Prot. Jas.* 20:25 out of reverence for the “Mother of God.” However, this activity must have occurred later, rather than earlier, in the process of the development of Mariology since the divine motherhood of Mary does not even occur in ecclesiastical writings until the fourth century, and Mary was not officially declared to be the Θεοτόκος (“Mother of God”) until 451 when the third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus established her status as church doctrine. Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (vol. 1 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 241, 261. But at the time of the composition of the *Prot. Jas.* and its hypothetical sources in the first two centuries—long before Mary achieved “Mother of God” status—the “logic” of the variants could be taken as indicating movement towards a more definitive demonstration of the developing concept of Mary’s sexual purity which was then in the process of being formulated as the doctrine of her *post partum* virginity. In these early centuries Christian evangelists, their redactors, and scribes would have endeavored to promote a “digital gynecological examination” of Jesus’ mother immediately after she gave birth, in order to authenticate the developing doctrine of the church.

<sup>183</sup> One each eleventh-, twelfth-, and fourteenth-, and two fifteenth-century MS(S). The translations of the variants provided here are taken from the standard definitions found in LSJ and BDAG, but further analysis of the shades of meaning represented by these Greek terms is in order.

<sup>184</sup> One each twelfth- and thirteenth-, two fifteenth-, eight sixteenth-, three seventeenth-, two eighteenth-, and one nineteenth-century MS. Tischendorf’s reading is confirmed by Daniels who collated this MS from “a positive photographic print supplied by the Bibliothèque Nationale,” “Tradition,” 67; cf. 798. See Petersen’s comment above, n. 144, expressing his preference for the critical apparatus’ of Tischendorf over that of de Strycker.

<sup>185</sup> One tenth-, two eleventh-, three twelfth-, two thirteenth-, three each fourteenth-, fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-, and one nineteenth-century MS(S). Tischendorf’s MS N is reported by Daniels, “Tradition,” 39, 799, to contain this reading although Tischendorf himself does not record it.

thirty-nine of the new witnesses, eleven of which are as old as any of those that Petersen labeled as “most other early manuscripts.”<sup>186</sup> Thus the overwhelming witness of the MS tradition of the *Prot. Jas.* confirms the conclusion indicated above by a correct analysis Petersen’s textual evidence: the “explicit Johannine parallel” εὐὰν μὴ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου cannot be considered with any degree of certainty to be the original reading of *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 because of: 1) the lack of support for this text among the MS(S) of the *Prot. Jas.*, and 2) the large number of MS(S) of the *Prot. Jas.* that contain viable alternative readings.<sup>187</sup>

### The Form Critical Problem

It seems, therefore, that Petersen’s argument for the dependence of the *Prot. Jas.* on John is seriously compromised by the compositional and textual uncertainty surrounding the possibility of a connection between the “doubting Thomas” (John 20:24-29) and “doubting Salome” (*Prot. Jas.* 19-20) episodes; his attempt to apply form criticism to this parallel is unsuccessful for the same reason. Petersen conducts a comparative form-critical analysis of the Thomas and Salome stories and detects four congruencies between them. In both scenes: 1) a “doubter” speaks the words of the parallel, 2) the “thing doubted” is one of the major miracles that “bracket Jesus’ earthly existence,” the virgin birth and the resurrection, 3) the digital method of examination is discussed, and 4) the doubters become believers as a consequence of their examinations.<sup>188</sup> To Petersen: “this form critical congruity indicates that some sort of dependence exists between the two texts. It suggests that . . . the author of the Protevangelium . . . both knew and used the Gospel of John.”<sup>189</sup> However, the third and most important of these congruencies—the digital examination—is effectively neutralized by the questionable compositional and textual status of the text of *Prot. Jas.* 19:3. And without the digital examination, the remaining three congruencies—the first, second, and fourth—collectively coincide merely with what Robert Fortna describes as the traditional “element of initial disbelief on the part of the disciples in the face of the resurrection, and the subsequent resolution of that doubt, [which] is

<sup>186</sup> Four tenth-, seven eleventh-, eight twelfth-, one thirteenth-, three fourteenth-, six fifteenth-, eight sixteenth-, and two eighteenth-century MS(S). The eleven tenth- and eleventh-century MS(S) in this group alone equal the total number of Greek MS(S) cited by Petersen in addition to P. Bodmer V itself (see above).

<sup>187</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 213, considers “the logic of the variants” (cf. n. 182 above) and “the dates of the manuscripts” to be two factors that “unequivocally posit the explicit Johannine parallel as the oldest text.” If the “manuscripts” to whose “dates” Petersen is referring are the same ones that he described earlier as “most other early manuscripts”—and which he inaccurately characterized as supporting the reading of P. Bodmer V—then his second primary justification for upholding the authenticity of the papyrus text of *Prot. Jas.* 19:3 is refuted by the witness of the vast majority of the extant Greek MS(S) of the *Prot. Jas.* cited above., many of which are as early or earlier than Petersen’s “most other early manuscripts.”

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* Petersen then extends this “dependence” to include also the *Prot. Jas.* 16:3/John 8:11 parallel, justifying his conclusion on the basis of the similar literary technique by which both parallels were incorporated “in situations which are form-critically identical—in the Protevangelium,” *ibid.*, 213-14.

found, in a variety of forms, in all the gospels.”<sup>190</sup> The “doubting Salome” story—without the digital examination—could have originated from, or been influenced by, any one of a number of similar narratives within the canonical texts alone.<sup>191</sup>

With the supporting evidence of the second parallel significantly diminished, the original parallel (*Prot. Jas.* 16:3/John 8:11) again comes into focus as the only remaining indication of a relationship between John and the *Prot. Jas.*, as well as between the PA and the story of the exoneration of Mary by the High Priest in *Prot. Jas.* 16. Judging by the same criteria that were applied above to the second parallel, *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 appears to be more compositionally and textually secure than verse 19:3. From the perspective of the three-source compositional theory, whereas *Prot. Jas.* 19:3 is found in the *Apocryphum Josephi*, an originally independent document, verse 16:3 forms an undisputed part of the Γέννησις Μαρίας which constitutes the core of the *Prot. Jas.* itself.<sup>192</sup> And in contrast to *Prot. Jas.* 19:3, which was shown above to be plagued by textual problems, the text of verse 16:3 is free of troublesome variant readings. Regarding *Prot. Jas.* 16:3, Petersen verifies that “among the many languages and manuscripts in which the *Protevangelium* survives, only two variants appear”: 1) κατακρίνω (“condemn”) for κρίνω (“judge”);<sup>193</sup> and 2) the absence of the critical phrase οὐδὲ ἐγὼ κρίνω ὑμᾶς from the text of *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 in the Armenian recension designated by H. Quecke as Arm<sup>b</sup>.<sup>194</sup> Although the second variant appears also in the earlier (989), more important, Edschmiadzin Codex,<sup>195</sup> Quecke’s negative appraisal of the Armenian MS tradition leads Petersen to conclude that the absence of John 8:11 from these witnesses is “of no significance for our investigation.”<sup>196</sup>

Petersen’s acknowledgement of the existence of “various forms” of the PA necessitates a review of the long-standing disagreement among scholars regarding the form-critical classification of this story. Already with his inauguration of the *Formgeschichte* methodology, Martin Dibelius recognizes the multi-faceted history

<sup>190</sup> *The Gospel of Signs* (SNTSMS 11; Cambridge: At the University Press, 1970), 142. Fortna cites “Mt 28:17, Lk 24: 11, 41, [Mk] 16:11-16”; cf. Bultmann, *History*, 288-91, for a fuller list and more detailed discussion.

