

The *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*: Textual Evidence of Modern Forgery^{*}

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The present essay summarises textual evidence indicating that the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* is essentially a 'patchwork' of words and short phrases culled from the lone extant Coptic manuscript of the *Gospel of Thomas* (Nag Hammadi Codex II), prepared by a forger using Michael W. Grondin's 2002 PDF edition of this manuscript. The text contains at least five tell-tale signs of its modern origin, including the apparent replication of a typographical (and grammatical) error from Grondin's edition. A direct link between it and Grondin's work also seems to be confirmed by the earliest known English translation of the fragment.

Keywords: Jesus' Wife, gospel, fragment, forgery, fake

1. The Forgery Debate: 2012 and 2014

On 18 September 2012, Karen L. King announced at the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies in Rome that a private manuscript collector had recently brought a remarkable papyrus fragment to her attention.¹ King had examined the business-card sized papyrus with Roger Bagnall and AnneMarie Luijendijk, and they had collectively concluded that it could be dated on palaeographic grounds to the fourth century.² The Coptic fragment partially preserved a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples in which Jesus unambiguously refers to 'my wife'. This dialogue, King argued, was probably part of a

* Special thanks: Milton E. Bernhard.

- 1 The collector, who remains anonymous by request, initially contacted King about the fragment in July 2010 and personally delivered it to her in December 2011. A. Sabar, 'The Inside Story of a Controversial New Text About Jesus', *Smithsonian.com*, 17 September 2012, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-inside-story-of-a-controversial-new-text-about-jesus-41078791>.
- 2 K. L. King with contributions by A. Luijendijk, "'Jesus said to them, 'My wife...'"': A New Coptic Gospel Papyrus', *Harvard Divinity School* (2012) 1–52, at 3, 5–12, https://web.archive.org/web/20120919115852/http://news.hds.harvard.edu/files/King_JesusSaidToThem_draft_0917.pdf.

text originally composed in the latter half of the second century.³ King made images of the papyrus fragment and her provisionally approved article on the subject for *Harvard Theological Review* (*HTR*) available online. For reference purposes, she designated the otherwise unidentifiable fragment as the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* (*GJW*).⁴

It became evident shortly after King revealed *GJW* that there were significant scholarly concerns about the possibility that it was a modern forgery.⁵ Several Coptic specialists at the conference in Rome – including Stephen Emmel, Wolf-Peter Funk and Alin Suciu – voiced suspicions about the fragment based on peculiarities in its handwriting and grammar, just as peer reviewers of a draft of King's *HTR* article had done previously.⁶ Then, on 21 September 2012, Francis Watson released a web article containing what would prove to be the key conceptual breakthrough in the analysis of *GJW*: the text appeared to be little more than a 'collage' or 'patchwork' of words and short phrases copied from the only Coptic version of the *Gospel of Thomas* (*GTh*) preserved from antiquity.⁷ Simon Gathercole, Oli Homron, Mark Goodacre, Leo Depuydt and other scholars collaborating internationally via the internet quickly established that all but a word or two of the dialogue in *GJW* could be traced back to *GTh*.⁸

A vigorous scholarly debate about the significance of the verbal similarities between *GJW* and *GTh* quickly ensued online. Goodacre became an early supporter of the 'patchwork' forgery theory and used his nearly decade-old *NT Blog* to disseminate his own observations (as well as those of others) in support of it.⁹ Andrew Bernhard soon pointed out that *GJW*'s most problematic line of text might well be the result of a modern forger's injudicious use of 'Grondin's Interlinear Coptic/English Translation of the Gospel of Thomas' ('Grondin's

3 King, 'Coptic Gospel Papyrus', 13.

4 King, 'Coptic Gospel Papyrus', 1.

5 The term 'forgery' is used here, as it has been throughout debate on *GJW*, as a label for 'a fake prepared with the intention to deceive'.

6 After receiving critical feedback from two of the three anonymous peer reviewers in August 2012, King consulted with noted Coptic linguist Ariel Shisha-Halevy, who stated that specific grammatical features of *GJW* did not 'warrant condemning it as a forgery'. King, 'Coptic Gospel Papyrus', 3–4.

7 Watson released a series of articles about *GJW*, all of which were announced on the *NT Blog* (see [http://ntweblog.blogspot.com/search/label/Francis Watson](http://ntweblog.blogspot.com/search/label/Francis%20Watson)). One of Watson's most prescient observations in these articles was that *GJW* shared a line-break with the lone extant manuscript of *GTh* in Coptic.

8 Gathercole and Homron pointed out parallels in *GTh* to line 6 of the dialogue in *GJW*; Goodacre did the same for line 7. Depuydt submitted a draft article arguing that *GJW* was a modern forgery to the editorial board of *HTR* within a week of King's presentation in Rome, but it did not become widely available until it was published 'mostly unchanged in its original state' in *HTR* in April 2014. L. Depuydt, 'The Alleged *Gospel of Jesus's Wife*: Assessment and Evaluation of Authenticity', *HTR* 107 (2014) 172–89.

