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Transcript: Jeff Riddle's Interview with James Snapp, Jr.

This transcript was slightly edited to reduce superfluities, such as "well" and "really" and "um."
Where the audio could not be understood, I wrote "[garbled]".
A few notes have been added to clarify accidental misstatements.
The audio interview can be heard at
http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=76161334397

Riddle: Hello and welcome to another episode of Word Magazine. This is pastor Jeff Riddle, from Christ Reformed Baptist Church, in Louisa, Virginia, and this is another edition of Word Magazine. In this edition, I have on the phone James Snapp, who is a pastor of a Christian Church in Indiana, and he has an avid interest in the study of the text of the New Testament. He recently, at the end of June, released an e-book that is titled, *A Fresh Analysis of John 7:53-8:11 With A Tour of the External Evidence*. It's available on Amazon. It's listed there as being about 113 pages in length.

The book got a recent shout-out on the blog Evangelical Text[ual] Criticism, which is a pretty well-respected blog, and James often comments on that blog, and he's considered somebody who keeps even a lot of the professional text-critics honest on some of their observations about the ending of Mark, which he's also an advocate for, the traditional ending of Mark. And more recently I think he's turned more of his attention to the *pericope adulterae*, the woman caught in adultery. So, first of all, James Snapp, welcome. How are you doing today?

Snapp: Thank you; I'm doing well. Thanks for having me on the show – or, podcast, rather.

Riddle: What'd you do for the Fourth of July yesterday?

Snapp: The weather wasn't all that great here, so we stayed home.

Riddle: Yeah; okay. It wasn't great here in Virginia, either. We had rain. But, I was telling you earlier that we visited some friends of ours in Madison County, Virginia. And it stopped raining long enough; they did have a fireworks display at Grey's Mountain Lodge. It's a beautiful area of Virginia, Madison County is. But anyways: so James, you are the pastor of Curtisville Christian Church in Elwood, Indiana. Where is Elwood, Indiana?

Snapp: If you were to start in Indianapolis and drive north 50 miles, you'd be in Tipton County, and Elwood is right next door in Madison County.

Riddle: How long have you been there as the pastor?

Snapp: Twelve years or so.

Riddle: Are you a native of Indiana? Where are you from?

Snapp: Yes; I grew up in Wabash.

Riddle: Okay. Is this the first church you've pastored, or have you been in other churches? Tell me a little about that. What was your path to get into the ministry?

Snapp: I was at a little church in Wood County, Ohio for four years, and before that I did missionary work in Belize, in Central America. I was there for about ten years.

Riddle: Obviously I'm a Reformed Baptist, so I'm guessing we would have some pretty significant confessional differences. Curtisville Christian: is it an independent Christian church? Is it associated with Disciples of Christ, or some other Restorationist Movement? Tell me about the church and the confessional background of it.

Snapp: It has a Restoration Movement background. It's not Disciples of Christ, and it's not non-denominational. [NOTE: I apologize for this blunder. Curtisville Christian Church **IS** non-denominational. I meant to say that it is not *non-instrumental*.] Kind of like, Max Lucado, Bob Russell – that general theological cloud there.

Riddle: I don't know a whole lot about the Churches of Christ or the Restorationist Movement. Are you in the camp that believes in the necessity of baptism as part of the process for regeneration?

Snapp: I'd say that baptism is part of conversion. Obviously there's always a catch, because once people say baptism is essential, the question will always come up, "Well, what about the person who's on his way to the baptistery and gets struck by lightning?" For that sort of thing, I think that God is a reasonable God; He's a merciful God; that there will be people that haven't been immersed in heaven. I just think that I'd like to ask myself, "What does the church have authority to do? Is there authority to invite people to the Sinner's Prayer? Do we see the apostles doing that? What do we see the apostles doing?" And I'd like to just do it the apostolic way when it comes to evangelism and inviting people to come to Christ – to just follow the New Testament pattern. For those specific questions, at the website of the Curtisville Christian Church, there's even – I do have a page to answer questions like that.

Riddle: Obviously, I'm a Reformed Baptist, and hold to the Second Baptist Confession of Faith. You and I would have definitely some different views on ecclesiology, and different views, it sounds like, even on soteriology, on baptism, and so forth. But we're not here to debate that today. That might be an interesting conversation at some other point.

We're here to talk about text criticism. And it's interesting that people who come from different perspectives, whether Reformed Baptists, Reformed Presbyterians, certainly lots of Independent Baptists, and apparently even people like yourself from the Restorationist Movement, have raised questions about the modern critical text. And I guess lots of people under the broad umbrella of evangelicalism. So I'm curious about how your interest in text criticism began. Where did you do theological education, and how did your interest in the whole issue of text criticism begin?

Snapp: Back in 1986, Taylor University, over in Upland, was having a book sale, and I picked up some books, including Kirsopp Lake's 1908 little book, *The Text of the New Testament*. And that kind of got me interested [garbled] at that time. I've been studying the subject of New Testament textual criticism ever since then. Obviously not as a professional interest, but I've been persistently poking around in the subject. I got my training at Cincinnati Bible College – it's Cincinnati Christian University now. I graduated from there in 1990 with a B.A. in Biblical Studies and in Missions. But not any of that was related to textual criticism, except on a very small percentage of it.

Riddle: Did you start studying Biblical Greek when you were at Cincinnati?

Snapp: Yes.

Riddle: Okay. All right. You did that. Any formal education beyond that?

Snapp: I audited a few classes, but nothing official.