<sup>191</sup> This possibility is supported also by the witness of the MS tradition of the *Prot. Jas.* against the authenticity of “the explicit Johannine parallel” (see above). See also Riley’s discussion of traditions of “physical demonstration” among the resurrection stories, *Resurrection*, 94-99.

<sup>192</sup> See the discussion above on the Compositional Problem of the *Prot. Jas.*

<sup>193</sup> See above, n. 3. Petersen’s assessment is confirmed by the collations of the hundred plus MS(S) referred in n. 180 above.

<sup>194</sup> Petersen, *Sayings*, 206, n(n). 54, 55; cf. de Strycker, *Forme*, 466-67. Quecke’s Latin translation of the Armenian texts was published on pp. 441-473 of de Strycker’s work.

<sup>195</sup> See above, p. 16, n. 125. Conybeare, “Verses,” 405-408, 416-17, values highly the idiosyncratic witness of the Edschmiadzin Codex whose text he considers to be so “remarkable” and in such an “archaic form” that he provides a full translation, *ibid.*, 406.

<sup>196</sup> *Sayings*, 206, n. 56. Citing Didymus, the anonymous late sixth- or early seventh-century Syriac *Historia ecclesiastica* that is associated with the early fifth-century Bishop Mara of Amida, and the tenth-century version of Agapius of Hierapolis, *ibid.*, 198-201, Petersen concedes that “the various forms in which the story is found suggest that it changed over time, either evolving (with the addition of v. 11, for example) or, alternatively, ‘shrinking’ (through the suppression of v. 11),” *ibid.*, 203. In fact, the presence or absence of verse 8:11 from the PA has long been one of the determining factors in scholarly attempts to rediscover the original form of the story. See Ehrman’s, “Jesus,” 33, citation of Zahn’s theory of a pre-literary form of the PA which is “notable especially for its omission of the dialogue between Jesus and the accusers.”

of the PA and characterizes the story as a more developed, “hybrid” example of his basic form-critical category of the “Paradigm.”<sup>197</sup> Bultmann rejects the assessment of Dibelius and classifies the PA generally as an “apophthegm,”<sup>198</sup> one subgroup of which are the *Streitgespräche* (“conflict stories”).<sup>199</sup> Becker also considers the PA to be a *Streitgespräch*<sup>200</sup> and attributes what Bultmann refers to as the “novel-like and secondary” elements in the story<sup>201</sup> to its adaptation to the “practical needs of the Jewish-Christian community.”<sup>202</sup> Both Vincent Taylor and Schnackenburg seem to emphasize the benign character of the PA as an illustration of the attitude of Jesus towards sinners and the Mosaic Law. Taylor views it as a “Pronouncement-story,”<sup>203</sup> and Schnackenburg as a “biographical apophthegm.”<sup>204</sup> Ehrman evaluates each of the various versions of the PA individually in an attempt to harmonize the opposing

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<sup>197</sup> Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), 37-69, discusses “Paradigms” in detail but treats the PA together with his category of “New Testament Tales”; cf. *ibid.*, 70: “There is found here exactly that descriptiveness which we missed in the Paradigms; that breadth, which a paradigmatic application makes impossible; that technique, which reveals a certain pleasure in the narrative itself; and that topical character, which brings these narratives nearer to the corresponding categories as they were to be found in the world outside Christianity.” Referring to the tendency of certain “Paradigms” to be “transformed” into “hybrid forms” in the “richer more secular narrative style” of the “Tales,” *ibid.*, 97, Dibelius states concerning the PA: “The text of the story of the woman taken in adultery is also to be explained by such tendencies, although it is by no means handed down along one line of tradition . . . Its form is hybrid . . . Obviously we have here a Paradigm which had been handed on and filled out independently of the discipline of preaching and the fixation of the text by the Gospels,” *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>198</sup> *History*, 11-69. Against Dibelius: “To carry on disputes in this way is typically *Rabbinic*. So we have to look for the *Sitz im Leben* of the controversy dialogues in the discussions the Church had with its opponents, and as certainly within itself, on questions of law. It is quite inappropriate to call these passages paradigms, i.e. examples of preaching, as Dibelius does,” *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>199</sup> For a general overview of these stories see Arland J. Hultgren, *Jesus and His Adversaries: The Form and Function of the Conflict Stories in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979). The antiquity and authenticity of the PA is underscored by its association with the *Streitgespräche* which otherwise derive from the earliest strata of the synoptic Gospels—Mark, Q, and L—within Mark 14-15 and parallels; cf. *ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>200</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 83, “*Es kann kein Zweifel darüber bestehen, daß die Geschichte von der Ehebrecherin gattungsgeschichtlich den synoptischen Streitgesprächen zuzuordnen ist.*” Petersen, *Sayings*, 206, n. 57, agrees that Becker “correctly classifies it [the PA] as a ‘confrontation’ story.”

<sup>201</sup> *History*, 63, Bultmann mentions the “initial silence” of Jesus and the “circumstantial ending” as such elements in the story.

<sup>202</sup> *Ehebrecherin*, 88-89; cf. Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 2:168.

<sup>203</sup> *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1960), 84, “For us to-day the story is precious because it reveals the attitude of Jesus toward a sinful woman. So it must have been from the beginning. But among the first Christians it must have been valued because it disclosed His attitude to the Mosaic Law: Jesus does not annul the Law but reinterprets it just as he does in some of the great utterances of Mt. v”; cf. Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 2:169, n. 135. According to Petersen, *Sayings*, 206, n. 57, Taylor “perversely . . . classifies the *pericope adulterae* as a ‘pronouncement story.’”