Riddle: Okay. So, your interest in text criticism has just sort of been personal interest and personal study, for lack of a better word?

Snapp: I like to think of it as a work-related hobby/obsession.

Riddle: [Chuckles] It is funny, when you get an interest in this, and particularly when you see some of the logical problems with it, it does gain a lot of your attention and interest. I like that: a hobby and an obsession. I like that description. So: was the ending of Mark the first thing that really caught your attention? You've got a lot of interest in that, obviously. Was that the first thing that sort of struck your interest?

Snapp: Not really the first thing. The first thing, I think, was when I read Hort's *Introduction*. After going through it again and again, it just occurred to me that so much of it was dependent on a theory in Hort's head. And a whole lot of the decisions that came about, that we see in the modern critical text, go back all the way to 1881, and even to Tregelles and Tischendorf before that. So much of it depended on an assumption of how things happened, to push aside the Byzantine readings and bring the Alexandrian readings to the forefront.

And, I was like, "Well, what's happened since 1881?" And then you look at guys like Colwell, and Kirkpatrick, and how they talk about the interlude that's occurred since then. We have [essentially?] the same text being presented even though we have all these important discoveries – so many hundreds and hundreds of manuscripts, being processed, being catalogued, the papyri being discovered. But the impact, when you compare the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland text to Hort's edition, there aren't really that significant differences. Because a lot of it doesn't depend so much on the hard evidence that has been discovered since 1881, as it depends on Hort's transmission-model about the Lucianic Recension, and – well, you can say "Lucianic recension" over and over again, and you get the idea of the main foundation-stone of the modern critical text.

That's kind of what it takes to get the Byzantine Text pushed aside. The more we've discovered, the less likely that looks like it ever actually happened. But they don't have anything to fill its place except this vague idea of a gradual influx of readings. But how did that happen so quickly back in the late 200's, early 300's, to get to the point where we see the Byzantine Text in the late 300's? And that question really hasn't been answered. So it was kind of digging into that that got my interest, that made me want to dig more.

The first major variant that I wrote about – I wrote a lot in online conversations with some old discussion-lists that probably don't exist anymore – but I didn't want to write anything until I was 40 because I didn't want to write stuff and they have to go backtrack over it all. So on very many questions I just kind of waited and accumulated data.

Riddle: Right. It's interesting that you said that. I think that's a very interesting insight. I know you sometimes listen to James White, and he very often says, "Well we've got the papyri now; we've got the papyri." And I always think of what you read, though, from people who are the credentialed academic

scholars, and they're saying what you're saying, that is, that the discovery of the papyri really hasn't made any dent in the current editions of the modern critical text. The modern critical text comes from the nineteenth century: the discovery of uncial manuscripts, like Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. The text itself really hasn't taken into consideration the papyri finds and other things. Do you believe that's accurate?

Snapp: Yeah, along the same lines: Hort's rejection of the Syrian [I think I said "Syriac," but meant Syrian] text was based on his observation that before you see the Alexandrian and Western texts, you don't see any unique Byzantine readings among the early patristic writers, and so: "You see? It's not used, because it wasn't there." He could never say that today, because so many essentially Byzantine readings have been found in the old papyri. Not manuscripts with extensive text, but you do have one here and there that reads [garbled]. On that central point, that there were no Byzantine readings, Hort couldn't write today what he wrote back then and be taken seriously. That's why Harry Sturz's work – it's kind of hard to get a hold of these days – I've got a copy of it: *The Byzantine Text-type and New Testament Textual Criticism* – just the charts in there slowly, methodically dismantle Hort's theory.

Riddle: I have a copy of Sturz's book also; it's pretty expensive, you're right; it's out of print. I got a copy on Amazon, and I read it, and I agree. His point is, the papyri readings do have a mixed, I guess, witness: there are witnesses to Alexandrian readings, witnesses to Western readings, but witnesses to Byzantine readings too. And this is not what Westcott and Hort would have theorized. They thought, you find the papyri, everything's going to be Alexandrian. That makes the claims of somebody like James White really ludicrous.

[brief talk-over]

Snapp: James White has claimed, I believe, if I recall correctly, that all of the papyri have an Alexandrian Text, and that's simply not true. You just go through them and the major ones do, but there's also several that are not Alexandrian. They're Western.

Riddle: Right. I know, on your website, you've written about – by the way, I should say that in addition to your church's website, where you have a few resources, you have a blog, where you have a lot of your writings, and you've got a lot of your resources. And the blog is TheTextoftheGospels.com . But I know that you've got an article there where you describe your theory of textual criticism, and don't you call it Equitable Eclecticism – is that right? What is Equitable Eclecticism?

[14:40] Snapp: Yes; at the church's website, there's an article – it's also included in the e-book, *Assorted Essays on New Testament Textual Criticism*, for 99 cents at Amazon – the whole essay is online for anyone who wants to read it, at the church's website, Curtisvillechristianchurch.org . Basically, Equitable Eclecticism is an approach to the evidence that pays attention to the Alexandrian Text, pays attention to the Western Text, and pays attention to most of the Byzantine Text. And that last step – paying attention to the Byzantine Text – isn't being done in the modern compilations, because they can't think of any good reason to pay attention to the Byzantine Text, because Hort has told them, and they have believed, that the Byzantine Text is just an amalgamation of the other two. [Riddle: Right.] So anything unique to it must be late. And that's why the evidence from the papyri is so significant, because it's shown us that, no, there are these readings that were in Egypt; so who knows what were being used in Africa or Greece or elsewhere. But even there in Egypt you see some Byzantine readings.