<sup>204</sup> *Gospel*, 2:169, “This is not a case of scandal arising over the behaviour of Jesus or his disciples . . . the focus is not on a controversy, but on the attitude of Jesus toward a sinner and those who are accusing her . . . These are not mere episodes from the life and activity of the Jesus, but are told with a kerygmatic or pedagogical purpose. Jesus’ behaviour becomes a lesson or admonition to the community.”

scholarly opinions on the form of the story.<sup>205</sup> Postulating the existence of two originally independent stories about an adulteress, Ehrman assigns each of these traditions to a different form-critical category; the story referred by Didymus is a biographical apophthegm<sup>206</sup> and that “loosely paraphrased by the author of the *Didascalía*” is a controversy dialogue similar to the *Streitgespräche* of the synoptic Gospels.<sup>207</sup> Ehrman maintains that these two early stories mutually influenced each other as they were gradually “combined into the traditional story later incorporated into John’s Gospel.”<sup>208</sup>

Each of the scholars cited above arrived at their conclusions concerning the form-critical classification of the PA by comparing the elements present in the story with those of several categories of the various approaches to *Formgeschichte*,<sup>209</sup> i.e., *Streitgespräche*, paradigms, biographical apophthegms, and pronouncement stories. The distinctive elements of the PA identified by these scholars are:

- 1) an introductory statement giving the time and setting of the event
- 2) the identity of the antagonists
- 3) whether the nature of the woman’s sin is specified
- 4) the scenario, including
  - a) where the event took place
  - b) whether the woman had already been judged
  - c) how Jesus came to be involved
- 5) the event itself, including
  - a) whether Jesus spoke to the woman and/or to the accusers
  - b) whether he wrote on the ground
  - c) whether the accusers left the scene
- 6) whether Jesus’ final statement to the woman (John 8:11) is present.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>205</sup> See especially his overview and assessment of these positions, “Jesus,” 42, n. 48. Ehrman initiated this phase of the investigation based on the “phenomenal contrast” between the Didymus story and the *Didascalía* version: “If the story was originally two different stories with different situations, different focal points, different apophthegms, and different textual histories, one would naturally expect their later combination to produce just such ambiguities and complexities,” *ibid.*, 34. See above, pp. 15-16, for the debate between Ehrman and Lührmann on the early history of the canonical PA. Ehrman provides a more comprehensive treatment, comparing the Johannine PA with the stories found in Didymus and the *Didascalía*, and the latter two versions vis-à-vis each other.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, “The story, then, is comparable to a biographical apophthegm that instructs, not by advancing a generalized principle, but by portraying a concrete action on the part of Jesus.” Ehrman sees evidence that Didymus actually was familiar with two forms of the PA, the canonical version and “one that has otherwise perished, presumably from the Gospel according to the Hebrews,” *ibid.*, 32.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 36, “Unlike our first story, this one bears a close resemblance to the controversy dialogues of the Synoptic traditions. The focus of attention is on a controversy between Jesus and the Jewish teachers of the Law who take exception to his implicit devaluation of the Mosaic tradition.” Cf. Lührmann, *Geschichte*, 293.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. According to Ehrman, this convoluted process—including earlier, accidental, partial confluences and a final complete conflation of the two early forms—left traces of both versions in the Johannine story, such as “certain doublets” and “certain ambiguities.”

<sup>209</sup> Principally those of Dibelius, Bultmann, and Taylor, see above.

<sup>210</sup> These elements have been gleaned from Ehrman, “Jesus,” 32-34; Lührmann, *Geschichte*, 293-96; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 118; and Petersen, *Sayings*, 203, 206-207.

Neither of the versions of the story with sufficient text to evaluate—those in the *Didascalía*, and Didymus<sup>211</sup>—is in complete agreement with the Johannine PA; nor does either contain all of the elements listed above. Neither version includes an introductory statement giving the time or setting of the event. In the canonical PA the antagonists are the Scribes and Pharisees; in the *Didascalía* they are elders; in Didymus they are Jews. The woman's sin in the canonical version is specified as “adultery” (μοιχεία); in the Papias/Eusebius reference she is accused “of many sins” (ἐπὶ πολλαῖς ἁμαρτίαις); it is not stipulated in the *Didascalía*; and in Didymus it is generically “sin” (ἁμαρτία). There are significant variations in the scenario of the story among the versions. In the canonical PA Jesus is teaching in the temple; the *Didascalía* has no location; Didymus' story occurs at the place of execution. In the canonical story and the *Didascalía* the woman has been caught but has not yet been judged; in Didymus she has been judged and condemned. In the Johannine PA and the *Didascalía* the woman is brought to Jesus for judgment;<sup>212</sup> in Didymus Jesus is at the place of execution by chance and intervenes unsolicited to stop the execution. During the event itself, in the canonical story and in Didymus Jesus does not initially address the woman but does speak to her accusers; in the *Didascalía* he speaks to the woman but not to the accusers. Jesus writes on the ground only in the Johannine PA. The accusers leave the scene in John's story and in the *Didascalía* but not in Didymus. Finally, and most importantly, the canonical PA and the *Didascalía* both contain the final statement of Jesus to the adulteress as in John 8:11; Didymus does not. Thus, apparently, the *Didascalía* story has more in common with the Johannine PA than do the other versions.<sup>213</sup>

It is at this point that Petersen enters the discussion with his form-critical comparison of the *Prot. Jas.* with the other versions of the PA.<sup>214</sup> Petersen himself discovers “a wealth of parallels between the *Protevangelium* and the Johannine *pericope adulterae*.”<sup>215</sup> In both contexts: 1) “the words are part of a ‘confrontation story,’” 2) “the accusation is one of sexual misconduct,” 3) “the accused is female,” 4) “religiously scrupulous Jews” are the accusers, 5) the accused woman is brought to the judge; the judge does not “interpolate himself into the situation,” 6) the “accused woman is brought by a crowd to stand before a *male* religious figure,” 7) “the words are spoken as the dramatic climax to a tension-filled scene,” and 8) “the woman is acquitted, despite overwhelming evidence of her guilt.”<sup>216</sup> For Petersen, these parallels lead to the conclusion “that the form of the *pericope adulterae* from which the *Protevangelium* borrowed these words [Jesus' statement to the adulteress]

<sup>211</sup> Since there is no actual extant text of the adulteress tradition associated with the *Gos. Heb.*, its inclusion in this study is based solely upon Eusebius' reference that it contained such a story. The Papias/Eusebius reference contains only the most rudimentary details. For the conflicting opinions among scholars on the relationship of the Papias/Eusebius reference and the *Gos. Heb.* to the versions of the PA in John 7:53-8:11, Didymus, and the *Didascalía*, see the discussion above, pp. 15-16.

<sup>212</sup> The Johannine PA in this respect is a true *Streitgespräch*; a trap is set for Jesus. The *Didascalía* version is more benign and contains no reference to a trap set for Jesus by his enemies; the accusers simply bring the woman to Jesus and leave her with him.

<sup>213</sup> This holds true for the general lines of the story, but not for all the details.

<sup>214</sup> See above, pp. 16-18, where Petersen criticizes previous scholarly investigations of the PA because they ignored this apocryphon in their assessments.