So basically, the model behind the Equitable Eclectic view is that instead of having the later Byzantine Text, the majority text, be late because every that's unique about it – everything that's not

Alexandrian, and not Alexandrian; excuse me; everything that's not Alexandrian and not Western, I mean – the idea is that besides the Alexandrian and Western texts that were floating around in the 300's, there was also a localized text that looked a lot like the Byzantine Text.

If you took the Peshitta, Codex A, and the text of the purple uncials like N, and just kind of combine those, and use the Gothic version as well – for the Gospels, this is – you would have something there, and when you [garbled] filter out all the differences they have, they must all be echoing something earlier. And that earlier thing would be a strong Byzantine layer. It wouldn't be the Majority Text as we know it today, but it would be about 80% Byzantine. So the basic idea is, if you picture a Lucianic recension, then it's not somebody making a compilation out of the Alexandrian and Western texts only. It's Alexandrian, and Western, and then there's this other thing – which is, on a whole, what might be called Byzantine, or a Proto-Byzantine Text.

Riddle: Let me go back on this and just tease out a few fine points here. Your view would be, for lack of a better term, you would hold to a Restorationist view, not just with regard to ecclesiology, but with regard to the text, that the task of modern people today is to try to restore the original text. You think that we can determine the original text, and that original text, you believe, as best as we can approximate it, was what you've called a Proto-Byzantine text. So, would it be fair to say that your view is kind of a variation on a Byzantine, or Majority Text view? Is that right?

Snapp: Partly. But as far as the basic theory that the Byzantine Text has a strong, ancient layer to it, I'm with guys like Maurice Robinson. I don't think you can look at the Byzantine Text and say everything there is the original text; I think it's one of three or four local texts that deserves to be heard, that is being relegated to the sidelines for most textual critical decisions.

[18:25] Riddle: You probably know, James, that I uphold the TR. I'm in the TR camp. I would hold to the TR based on a confessional perspective. And I would want to emphasize less our ability to restore, and more an emphasis upon preservation. But, anyways, that would be another place where you and I wouldn't necessarily agree. However, I think we do find common ground in both believing in the authenticity of passages like the traditional ending of Mark, and like the *pericope adulterae*.

So, why don't we turn to that? Let's turn to your book, and let's talk a little bit about what you have written about in your book on the woman-caught-in-adultery passage.

Just looking at the outline of your book, after a preface, you have five sections to it. There's a section on external evidence, a section on internal evidence; then there is a section in which you deal with what you call five miscellaneous concerns, and one of those five miscellaneous concerns, the one that certainly intrigued me, was the question of whether or not John 7:53-8:11 is a so-called "floating tradition," and then the fourth section is a conclusion, and the fifth is an appendix, which is *A Tour of the External Evidence*, which I think you actually had previously published as an e-book; you sort of added that as an appendix. So let's just go through each of these sections, and why don't you give me a summary of this.

Let's start off with the external evidence. And if there's anybody who's new to this discussion who might be listening: "External Evidence" refers to the actual physical manuscripts that have a witness to the passage, either ones that omit it, or ones that include it. So, what is the state of the art on the external evidence of the woman-caught-in-adultery passage?

[20:55] Snapp: Well, to give you an idea of how much the evidence is still being accumulated, and has changed in just the past 20 or 30 years: if you look in the New King James Version, you'll see a footnote about this passage, and it says that these verses are bracketed by the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies' text as non-original, and it says they're present in over 900 manuscripts. And that was, like, what, 1982,

I think. But Maurice Robinson, of . . . Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, has made a special project of research on this, and those numbers in the New King James Version's note are a little bit off, because he's confirmed that it's in 1,476 Greek manuscripts. That's a lot more than people seemed to be aware of just in 1982.

Riddle: Since 1982, the New King James Version – I have read that as well; I remember when I preached on that passage, several years ago, seeing that note in the New King James: it's in over 900 manuscripts. You and I both attended the Pericope Adulterae conference at Southeastern back in April 2014, and Maurice Robinson was one of the presenters, and he presented the evidence, and he said it's in over 1,400 manuscripts – Greek manuscripts. That's aside from references to it in the lectionaries and patristic citations. I just looked it up on my blog, the summary I did of that conference: 1,476. It's omitted in 267 Greek manuscripts – that's both uncial manuscripts and minuscule manuscripts.

Snapp: You could make a proportion of 85% has it; and about 15% don't.

Riddle: 85% include it; 15% don't. So, of the 85% that have the woman-caught-in-adultery passage, what are the oldest and strongest witnesses to the PA?

Snapp: Codex Cyprianus has it – it's 700's, maybe 800's. Codex M has it. If you jump down to the end of that *Tour of the External Evidence*, there's a list of some of the major ones that have it. . . . . I'd have to pull out a list to look at the exact ones. [NOTE: I should have mentioned Codex D at this point.]

Riddle: What about on the other side? What are the strongest evidences against the woman-caught-in-adultery passage? What of the 267, as Robinson calculated it in 2014, which omit the PA?

Snapp: Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, obviously Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Those would all be the major ones that don't have it. I'd say if you have those basic Alexandrian manuscripts – there's about six early ones, where you can say, "If these would have had it, Hort would have included it, and we wouldn't be having this conversation." Basically, a cluster of mainly Alexandrian copies.