<sup>215</sup> *Sayings*, 206.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-207.

must have been similar to the form the episode now has in the Gospel of John.”<sup>217</sup> Petersen further identifies “three distinctive elements in the story”: 1) the sin of the woman was “explicitly sexual in nature,” 2) she “was presented by a mob to the authority figure for judgement,” and 3) Jesus’ concluding statement, “οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε [κατα]κρίνω.”<sup>218</sup> Whereas other researchers misconstrue these elements as “later accretions, absent from its (*sic*) earliest form of the story,” Petersen views them as the “earliest evidence for the story.”<sup>219</sup> The *Prot. Jas.*, therefore, displaces the third-century *Didascalia* as the oldest witness to the PA, allowing the composition of the Johannine story to be placed at least in the second half of the second century.<sup>220</sup>

Having thus established the literary and historical connection between the PA and the *Prot. Jas.*, Petersen proceeds to discuss the possible origin of the parallel statements spoken by Jesus in John 8:11, “οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε [κατα]κρίνω,” and the high priest in *Prot. Jas.* 16:3, “οὐδὲ ἐγὼ [κατα]κρίνω ὑμᾶς.” However, the manner with which he poses the question—“whence did the author of the *Protevangelium Jacobi* acquire these words?”—and his approach to its solution, from their inception betray the limitation of his perspective by the de Strycker model of a late second-century *Prot. Jas.* that is dependent on John.<sup>221</sup> The equally viable alternative question—“whence did the author of the PA acquire these words?”—is not deemed worthy of consideration; *a priori* John is the source and the *Prot. Jas.* is secondary. Petersen suggests three options as possible answers to his question: 1) this statement is the original creation of the author of the *Prot. Jas.*, 2) it is drawn from the Johannine PA which was already found in the Gospel of John in the second half of the second century, and 3) both John and the *Prot. Jas.* obtained the statement independently of each other from “some earlier, now-unknown document.”<sup>222</sup> Petersen summarily dismisses the first option as “untenable” on the basis of his *a priori* acceptance of the dependence of the *Prot. Jas.* on John; the exact verbal parallels, the similar context, and the knowledge displayed by the *Prot. Jas.* of proto-canonical gospel traditions—especially the digital examination in John 20:24—can only be interpreted in terms of the dependence of the *Prot. Jas.* on John.<sup>223</sup> The second option is “much more likely”

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* It is significant that “all of these features—while present in the *Protevangelium* and in the Gospel of John’s version of the story—are not only absent from Papias/Eusebius and Didymus the Blind, but specifically contradict their information.”

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 203, Petersen attributes this misunderstanding on the part of Ehrman and Lührmann to their failure to take the evidence of the *Prot. Jas.* into consideration, leading them instead to seek the roots of the PA in the *Didascalia* and Didymus; Petersen seems justified in regarding this position as no longer tenable; *ibid.*, 208, “this earliest evidence for the story shares recognizable, distinctive elements with the Johannine version of the story.”

<sup>220</sup> Given: 1) this dating for the *Prot. Jas.*, see above, pp. 18-19, and 2) that the Papias/Eusebius reference to the *Gos. Heb.* is not generally identified with the canonical PA, see the discussion above, pp. 8-11.

<sup>221</sup> See above, pp. 18-19.

<sup>222</sup> *Sayings*, 214.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-15. See above for the compositional, textual, and form-critical arguments against the originality of the reference to the digital examination in *Prot. Jas.* 19:3. The parallel between the digital examinations in the “Doubting Thomas” story of John and the “Doubting Salome” story of the *Prot. Jas.* is too obvious to be denied; it is the doubtful compositional and textual status of *Prot. Jas.* 19:3 that compromises the value of this parallel as evidence for the dependence of the *Prot. Jas.* upon John. For a discussion of what Petersen terms the “knowledge of the ([proto-] canonical) gospel

for the same reason—the assumed dependence of the *Prot. Jas.* on John as further substantiated by the second parallel between John and the *Prot. Jas.*<sup>224</sup>

Petersen's third option—"mutual dependence [of both texts] upon an earlier, unknown source"—becomes the subject of his highly speculative investigation of the possibility that the "mysterious" *Gos. Heb.* fulfills what he regards as "the known parameters" for this source; it must 1) antedate 150, 2) have been written in Greek, 3) contain narratives and *logia* about Jesus, and 4) "have circulated in Egypt at this early date."<sup>225</sup> Of these parameters, the first two are acceptable, but the third and fourth are doubtful. Regarding the third parameter, the possible presence of a single "*logion*" in the hypothetical source of John 8:11 and *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 is not adequate proof that this source "must preserve narratives about Jesus as well as *logia*" (note especially the plural *logia*).<sup>226</sup> Several of the extant fragments of the *Gos. Heb.* do contain "*logia*" of Jesus,<sup>227</sup> but this particular characteristic of the *Gos. Heb.* cannot be imposed as a compulsory parameter upon the source under discussion. The fourth parameter, which requires the source to have circulated in Egypt, is entirely based upon Petersen's dependence upon de Strycker's opinion of the provenance of the *Prot. Jas.* Petersen cites de Strycker exclusively as the authority for the Egyptian origins of the *Prot. Jas.*, ignoring the many scholars who assign a Syrian provenance to this document.<sup>228</sup> Without the third and fourth parameters above, the remaining criteria for the source of John 8:11 and *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 describe a Greek text before 150 that contains the statement of Jesus to the adulteress.<sup>229</sup> In any event the extant

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tradition" by the *Prot. Jas.*, see George T. Zervos, "Dating," 415-34, idem, "An Early Non-Canonical Annunciation Story," *SBL Seminar Papers, 1997* (SBLSP 36; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 664-91, where this writer argues that the editor of the *Prot. Jas.* incorporated canonical gospel material in his redaction of this apocryphon.

<sup>224</sup> *Sayings*, 215. The first two options actually are identical and, *mutatis mutandis*, approach the same question from opposite directions. Both are predicated upon the assumed primacy of the PA vis-à-vis the *Prot. Jas.*

<sup>225</sup> *Sayings*, 215-16.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Vielhauer, "Hebrews," 177-78.

<sup>228</sup> *Sayings*, 216, n. 83, "The *Protevangeliem*'s provenance, according to de Strycker, *La forme*, p. 423." For the Syrian provenance of the *Prot. Jas.* see Smid's criticisms of de Strycker's arguments, *Protevangeliem*, 20-22, 29-30, 35; Amann, *Protévangile*, 237; cf. Edouard Cothenet, "Protévangile de Jacques," *DBSup* 8 (1972), 1383, following, A. Hamman, "*Sitz im Leben*' des actes apocryphes du *Nouveau Testament*" (TU 93; StPat 8, part 2; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 66-67, on early Syrian ascetic groups as a possible milieu for a document such as the *Prot. Jas.*

<sup>229</sup> In an abortive attempt to "gauge the likelihood" that the statement of the high priest to Mary entered the *Prot. Jas.* from the *Gos. Heb.*, Petersen examines the *Prot. Jas.* in order to find "elements otherwise known to be part of the Judaic-Christian gospel tradition" to which the *Gos. Heb.* belongs. He discovers only a single such passage, the phrase φως μέγα ("great light"), which appears both at Jesus' birth in the cave in *Prot. Jas.* 19:2 and at his baptism in Epiphanius' report concerning "the Hebrew gospel" that contains these same words in its story of Jesus' baptism, *Sayings*, 216, see also Petersen's *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (VCSup; Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1994), 14-20. Although there is ample evidence of this reading in the earliest baptismal traditions, the possibility that this phrase was transposed into the birth story of the *Prot. Jas.* is so remote and the supportive evidence for it so weak, *Sayings*, 216, n. 85, that its witness in support of the dependence of *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 on the *Gos. Heb.* can be discounted, given the paucity of verbal material, the generic nature of the phrase itself, the doubtful relationship between the Jewish-Christian *Gos. Heb.* and "the Hebrew Gospel" (see above, p. 13, n. 102), the fact

material of the *Gos. Heb.*, consisting of only six or seven disjointed fragments, is too limited in extent to support definitive conclusions as to its nature or contents.<sup>230</sup>

The lack of evidence for the connection between the *Gos. Heb.* and the *Prot. Jas.* underscores Petersen's own characterization of the "problem of deciding which source . . . first contained the *pericope adulterae*" as "a very difficult task, fraught with uncertainty . . . a problem which, given our present state of knowledge of the sources, cannot be solved."<sup>231</sup> Ultimately, Petersen must admit: "We have exhausted the evidence available to us, and still no answer to the question of the origin of the *pericope adulterae* is obvious."<sup>232</sup> It has been this writer's contention that Petersen's dilemma is due to the limitation of the scope of his investigation of the prospective sources of the PA to "the Gospel of John, the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, or some other as-yet-undiscovered source."<sup>233</sup> His *a priori* exclusion of the *Prot. Jas.* from consideration in his pursuit of the elusive "as-yet-undiscovered source" leads him to neglect options that a more comprehensive approach to this apocryphon may provide. Petersen must be given credit for bringing the significant parallels between the PA and the *Prot. Jas.* to the attention of the scholarly world thereby illuminating the origins of the PA and successfully establishing its presence in the second century. He has introduced important new evidence in his search for the origins of the PA and has interpreted this information consistently, albeit within the limits of his understanding of the character of the *Prot. Jas.* It remains for future researchers to further advance the quest for the origins of this enigmatic story by taking advantage of the great potential of the *Prot. Jas.* for clarifying this question by acknowledging more fully the complexities of its compositional, textual, and form-critical history.

### *A Fresh Old Approach*

We have endeavored to understand the relationship between the *Prot. Jas.* and the Johannine PA by reviewing the textual, form-critical, and compositional evidence as presented through the medium of William Petersen's very informative article. But we have noted repeatedly how his interpretation of this evidence has been influenced by the paradigm of the *Prot. Jas.* as a unitary document of the late second century, which limits its value for illuminating the origins of the PA to the mere affirmation of the existence of the story at that date. We will now attempt to reassess the witness of the *Prot. Jas.* from the perspective of a more flexible view of the date and composition of this document. In order to do this we must first strive to clear away the misconceptions that are due to later developments in the history of

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that this phrase occurs in *Prot. Jas.* 19:2—together with the digital examination in *Prot. Jas.* 19:3—which may be part of a separate source (see above, pp. 22-25) and therefore unrelated to *Prot. Jas.* 16:3, and Petersen's own admission that this same tradition of a light at Jesus' baptism was fairly widespread in "very early second-century Christianity," occurring also in Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 88.3), several Diatessaronic witnesses, and two *Vetus Latina* MS(S), *Sayings*, 216-17.

<sup>230</sup> See above, pp. 13-14.

<sup>231</sup> *Sayings*, 219.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. his comments on a hypothetical "Ur-version of one of the (proto-)canonical gospels" such as a "very early recension of the Gospel of Matthew" based upon the readings of two *Vetus Latina* MS(S).

interpretation of the *Prot. Jas.* and to examine its relationship to the Gospel of John exclusively from the standpoint of the first two Christian centuries.

### The Textual Evidence

First, we must disassociate the PA completely from the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John should not even be mentioned in connection with the origins of this story. Any thoughts we might have relating to the later association between these two texts must be completely cleared from our minds. If the overwhelming witness of the MS tradition of the Gospel of John tells us nothing else, it tells us that there was absolutely no relationship between the PA and the Gospel of John in the first two centuries. The MS(S) constitute definitive and irrefutable proof that the PA was not originally a canonical story since we do not have a single early MS of John that contains it. But we do have a complete third-century papyrus of the *Prot. Jas.* that includes a parallel to a statement in the modern PA. And this parallel found in *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 and—much more recently—in John 8:11 cannot be interpreted as proof of a connection between the *Prot. Jas.* and some early story of an adulteress similar to the canonical PA. Excluding the Papias/Eusebius reference, there is no evidence that a story like the Johannine PA existed independently in the first two centuries.<sup>234</sup> The best evidence pertaining to the PA in the second century is the *Prot. Jas.*, and it is to the *Prot. Jas.* alone that we must turn for information regarding the status, or lack thereof, of the PA at this early date.

Second, what of the *Prot. Jas.* itself? Given the parallel between John 8:11 and *Prot. Jas.* 16:3, what is the basis for the *a priori* precedence of the PA over the *Prot. Jas.*? The textual evidence is clear—the total absence of MS support for John 8:11 before the fifth century<sup>235</sup> as opposed to the universal attestation of verse 16:3 in the MS(S) of the *Prot. Jas.*, beginning with the complete third-century papyrus, P. Bodmer V, and continuing throughout the next sixteen centuries in more than one hundred extant MS witnesses to this document.<sup>236</sup> When *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 was penned John was not a canonical gospel because there was no New Testament canon. If the PA had never been included in the subsequently canonized Gospel of John in later centuries, would we automatically assume its precedence over a well-documented, not-yet-apocryphal gospel such as the *Prot. Jas.*? Does our “canonical myopia” so blind us to the possibility of the priority of *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 over John 8:11—even in

<sup>234</sup> See the discussion above, pp. 7-11. The only other early mention of a story that even vaguely resembles the PA, Eusebius’ reference to Papias’ comment about a woman accused of “many sins,” has been disqualified by most scholars who identify it more with the story of a sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50.

<sup>235</sup> See above, pp. 2-7.

<sup>236</sup> In addition to P. Bodmer V, there are two extant fragmentary papyri of the *Prot. Jas.* which date to the fourth and sixth centuries, respectively, P.S.I. 6, Ermenegildo Pistelli, “*Papiri evangelici*,” *Studi religiosi* 6 (1906): 129-40, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Gr. Th. g. I (P), B. P. Grenfell, *An Alexandrian Erotic Fragment and other Greek Papyri Chiefly Ptolemaic* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1896): 13-19, neither of which contains the text of *Prot. Jas.* 16:3. Otherwise, all of the 100 Greek MS(S) of the *Prot. Jas.* collated in the combined dissertations of Daniels and Zervos, see above, pp. 26-27, dating from the eighth to the nineteenth centuries, preserve the statement of the high priest to Mary, with a small percentage of these exhibiting the usual grammatical, orthographical, and minor syntactical variants.

view of the lavish documentation for the former as opposed to the total absence of MS evidence for the latter—that we cannot even entertain the idea that John 8:11 may have derived from *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 or that the PA may have been inspired by the *Prot. Jas.* or by one of its sources?