Codex A doesn't have it; its pages are missing, but you can do a very clear calculation of the space of the page; so even though Codex Alexandrinus doesn't have it because the pages aren't there, but also, even if we had the pages, we'd probably see it's not there. I'd even up that "probably" to "certainly," because the space-calculations aren't even close to allowing it.

Riddle: It's interesting that the page, it's a mutilation, I'm guessing, or is that page just completely missing in Codex Alexandrinus?

Snapp: Well, Codex Alexandrinus is missing a lot of pages; it's missing Matthew chapters 1 through about 25, so that's not so surprising that it would have pages missing. But on those pages that are missing, it's a practical certainty that the story about the adulteress wasn't there. And Codex C is the same way: it doesn't have those pages, but space-calculations pretty much assure that it wasn't there. So, pretty much, Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, A, C, N, T, and W – all of those do not have it.

Riddle: Isn't P75 considered to be pretty much a prototype to Vaticanus; it's almost identical to it; isn't that right?

Snapp: Yeah; it kind of depends on how you do your calculations, but it has a very close affinity to the text of B, yeah.

Riddle: So, in some ways, you might hear two papyri, but in some ways, P75 and Sinaiticus sort of represent the same tradition in some ways. [NOTE: Vaticanus, not Sinaiticus, was intended.]

Snapp: They're definitely in the same transmission-line.

Riddle: Okay. So, if we're just counting manuscripts, 85% of extant Greek manuscripts have the PA; 15% do not. Of course the modern text-critics will chide us and say, "Manuscripts should not be counted, but they should be weighed." So if we weigh this external evidence, why do you read this, weigh it, and still believe that the *pericope adulterae* should be included in the traditional text of the New Testament?

[27:15] Snapp: Well, if you had asked the typical defender of the traditional text, he would probably say, "Well, the church has used it; it's been in the text; it's been in the Vulgate, it was in the Reformation-era text; it has been handed down through the King James, and so forth." That's one way to go at it, but that seems, to me, I don't think you can maintain that on a scientific basis; that's more of a theological basis. And I'd like to approach the whole subject from a scientific basis.

Sometimes it's said that textual criticism is a science and an art. I want to, like, facepalm. It's not an art. Art involves creativity. Textual criticism is a science. We're not trying to make anything original when we do this. We're trying to reconstruct what somebody else made. So, I know Bruce Metzger said that it's an art and a science, but I would protest and say, "No; it is not an art. It's a science." And when you look at the evidence scientifically, you can go back to how the early church used the text of the Gospels in the church.

Justin Martyr, around the year 160, mentions that we read the memoirs of the apostles while we have time; here's the meal that we have when we have meet together; he describes Christian services, worship services. And, also, in the early days of the church, there were annual feast-days celebrated, inherited from the calendar of Mosaic times; for instance, the Passover was celebrated, at Easter, or Resurrection Sunday, Easter-week. And, Pentecost was celebrated. We see it being celebrated already there in Acts chapter 2. So, there were always feast-days in the calendar of the church, as long as there has been a Christian church. And, like I said, one of those feast-days was Pentecost.

And in the Byzantine lectionary, the church separated, in the Gospel of John, a passage beginning in John 7:37, as Jesus is speaking there about the coming of the Holy Spirit, the same theme that you have in Acts chapter 2. So it's a natural passage to go to when you're talking about the day the Holy Spirit came to the church; because that's what Jesus begins to speak about: *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living waters, but this He spoke concerning the Spirit,"* and [garbled] you have that theme there.

Now, if you go on, to when you get to the end of John chapter 7, the theme drastically changes, and it's about the story of the woman caught in adultery. But the last thing that's said before that change is when the religious leaders are getting together – the Pharisees and the chief priests – and they say, "Search the Scriptures; no prophet has arisen out of Galilee," which, you know, ends on a down-note.

So what the lectionary-makers did was, they decided to include John 8:12 in the Pentecost-reading, the reading that was assigned to that particular day, to be read on that day of the year. So on Pentecost, when the church standardized the readings, on Pentecost they would read John 7:37 through 52, but they wouldn't end it there; they would include one more verse, and [garbled] that's John chapter 8 verse 12, and skip, thus, the intervening verses, which we know as the *pericope adulterae*, John 7:53 through 8:11.

My theory is that in one of the copies that was used in the early transmission-stream that resulted in the Alexandrian Text's reading, there was a lector's copy being used as an exemplar, being used to copy out of to make other copies from. And a lector had made little notes or marks in his copy that meant, "Stop here, and skip down to here," in his copy. So when he came to the Pentecost-reading, he

would read to the end of John chapter 7 verse 52, and then he would skip down to the beginning of John chapter 8 verse 12, and that would be it. He would know that meant, when Pentecost came every year, that you're supposed to skip the verses in between.

Somewhere along the line, in the early or mid-100's, somebody using a lector's copy – it might have been late 100's, really, but in the 100's – someone using a lector's copy just like that – who was very meticulous, very professional and disciplined – was making a copy of the Gospels, or a copy of the Gospel of John, and he came to those instructions, and thought, "Well, this is what I've been instructed to do." He didn't realize the instructions were for the lector; he thought they were for him. So when he came to the end of John 7:52, and saw a little note or symbol that said, "Skip down to this other symbol," or, "Skip down to this other point in the text," that's exactly what he did, and that's how the passage got lost. Basically, a scribe misinterpreted symbols that were intended to instruct the lector to skip the passage, and he thought they were meant [*sic*] that he was supposed to skip the passage, and that's how they disappeared. It's pretty simple.

Riddle: So if you were to sum it up, the reason it's missing in basically the Alexandrian stream is because there was a confusion about lectionary instructions – about when the passage was read in the liturgy of the early church, and it was accidentally omitted in some early exemplars and that led to its omission in some manuscripts. However, it was retained in the vast majority, and so it's the earliest and best reading. Is that a fair summary?

[33:30] Snapp: Somewhat; I'd make a few clarifications of that. First, I'd say it had to happen before the Alexandrian Text in Egypt became a really strong transmission-stream. It was so early that it had to have affected the text in other areas. For instance, the Peshitta does not have the PA, in general. Codex A and the Gothic version – we can't tell the Gothic version [garbled]; we only have one copy, but for what it's worth, the Gothic version, as far as we can tell, doesn't have it. So it has to have been a pretty early point; it can't be something happening later in the time of Augustine. It has to be something very early, in the 100's, because it affected not just the Alexandrian text-stream; it also affected branches, or sub-branches, of other groups.

Riddle: Is your view – is the view you just articulated – is that pretty much the same view as Maurice Robinson; is that consistent with his view?

Snapp: You'd probably have to ask him for the details, but I think that's the gist of it. I think he might propose that perhaps what happened was that maybe someone didn't accidentally drop it, but deliberately moved it to the end of the Gospel of John. And when that happened, some scribes simply didn't copy it out because they didn't know what to do with it. They reached the end of the Gospel of John, and they had this other thing there, so they just didn't copy it. That's another possibility. I think the accidental dropping is just simpler. Both are plausible.

Riddle: The thing I find interesting about both your position and Maurice Robinson's, there are similarities between them, seeing the omission as due to some sort of lectionary, whether intentional, unintentional – it's a reasonable possibility. It's plausible. It's a reasonable possibility. In some ways, that's the burden of proof. I mean, the people who have chosen to omit the PA are making a conjecture based on a possible suggestion, and they don't really have any firm proof that it wasn't the original reading, and you've given an alternative explanation of the same evidence, and so has Maurice Robinson. And why should we accept their interpretation versus yours, when both seem to be equally reasonable? Does that make sense?

Snapp: Yeah. One other clarification I would make is, I wouldn't use the term "lectionary" for something that happens in the 100's, because there were no lectionaries, as we define them today. [Riddle: Right.] Lectionaries are the books themselves that separate the passages individually so that they were in the order that they were read chronologically. So, you might have a little from Matthew, and then some from John; and then you have a little from this; it's all chopped up. Those didn't exist in the 100's.

Riddle: How about just, "for liturgical reasons," then?

Snapp: I would use the term "lection-cycles." Because these weren't fully developed, "This is what we read this day; this is what we read that day," for all Sundays and the weekdays. This would be, like, "We have five feasts. And here's what we read this time; here's what we read here; here's what we read here." It doesn't need to be anything more than that very basic, very primitive level. So, I'd say a lection-cycle was the pivotal factor that involved the loss of the passage.

[37:20] Riddle: Let's move on; our time is short, so I want to try to cover, to get as much in as we can in this conversation. Let's turn to the internal evidence – the second section in your book. And, for those who might be new to the conversation: internal evidence is looking at the text of John in this case, itself, and asking whether or not the wording, the style, the vocabulary of John 7:53 through 8:11, the theological themes, the theological perspective – whether that is consistent with the rest of the style, vocabulary, theology, in the Gospel of John.

People who reject the *pericope adulterae* argue that it is not consistent with the rest of John. Those who affirm would give reasons to argue why it is consistent with the rest of the Gospel of John. So give us a summary, James: in your book, what is your analysis of the internal evidence with regard to the *pericope adulterae*?

Snapp: I think it fits John's themes really well, and I think the only reason why some folks have not acknowledged that is because there's this theory – I think Gordon Fee has promoted it – that John is trying to paint this picture of Jesus as the springs of living water and that's supposed to be paralleled to the ceremonies of the feast, and then the light of the world is supposed to be paralleled the next day of the feast, and if everything's happening on the day after that, then that parallel doesn't work. What I don't see in the actual text, though, is anything that would suggest that John is trying to do that. It's a nice little metaphorical picture, but that's not necessarily what's on John's mind, even thought it might have been what's on Gordon Fee's mind, or D. A. Carson's mind, to make those connections. John seems perfectly willing to let people make their own connections.

Also, as far as the light of the world goes, it also makes a very bright, shiny point, if the day after, Jesus is speaking about this early in the morning, as the lights that have been lighting up the temple go out, and He is there, and the sun is shining, and the sun is beginning to overwhelm all the feeble lights of the torches, and now the sun is shining, and that's when He says, "I am the light of the world," in the morning the next day, after He's had the encounter about the adulteress. It works a little bit with Fee's picture; it works a whole lot better without it.

Riddle: I think the difficulty with the internal evidence always is – maybe it goes back to your statement about text criticism being a science and an art, or whether it is merely a science, or merely an art – it's the issue of subjectivism. One person can study the material and say, "This isn't Johannine." Another person can look at the same material and say, "It *is* Johannine." And of course one of the things that people who defend the authenticity of the *pericope adulterae* have done is to choose out a similar passage, a passage of similar length, in other portions of John, a 12-verse section, and you can find, sometimes, some *hapax*

legomena, some words that only appear there. Are you going to argue then that *that* passage isn't authentically Johannine? It just seems to be very subjective.