### The Compositional Evidence

How can the concept of the *Prot. Jas.*—as a second-century compilation of several earlier sources—illuminate the origins of the PA? On two separate occasions Petersen alludes to the possible existence of an earlier source as an explanation for the common material shared by the *Prot. Jas.* and John, but he does not explore this possibility further. First, in our discussion of the compositional history of the *Prot. Jas.* (pp. 20-25), it was noted that Petersen mentions a “pre-Johannine source” in his remarks on the “oldest layer” or “earliest stratum” of this apocryphon in which he believes the parallels between John and the *Prot. Jas.* occur. And, second, in his treatment of the form-critical congruity between the PA and the *Prot. Jas.* he proposes “some earlier, now-unknown document” as one of three optional sources for the parallel statement in John 8:11 and *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 (p. 34). The resemblance between these concepts of a “pre-Johannine source” and an “earlier, now-unknown document” is obvious. It cannot be mere coincidence that the potential existence of such a source document has emerged within two separate contexts as a viable solution to the problem of the relationship between the *Prot. Jas.* and the Johannine PA. Although Petersen does not pursue this “pre-Johannine source” or the “earlier, now-unknown document,” it appears that just such a source document would fulfill many of the criteria required to resolve the problem of the relationship between the *Prot. Jas.* and the Johannine PA.

It is our contention that it is not necessary to seek this document elsewhere or to fabricate a hypothetical *tertium quid*; such a document already exists within the *Prot. Jas.* itself as one of the sources identified by Harnack from which the *Prot. Jas.* was composed. Harnack labeled this source the Γέννησις Μαρίας (“Birth of Mary”); but it would be more appropriate to name it the Γένεσις Μαρίας (“Genesis of Mary”) in agreement with the unique title given to the *Prot. Jas.* in P. Bodmer V.<sup>237</sup> It was argued above (pp. 21-25) that the Γένεσις Μαρίας and another of the sources of the *Prot. Jas.*—the *Apocryphum Josephi*—bear witness to the developing Mariological teaching of early Christianity concerning the sexual purity of Jesus’ mother. The Γένεσις Μαρίας, which comprises the bulk of the *Prot. Jas.*, seems to have constituted the original core of this apocryphon since it shares the early *ante partum* Mariology of the synoptic nativity stories, whereas the birth story of the subsequently added *Apocryphum Josephi*, with its concern to demonstrate Mary’s sexual purity after giving birth to Jesus (*viz.* the doubting Salome story), embraces the more advanced

<sup>237</sup> See above, pp. 22-25. It is to Harnack’s credit that his label for this source approximates part of the composite title—not found in any other MS containing the *Prot. Jas.*—of the complete papyrus copy of this document that was discovered a half century after he wrote. The title itself, Γένεσις Μαρίας, Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰακώβ, indicates the composite nature of the *Prot. Jas.*; see Testuz’ comments above, p. 22. De Strycker, *Forme*, 212, supports the authenticity of the title Γένεσις Μαρίας, but rejects the subtitle Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰακώβ as secondary.

*post partum* virginity of Mary. This writer has also characterized the *Prot. Jas.* in a recent publication as the “missing link” that fills the documentation gap between the canonical gospel witnesses to Mary’s *virginitas ante partum* on the one hand and the next generation of texts that exhibit her more developed *virginitas post partum* already at the beginning of the second century: the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the *Odes of Solomon*, and the letters of Ignatius of Antioch.<sup>238</sup>

What more fitting pre-existing source of the parallel statements in John 8:11 and *Prot. Jas.* 16:3 can we hope to discover than the Γένεσις Μαρίας, a document that was incorporated into the *Prot. Jas.* when this apocryphon was composed from several such sources around the middle of the second century?<sup>239</sup> And if we must identify an “earlier, now-unknown document” that fulfills Petersen’s valid first two parameters for the source of the *logion* in John 8:11/*Prot. Jas.* 16:3 (see p. 34), there is no better candidate than the Γένεσις Μαρίας which is “pre-150,” originally written in Greek,<sup>240</sup> and, even more importantly, contains the *logion* itself in what may have been its original form—the exonerative statement of the high priest to Mary. If we are seeking a very early story or tradition of a woman who was accused of adultery and acquitted of that charge in a legal proceeding, and if this story must contain a statement similar to that of the presiding judge in the *Prot. Jas.* and of Jesus in the Johannine PA, there seems to be no apparent reason to deny that that story could have been the Γένεσις Μαρίας or the tradition behind it. And it is only a small step from this hypothesis to the conclusion that the Γένεσις Μαρίας was the source of the scenario of the PA at least, if not of the entire PA itself, given that this document is the earliest extant evidence for the Johannine PA and—with the possible exception of the Papias/Eusebius reference—the only such evidence from the second century.

### The Form-Critical Argument

A form-critical comparison of the Γένεσις Μαρίας and the PA supports our hypothesis of a relationship between these two documents. Viewed alone, without the second and third sections, or sources, of the *Prot. Jas.*, the Γένεσις Μαρίας is nothing but the story of a pregnant, unmarried—and therefore obviously guilty—woman who is accused and acquitted of the charge of adultery. It is highly relevant to our argument that all of the elements of Petersen’s comprehensive form-critical comparison of the *Prot. Jas.* and the PA (pp. 32-33) apply exclusively to the Γένεσις Μαρίας and not to the latter two parts of the *Prot. Jas.* which are concerned with the birth of Jesus and its aftermath. The Γένεσις Μαρίας is a confrontation story about a female accused of sexual misconduct by religiously scrupulous Jews, who is brought

<sup>238</sup> George T. Zervos, “Seeking the Source of the Marian Myth: Have We Found the Missing Link?” in *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition* (ed. F. Stanley Jones; SBLSymS 19; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002). See idem, “Dating,” and “Annunciation”; Smid, *Protevangelium*, 17, writes: “P.J. is not the only witness to the Virgin Birth in the second century; rather is it (*sic*) one of a series, of which several testimonies are still preserved to us.” For the relevant texts, see W. Delius, *Texte zur Geschichte der Marienverehrung und Marienverkündigung in der alten Kirche* (KIT 178; Berlin: 1956) 5-14. Cf. above, pp. 34-35, n. 241, for the Syrian provenance of the *Prot. Jas.*

<sup>239</sup> Zervos, “Annunciation,” 686-88, idem, “Seeking,” 115-20.

<sup>240</sup> De Strycker, *Forme*, 421. Cf. Testuz, *Nativité*, 21, 24-25, who views the occurrence of the semitic spelling Μαριάμμη in the second section of the *Prot. Jas.* as evidence of a Syriac or Aramaic source.

by a crowd to a male religious figure who judges her, speaks the *logion* in question as the dramatic climax of a tension-filled scene and acquits the woman in spite of overwhelming evidence of her guilt. It is significant to note within this context that the second verification of Mary's purity by Salome in the nativity story in *Prot. Jas.* 19—which is part of the *Apocryphum Josephi*—seems redundant in the *Prot. Jas.* as a whole. If Mary had already been exonerated once by the high priest in the Γένεσις Μαρίας (*Prot. Jas.* 16)—thus establishing her *ante partum* virginity in agreement with the agenda of the early gospel tradition—why would a second validation of her purity be necessary after the birth of Jesus in the *Apocryphum Josephi* (*Prot. Jas.* 19) except to advance her *post partum* virginity in accordance with the next generation of Christian documents noted above.<sup>241</sup>

It is instructive for us to consider as well the assessment of the composition of the *Prot. Jas.* by the first editor of P. Bodmer V, Michel Testuz, who was also the last scholar to write extensively on this apocryphon in the era when the multiple-source compositional theory of the *Prot. Jas.* held sway, before the de Strycker juggernaut established the unity of this work as the norm.<sup>242</sup> Working primarily from the text of the papyrus itself, Testuz placed the dividing line between the Γένεσις Μαρίας and the second section of the *Prot. Jas.* precisely after the *logion* οὐδὲ ἐγὼ κρίνω ὑμᾶς.<sup>243</sup> Testuz hypothesized that the present ending of the *Prot. Jas.* in chapter 25 originally followed directly after this statement of the high priest to Mary and was separated from it when a variety of materials that now form chapters 17-24 were inserted into the original document.<sup>244</sup> There is no indication that Testuz was aware of the issue of the PA or its relevance for his conclusions on the composition of the *Prot. Jas.* But if his contention is correct that the Γένεσις Μαρίας ended immediately after the final exonerative statement of the high priest to Mary, the story of Mary as an accused and acquitted adulteress would have been the focal point and dramatic conclusion of the work as a whole. Consequently, if the Γένεσις Μαρίας, as a complete document narrating the early life of Mary, culminated in the earliest form of the story of the adulteress in existence—which is of such precise form-critical congruity with the PA—we may conclude that there is every possibility that this was the source out of which the PA was later formulated.

### *Was Mary the Adulteress?*

Finally, we must address the question that does not seem to have occurred to anyone within the context of the investigation of the origins of the PA: If the Γένεσις

<sup>241</sup> P. 38, n. 251. See also our discussion above, pp. 22-23, concerning the progressive dogmatization of the *Prot. Jas.*

<sup>242</sup> See above, pp. 21-22.

<sup>243</sup> *Nativité*, 24. Oscar Cullman, "The Protevangelium of James," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (rev. ed.; ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Eng. trans. ed. Robert McLachlan Wilson; Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 1:42, also places ch. 17 in the second part of the *Prot. Jas.*; Harnack considers ch. 17 to be part of the Γένεσις Μαρίας, see above, p. 22.

<sup>244</sup> *Nativité*, 22, 24-25. Testuz did not regard ch(s). 17-20 to be a unified document such as the *Apocryphum Josephi*, but as a combination of various source materials. But he did label ch(s). 21-24 as the *Apocryphum Zachariae*.

Μαρία is the source of the early Christian tradition of the adulteress, meaning that the original form of the tradition was associated with the mother of Jesus, does this allow us to speculate that Mary herself may have been the original adulteress? This would certainly account for the impenetrable mystery of the origins of the PA and would explain why its canonical form suddenly appeared in the late second or third century in a form completely disassociated from the mother of the man who was in the process of becoming the master of the universe. Is this the reason that the PA did not circulate in Christian circles in the first two centuries,<sup>245</sup> because another such story did exist whose content involved the mother of Jesus being accused and exonerated of the charge of adultery? And is this why the telltale exonerative *logion* eventually found its way into a scenario in which Jesus is addressing an unnamed adulterous woman, because it was first directed toward the mother of Jesus? Was the PA originally the concluding scene of the Γένεσις Μαρίας—a document narrating the early life of the mother of Jesus—that had to be detached from this context and rewritten as a shortened, censored version of the story that eventually reappeared in John in a form that had nothing to do with Mary herself? Does this hypothesis find support in the fact that the earliest historical association of the PA with John is in the later Latin tradition, in which also occurs the first stated opposition to the story, and which also soon thereafter banned the *Prot. Jas.* via the Gelasian decree?<sup>246</sup>

Granted that these questions are largely speculative and are based on the only existing evidence—the present form of the *Prot. Jas.* and the later PA as it occurs in John 7:53-8:11. However, there does exist considerable circumstantial evidence further attesting to these possibilities that has best been presented by Jane Schaberg in her landmark work: *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist theological*

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<sup>245</sup> Some scholars have conjectured that the PA was temporarily suppressed by the early church and accepted in later centuries for a different reason: to emphasize the severity of the sin of adultery and the necessity for its punishment, see above, pp. 4-5, n(n). 32-33; cf. Harald Riesenfeld, “The Pericope de adultera in the Early Christian Tradition,” in *The Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 98-99, “the contents of the account came to contrast in a disturbing and embarrassing way with the praxis of church discipline regarding offenses against the sixth commandment”; Ehrman, “Jesus,” pp. 42-43, n(n). 53, 58; see Burge’s more complete scenario, “Problem,” 146-48, of the story’s initial suppression because of conservative Christian attitudes against sexuality in the second century and its return in the fourth century when the church was in control of society and bishops were forced to be more lenient; Schilling, “Story,” 96-99, 105-106, agrees that “the story circulated independently and found its way early into church orders, such as the *Apostolic Constitutions*” in what he views as an attempt to entice Christian bishops, who in the fourth century had come to control Greco-Roman society at large, to be more lenient towards sinners.

<sup>246</sup> See above, pp. 4-5. The PA is conspicuously absent from the earliest Latin witnesses, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae (k), whose text may date from the second century; the affirmative Latin witnesses, both MS and patristic, are from the fourth century and later, cf. Aland, *Text*, 187-90. For the Gelasian Decree, see Wilhelm Schneemelcher, “General Introduction,” in *New Testament Apocrypha* (rev. ed.; ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Eng. trans. ed. Robert McLachlan Wilson; Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 1:38-40. Cf. Lührmann’s linking of the PA and the Didascalia with Bezae and the Latin MS tradition, “*Geschichte*,” pp. 293-94, 302-304, and Petersen’s observation that the witness of Didymus the Blind should be considered collectively with those of Jerome and Rufinus in the Latin tradition, since both of the latter were students of Didymus in the catechetical school of Alexandria, “*Sayings*,” 199, n. 34; cf. Lührmann, “*Geschichte*,” p. 292.

*Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives.*<sup>247</sup> In this book, which has been described as “foundational for feminist theology,”<sup>248</sup> Schaberg argues that the canonical infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke independently preserve a tradition that Jesus was conceived normally—not miraculously—when his mother was seduced or, more probably, raped while she was engaged.<sup>249</sup> It is not within the scope of our present discussion to resolve the issue of whether Mary was seduced or raped.<sup>250</sup> Schaberg herself upholds the likelihood that this tradition is based upon the simple report—probably originating from Jesus’ mother, brothers, and sisters—that Jesus was illegitimately conceived and that further interpretation of this report of illegitimacy in the pre-gospel period does not stem from his family.<sup>251</sup> But what does interest us is that the manner of Jesus’ conception would have been so troublesome to the early Christian writers that it would have prompted them to present that conception in a more favorable light, as witnessed by the canonical nativity stories and the Γένεσις Μαρίας/*Prot. Jas.*, and, if our hypothesis is correct, the formation of the PA out of the Γένεσις Μαρίας, its subsequent incorporation into the canonical Gospel of John, and its eventual universal acceptance by the Christian tradition.