Snapp: Exactly. I deal with [garbled word-counts in the book, and others, too, have already done the same kind of analysis in John; they look at this or that section in John and say, "Well, this one over here has a very high concentration of non-Johannine words; are we going to take that out too?" It seems pretty clear, and I feel like, [garbled – it was admitted in the 1800's] if it wasn't for the external evidence, the internal evidence at this point, people would just kind of say, "Meh. Yeah, but *some* passage has to be the passage that has the highest number of non-Johannine, or once-used, words. It's surprising how many passages you could say, "This must not be authentic," if you just tried to go on the internal evidence.

Also, when you come to Johannine style in the *pericope adulterae*, you have to ask, *"Which text are you using as the basis for comparison?",* because there are different forms of the *pericope adulterae*. If you look at Jonathan Borland's work, he isolates three different text-streams just in the early Old Latin transmission-line. So, if you're going to take *this* transmission-stream, and use *that* text, then you're going to come up with different numbers, and obviously a different total of how many once-used words are there. If you use, for instance, the text that's in the family-1 line of manuscripts – the Caesarean text, the ones that usually have the passage in the back, after John 21 – try it with that, and you won't get the same numbers that you get with the text that all those other comparisons are using.

[43:00] Riddle: Right. What are some of the things that those who oppose the authenticity of the passage – what are some of the words in John 7:53 through 8:11 that they claim are non-Johannine?

Snapp: I would think probably the number one would be the reference in John chapter 8 verse 3, where John refers to the scribes. And, as I just mentioned, in the family-1 text, that's not the word that's used there; there's a reference to the high priests there instead.

Riddle: So, they would say, "Scribes. That's a term that's used in the Synoptic Gospels, but it's only used in John 8:3 in the Gospel of John," and so they would conclude therefore this is a non-Johannine text.

Snapp: Yeah, a lot of weight has been put on that point. But again, if you're going to put weight on that point, then you can basically turn that around, and say, "Let's look at that family-1 text, and see if that's Johannine." Does John ever use the phase, 'the high priests and Pharisees'? And there it is; it is Johannine. So, yeah. The internal evidence just really isn't as strong.

And that's kind of a secondary line of defense for those that argue for non-authenticity. The first one is the line that it's a "floating anecdote." And if you look at the works by James White, and the works by Metzger – well, White's just echoing Metzger – and in many commentaries, if you compare them to Bruce Metzger's *Textual Commentary*, you can kind of see what the other commentators have been reading: they've been reading Metzger, and they're trying to find different ways to rephrase what he says. So many of them say this is a floating story that's kind of floating around like a butterfly: sometimes it landed there at the end of Luke 21; sometimes it landed somewhere in John 7 or 8; sometimes it landed at the end of the book. The thing is, they're still quoting Metzger, even though subsequent to Metzger, Chris Keith and some others completely eviscerate – I mean, pulverize down to the last brick – that position.

[45:15] Riddle: Let me respond to some of this and probe a little bit further. You raise a couple of interesting things. I don't want to leave the issue about the scribe. For just a second: my response to that, I often refer to the fact that the use of the reference in the Gospel of John to "the twelve" only appears, I think, three times, in John 6:67, 70, and 71, references to Jesus' disciples as the *duodeka*,

the twelve. It's known, the listing of the twelve disciples in the Synoptic Gospels – but John, one of the interesting things about him is, he never lists the twelve disciples as in the Synoptic Gospels or in the first chapter of Acts. But he knows about the *duodeka*; he knows about the twelve, unless someone could take the three references that are there clustered together in John 6 within three or four verses, and say, "Oh, this is non-Johannine." You know what I mean? And I would say the same thing related to – he knows the Synoptic tradition; he includes the feeding of the five thousand; he knows the Synoptic tradition; he certainly would have known of the scribes, and Jesus is an opponent of the scribes. So it seems to be illogical to exclude the authenticity of it.

Now let me jump over to your other comments for a second. You raise a couple of interesting things which I want to get to, and I'm looking at the time. We're about 45 minutes in, and I want to keep this to under an hour if we can. So we jump to the PA as a floating tradition. So let's just go ahead and transition to the third part of your book, which are the *"Five Miscellaneous Concerns."* And one of those five miscellaneous concerns relates to the idea that the PA is a so-called "floating tradition." I'm looking at your five concerns: number one is for evangelical Christians, only the original text is authoritative. Two: reliance on manuscripts' quality and age to solve specific textual contests is fallacious. Three: the theory that John 7:53-8:11 was a floating, edited, accepted insertion is intrinsically unlikely. Four: thinking through the implication of providential preservation. Five: early texts of the Christian church.

Let's go back and spend some time talking about the idea of this as a floating tradition. One of the things you mentioned was that Metzger promoted this idea. It's there in his *Textual Commentary*, which was extremely influential on pastors and seminarians. You see people like D. A. Carson and James White; they just, they often paraphrase, if not quote *verbatim*, the ideas of Metzger, without citing primary evidence; they use him as a secondary evidence. What you're saying is that since the work of Metzger, people like Chris Keith have come along and have blown out of the water any notion of the PA being a floating tradition. So let's go back on this a second. Summarize for me if you can: why did Metzger argue that it was a floating tradition, and what did Chris Keith and others – what have they done, said; what have they discovered since that has eviscerated, as you said, this theory?

[49:00] Snapp: Basically, Metzger said that since you have this story sometimes at the end of Luke 21, sometimes at different places besides where it's usually found in John 7, or right after John 8:12; sometimes you have John 8:12 repeated, and sometimes at the end of the Gospel. Metzger basically said – I can just read it: he said it's "a piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western church and which was subsequently incorporated into various manuscripts at various places. Most copyists apparently thought that it would interrupt John's narrative least if it were inserted after 7:52 – others placed it after 7:36 – or after 7:44 – or after 21:25, or after Luke 21:38."

Now when you look at those things, Metzger says nothing – I don't know if he didn't know it, or if he just didn't think that his readers would be interested in it – he says nothing at all about *why* it's at those particular points. If you were to walk through those particular points, which I do in my book, you would see that each and every one is related to the lection-cycle.

After 7:52 is obviously the main place, where the vast majority, more than 96% of the ones that do have it, that's where they have it. After 7:36? Well, look: that's right before the Pentecost-lection begins. So what the people that made those manuscripts were doing was, they were saying, "Look, let's make the lector's job a little bit easier." Instead of having to jump from 7:52 to 8:12, they said, "Let's just put that story here, and that way the lection for Pentecost-day will be one continuous, non-interrupted block of text."

That's all that's going on there. Daniel Wallace has completely misunderstood what's happening when you see the PA being moved within chapter 7 or after 8:12. There's nothing about double exemplars or anything like that. It's simply somebody making the lector's job easier on Pentecost by moving the story of the adulteress right before it, or right after it, or to the end of the book. What those

scribes who were doing that were doing was, they were simplifying the lector's job on Pentecost, by making the Pentecost-lection one continuous block of text, so the guy wouldn't have to say, "Excuse me folks; time out; wait till I find that last verse," and jump down. With the passage in there, either before or after it, or at the end of the Gospel of John, you've got the Pentecost-lection as one continuous reading – which simplifies things for the lector, if you're reading the text out loud, you don't have to make that jump. That's what's going on when you find it after John 7:36, when you find it after 8:12, and when you find it at the end of the Gospel of John.

[51:50] Riddle: So you would attribute it being moved in these very limited number of manuscripts to simply lectionary adjustments. I think, as I understand it correctly, one of the things Chris Keith says in his article on this, is, he just points out that all of the manuscripts that have it moved to different locations are late. It already – the place that it appears in the earliest manuscript traditions is at where it stands now in the traditional text, John 7:53-8:11. It's only in much later manuscripts is there even any evidence of it being moved about.

Snapp: I think that Chris Keith focused on the Greek evidence, and might have missed the evidence from the Palestinian Aramaic that indicates that the movement occurred earlier. But the basic idea that, for instance, in the f-13 manuscript-group, and where we see it at the end of the Gospel of Luke, [garbled] "Well, how did it get over around Luke?"

Well, the contents of John 8:3-11, that was also used as a special lection, on Saint Pelagia's Day, October 8. And earlier in Luke 21, you have a feast-day, in what's called the Menologion, the fixed, or the non-movable feast-days, for Saints Sergius and Bacchus, that's earlier there in Luke 21. So where better to put it, according to the thinking of somebody in the Middle Ages: "Where should we put this, if we take it out of John, or perhaps out of the end of John, where should we place it to make it more convenient?" They said, "Well, we read *this* passage on October 7 from Luke 21. Why not just put it right after that, because that's where the reading will be for October 8, nice and convenient-like?" And that's why you find it in Luke, in the f-13 manuscripts, which is clearly a lectionary-related movement. And the guys that know what lectionary-related movements are, like Van Lopik – Chris Keith covers the data – they see it, and they say, well, yeah, it's obvious – because when you know about lectionary cycles, and the lection-cycles, it *is* obvious.

The thing is, guys like James White have no clue when it comes to lection-cycles. If you gave them a lectionary and said, "What's this [garbled] mean in this manuscript here?" I don't think they could read that; I don't think they would even begin to know what to do with one.

Riddle: Right. You mentioned Bruce Metzger; as I understand it, did his Ph. D. at Princeton, studying a lectionary manuscript that was in the library there. He knew, he understood, the lectionary text. But what I always find in Metzger's *Textual Commentary* is, he's very selective in the information he shares, and he always shades it in such a way to support the modern critical text, and to exclude any questioning of it, and so I'm not surprised that he doesn't, maybe, tell us everything that he knows when he presents that information there.

Snapp: Oh, don't get me started on how one-sided Metzger's *Textual Commentary* is, and how much data is left out, not only in his textual comments, but also in the apparatus, and minimized. Like I said, we could go all day on that.

Riddle: Let me cover just two other things as we come closer to a conclusion. One thing is, I want you to just briefly give me a review of what you do in your book with Augustine, and Augustine's explanation for why the *pericope adulterae* was excluded in manuscripts that he knew of in his time, in the fifth

century. And then secondly, I want to end with asking what you think is the spiritual significance of the fact that there is controversy over the PA. What is lost, if, let's say – why should conservative evangelicals, in my case a Reformed person, I guess in your case, maybe more evangelical, or why would a Christian, someone in the Christian Church – why would it be a big issue as to whether or not the *pericope adulterae* is included?

So, first of all, tell me, talk about Augustine, and then let's move to that final question.

[56:40] Snapp: Okay. Let's look at Augustine and then you can re-ask that second question. But first, Augustine: writing in the early 400's; he's in North Africa, in Hippo. And Augustine has both Latin and Greek manuscripts; every now and then he alludes to readings in his Greek manuscripts, like he does to Mark chapter 16, verse 12. So, Augustine makes an extensive comment on the story of the woman caught in adultery, and he mentions that some manuscripts don't have it. And his theory is that some men – he doesn't say in what time, or where – but some Christians were concerned that their wives might look at this story, and say, "Our wives are going to use this story and they're going to go commit adultery, and then after they're caught and we want to punish them, they will say, 'But honey, Jesus forgave this adulteress; aren't you going to forgive me?'" and so they thought their wives would use it as an excuse for licentiousness, and so that's why some men took it out.