The additional evidence of the illegitimacy tradition presented by Schaberg occurs in a variety of pre- and post-gospel sources:<sup>252</sup> 1) the statement made to Jesus by his opponents in John 8:41 that ἡμεῖς ἐκ πορνείας οὐ γεγενήμεθα, (“we were not born of fornication”), perhaps implying that Jesus was, 2) the characterization of Jesus in Mark 6:3 as ὁ υἱὸς τῆς Μαρίας, (“the son of Mary”), by people in his hometown of Nazareth as he taught in the synagogue, possibly being an insulting reflection on Jesus’ not having a father,<sup>253</sup> 3) the generally negative depiction of the relationship between Jesus and his family in Mark: a) in 3:21 they think Jesus is out of his mind and try to seize him, (καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐξήλθον κρατῆσαι

<sup>247</sup> San Francisco: Harper and Rowe, Publishers, 1987. See also her, “The Foremothers and the Mother of Jesus,” in *Motherhood: Experience, Institution, Theology* (ed. Anne Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 112-19.

<sup>248</sup> Luis Schottroff, *Lydia’s Impatient Sister: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 200.

<sup>249</sup> “The biological father is absent and unnamed . . . He plays no role at all . . . Joseph becomes the child’s legal father, incorporating him into the Davidic line,” *Illegitimacy*, 146-47. In her latest publication Schaberg describes the responses to her conclusions as ranging from acceptance to a “popular and academic anti-feminist backlash, some of it violent,” *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (New York, London: Continuum, 2002), 13-14,

<sup>250</sup> Schaberg’s own reading of the canonical stories leads her to conclude that “Mary is not at fault in this pregnancy . . . both evangelists want the reader to regard Mary as innocent of cooperation in seduction, that is, adultery. They are leading the reader to think . . . of her rape,” *Illegitimacy*, 146.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-54. She finds further support for this position in early reports that the family of Jesus was not among his original followers (John 7:5; Mark 3:21, 31).

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-92. The only sources presented here are those which appear to be significant for the question of Jesus’ illegitimacy in the first two centuries. Schaberg herself considers the *Prot. Jas.* to be a late second-century work and therefore is unaware of its relationship to the PA and the positive enhancement of her thesis that this relationship may provide, *ibid.*, 188-90.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-63. It is significant that whereas Mark never mentions Joseph (although he names four brothers of Jesus and refers also that he had sisters, see above, pp. 23-24, and n. 166 for the texts), Matthew and Luke both take pains to modify Mark’s omission by inserting Joseph into their texts. For Mark’s οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τέκτων, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς Μαρίας, Matthew reads: οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ τέκτονος υἱός; οὐχ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ λέγεται Μαριάμ; and Luke: οὐχὶ υἱός ἐστιν Ἰωσήφ οὗτος;

αὐτόν· ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστι), b) in 3:31-35 Jesus' seeming denial of his biological family in favor of those around him who do the will of God, whom he describes as ἀδελφός μου, καὶ ἀδελφὴ καὶ μήτηρ, ("my brother and sister and mother"), and c) in 6:4 the addition of the relatives and household of Jesus to his statement concerning those among whom a prophet has no honor, (οὐκ ἔστιν προφήτης ἄτιμος εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῦσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ),<sup>254</sup> 4) in *logion* 105 of the second-century *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus says, "He who will know the father and the mother will be called the son of a harlot (πόρνη), possibly referring to his own birth, 5) Origen's third-century report concerning a statement of the pagan philosopher Celsus (178)—purportedly based on a Jewish source—to the effect that Jesus' mother was a poor country spinster who was accused or convicted of adultery (ἐλεγχθεῖσα ἐπὶ μοιχείᾳ) and was driven out by her carpenter fiancé (ἐξωσθεῖσα ἀπὸ τοῦ μνηστευμένου αὐτὴν τέκτονος) because she became pregnant by a soldier named Panthera (κύουσα ἀπὸ τινος στρατιώτου Πανθήρα τοῦνομα),<sup>255</sup> 6) several references to Jesus as Yeshu ben Pantera ("Jesus, son of Pantera") in early rabbinic sources—the earliest of which involves the first-century Rabbi Eliezer—which apparently confirm Origen's information from Celsus' Jewish source (see 5 above).<sup>256</sup>

The cumulative effect of these witnesses strongly suggests that in the first two centuries there was widespread innuendo from both inside and outside the Christian community regarding the questionable circumstances surrounding the conception of Jesus. The extent and intensity of this innuendo was of such magnitude that various early Christian writers, including the authors of the gospels of Matthew and Luke, and the composer of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, felt compelled to include in their works a rejoinder to these insinuations of impropriety on the part of Mary—the idea of her virginal conception of Jesus. The absence of any traces whatsoever of this concept before Matthew and Luke raises the possibility that it was produced as a reaction to the reality of (or to derogatory rumors about) Mary's problematic conception of her son. As the second century gave way to the third the innuendo gradually faded from the collective mind of the church—but not from that of its adversaries—and Mary's reputation of *ante partum* blamelessness came to be enveloped in the respectability of historical fact with the canonization of Matthew and Luke. On the other hand the author of the *Γένεσις Μαρίας* and the later editor of the *Prot. Jas.* composed whole documents whose primary purpose was to redeem Mary's image by portraying her as being endowed with superhuman innocence and sexual purity from her birth and throughout her entire life leading up to, including, and even after her conception of and giving birth to Jesus. Although these latter documents did not achieve canonical status, their portrait of Mary survived and was eventually adopted as the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of the "Mother of God." One can envision in this scenario the transfer of the stigma of adulteress from Mary to the unnamed woman in the PA.

Obviously these proposals are hypothetical. But we must keep in mind that we are working only with vestiges of ancient traditions, wisps of memory from the

<sup>254</sup> In the parallel passages, both Matthew and Luke soften these harsh words of Jesus against his relatives; Matt 13:57 omits the Markan reference to Jesus' relatives, ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῦσιν αὐτοῦ, while Luke 4:24 omits both the reference to Jesus' relatives and to "his house," ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

<sup>255</sup> *Against Celsus* I. 28, 32; cf. 39, 69.

<sup>256</sup> See Schaberg, *Illegitimacy*, 170-174, for references.

**earliest times of a religious institution whose long-standing practice it has been to expunge any remembrance of these ideas from the historical record. And since this institution was able to achieve and retain for many centuries absolute control of the society in which these events transpired, it succeeded in its expurgatory task with such devastating thoroughness that any relevant traditions and documents that have survived have long since been purified of the stain of “unorthodox” elements in the same way that Mary’s image was purified of the blemish of adultery. It cannot be confirmed that Jesus was illegitimately conceived by adultery or rape, or that the historical Mary was an adulteress whose image was transformed into that of an innocent woman who was accused and acquitted of adultery. It is probably beyond our capacity to rediscover the historical truth—across two millennia—concerning the conception of Jesus or his mother’s moral state on the basis of the writings of a few, usually prejudiced, ancient authors. We only hope to have shed new light upon these mysteries and to have opened new avenues of investigation that may yet yield solutions to these seemingly unanswerable questions .**