Plus, Augustine – bear in mind that not only does Augustine show that he had it in his manuscripts, but he also quotes his heretical opponent Faustus, and Faustus uses it to make an objection, and Augustine also mentions that some other pagans were using the example of Jesus writing in the ground as an example of childish behavior. So, really, Augustine is three witnesses in one when it comes to confirming the presence of the passage.

The thing is, when you look at the text of the story of the woman caught in adultery, if somebody were out there saying, "Hmm; I don't want my wife to use this passage; I'm going to take it out," he would probably just start, maybe, at verse 3, because verses 53 through 2 don't really have anything to do with the main subject. They can be retained and nothing about adultery would be in the picture. So the question is – and I address this in the book – is, why would anybody take out 7:53 and chapter 8 verses 1 and 2, if the only problematic part was from chapter 8 verse 3 onward to the end of chapter [*sic* – I meant verse] eleven?

And, sometimes, if you've ever had your wallet stolen, the mugger took your money, and you say, "Why did you take my pictures?" What possible use could he have for that? Maybe it was just the easiest thing to do, if it was already existing as a lection – as the Old Latin evidence clearly shows that it was, here in John, at this spot, just like it is in the Vulgate – maybe it was because that was the easiest thing to do: to take out the whole lection. But I don't subscribe to Augustine's theory. I think it was more of a lection-related thing; I think Augustine was just making a calculated guess, but I don't think that's what happened. And, again, there's a chapter, a section, on this in the book.

Riddle: You fall back more on it being a lection – from my perspective, I think it's intriguing, because, again, not necessarily – I think, sometimes, what Augustine wrote there is simplistically dismissed as, "Oh, how silly is this, that women would use this as a justification for the committing of adultery," or something like that; it's ridiculous, I mean, it might even be, today, certainly with feminism, be seen as misogynistic or whatnot. But I think that's too simplistic. I think what he's saying is, it was a source of controversy, probably over the early Christian view of the Law – the abiding validity of the law. Certainly, it would have been controversial, and it seems to be a plausible ground for why some might have wanted to eliminate it. But anyway: your belief more is that it was due to liturgical reasons that it was excluded.

Snapp: I would appeal to Heinlein's Law, which is, "Don't attribute to villainy what can be explained by stupidity."

Riddle: Let me return to the final question, basically: what is the theological spiritual significance over the debate over the *pericope adulterae*? So, you're a pastor in Curtisville, Indiana and someone might say to you, "Well, you know, the greatest scholars in the world have, you know, excluded this from the modern critical text, and why don't you just go along with that?" Why are you arguing for this? What are the stakes in this for you?

[1:01:25] Snapp: Well, I see some of the scholars that are arguing for the non-authenticity of the passage, and I see that in order to sustain their view, they have to twist the evidence and leave out important things. Look at the NET's notes about this passage, and show me: where does it mention Augustine? Where does it mention Jerome's statement that he found the passage in many manuscripts, both Greek and Latin? It's not there. They're leaving that part out; they're using unjust weights, unequal weights, when they present the evidence. And so, their case is not really as strong as they present it as being at all; they just make it seem that way. And one generation of scholars does that, and the other generation of scholars says, "Yeah, okay." Basically, there's a whole bunch of groupthink, a herd-mentality. And the evidence never gets re-examined, in large part, because the evidence has never been known; all of the commentators are [garbled] what they received from their teachers, who have done the same thing.

As far as the question of what difference does the inclusion or the passage, or non-inclusion, make, I would say, well, it's nice to know that this happened. And to constantly have it bracketed, or to have it removed, as some folks have called for, I think that would be a loss.

Sometimes people wonder, which is better: the *Textus Receptus*, where I think a very strong case can be made that it has a lot of accretions in it, or the Nestle-Aland text, for which I think a strong case can be made that it's got a lot of holes in it. And I would say, if I was sailing a ship, I would rather sail in the one that has the barnacles than the one that has the holes.

Riddle: Interesting. Of course, I'm a defender of the TR, but I like the analogy; you'd rather sail in a ship with barnacles than holes. That's good; I will use that one again.

Snapp: Now, ideally, of course, I'd prefer a ship that's complete and doesn't have the barnacles and doesn't have the holes either.

Riddle: Right. James, I really appreciate you taking the time today to talk with me, and I'm going to get this posted, and hopefully some other people will get a chance to learn about your book, and they can, again, download the book at Amazon.com – I think it's $4.99 to download it –

Snapp: $2.99; I've lowered the price. It's $2.99.

Riddle: $2.99; you can get a Kindle version of it and get a chance to read it. I think you'll find it very interesting, and you might also want to look at some of the information. I will put a blog-post on my blog, JeffRiddle.net, and I'll have links to James Snapp's text-criticism blog, and to where you can find his book on Amazon. So, thank you again, and we'll look forward to the next issue of Word Magazine.

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James Snapp's blog:
www.thetextofthegospels.com

Jeff Riddle's blog:
http://www.jeffriddle.net/

Amazon e-book for Kindle:
https://www.amazon.com/Fresh-Analysis-John-External-Evidence-ebook/dp/B01HBC8EGQ

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