9 See [http://ntweblog.blogspot.com/search/label/Gospel of Jesus' Wife](http://ntweblog.blogspot.com/search/label/Gospel%20of%20Jesus'%20Wife).

Interlinear’).¹⁰ On 11 October 2012, Bernhard released an online article calling attention to a number of features in the text that suggested *GJW* was probably prepared by someone relying on Grondin’s edition of *GTh*, and Goodacre simultaneously spotlighted the most startling discovery in a blog post: *GJW* seems to reproduce a typographical (and grammatical) error directly from ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’.¹¹

King withdrew from public discussion about *GJW* for roughly a year and a half as she coordinated a series of laboratory tests on the fragment and a Coptic fragment of the Gospel of John provided by the same manuscript collector. The testing, King asserted when her revised article on *GJW* was published in *HTR* in April 2014, ‘consistently provides positive evidence of the antiquity of the papyrus and ink ... with no evidence of modern fabrication’.¹² The predominant material in each fragment was identified as ‘oxidized cellulosic material, which is consistent with old papyrus’.¹³ The papyrus of *GJW* was determined to have been harvested during the seventh–ninth centuries CE, and the papyrus of the John fragment during the seventh or eighth century CE.¹⁴ The chemical composition of the inks used on the two papyrus fragments were found to be similar but distinct; both were comparable to inks based on carbon black pigments (such as ‘lamp black’) from manuscripts dated between 500 BCE and 1000 CE and showed no sign of modern contaminants.¹⁵ Unpersuaded by textual arguments that *GJW* was a modern forgery,¹⁶ King asserted that the completed laboratory tests supported ‘the conclusion that the papyrus and ink of *GJW* are ancient’.¹⁷

10 Bernhard first suggested that a forger had used ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’ on 27 September 2012. He released a series of articles about *GJW*, all of which remain available on his website, http://www.gospel-thomas.net/gtbypage_112702.pdf.

11 For a helpful summary of the forgery debate in 2012, see M. W. Grondin, ‘A Question of Content: How I Saw the Internet Furor Over the Jesus’ Wife Fragment’, *The Gospel of Thomas Resource Center*, http://gospel-thomas.net/x_gjw.htm.

12 K. L. King, ‘“Jesus said to them, “My wife . . .”’: A New Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, *HTR* 107 (2014) 131–59, at 154.

13 T. M. Swager, J. M. Azzarelli, J. B. Goods, ‘Study of Two Papyrus Fragments with Fourier Transform Infrared Microspectroscopy’, *HTR* 107 (2014) 165.

14 According to tests conducted in March 2014, the calibrated age range for the papyrus of *GJW* was determined to be between 659 CE and 869 CE (median date: 741 CE), and the calibrated age range for the John papyrus between 648 CE and 800 CE (median date: 718 CE). N. Tuross, ‘Accelerated Mass Spectrometry Radiocarbon Determination of Papyrus Samples’, *HTR* 107 (2014) 170–1.

15 J. T. Yardley and A. Hagadorn, ‘Characterization of the Chemical Nature of the Black Ink in the Manuscript of *The Gospel of Jesus’s Wife* through Micro-Raman Spectroscopy’, *HTR* 107 (2014) 162–4.

16 King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 154–8; ‘Response to Leo Depuydt, “The Alleged *Gospel of Jesus’s Wife*: Assessment and Evaluation of Authenticity”’, *HTR* 107 (2014) 190–3.

17 King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 135.

However, images of the John fragment posted on Harvard Divinity School's new *GJW* website soon helped put the laboratory results in perspective and provided the most compelling evidence to date that *GJW* is a modern forgery.¹⁸ On 24 April 2014, Christian Askeland viewed the online images of the John fragment and observed that the text on the seventh- or eighth-century papyrus fragment was written in a Coptic dialect (Lycopolitan) that had fallen into disuse centuries earlier; even more surprisingly, the text appeared to have been copied directly from a 1924 edition of the Qau codex prepared by Herbert Thompson.¹⁹ Goodacre and Suciú swiftly illustrated the uncanny relationship between the John fragment and Thompson's edition of the Qau codex (online since 2008).²⁰ Emmel then pointed out that the John fragment would have had to be part of 'the tallest (or widest) papyrus codex yet known' if authentic.²¹ In an article published in June 2014, Askeland demonstrated conclusively that the John fragment was a modern forgery with the remarkable observation that it shared all seventeen of its line-breaks exactly with the Qau codex: 'The forger skipped every other line of Thompson's text when copying it onto his papyrus fragment ... [but] failed to skip a line when he had to turn two pages of Thompson's edition'.²²

Clearly, a modern forger could prepare an ancient-looking papyrus fragment with ink not detectable as a recent fabrication in laboratory analysis.²³ In fact, the tests King had arranged actually failed to expose a *pair* of modern forgeries: one was the John fragment, and the second was the other fragment with essentially indistinguishable handwriting (*GJW*).²⁴ As Askeland has now explained and

18 Harvard Divinity School's current *GJW* website (<http://gospelofjesuswife.hds.harvard.edu>) includes images of the John fragment in supplements to two articles: Swager *et al.*, 'Fourier Transform Infrared Microspectroscopy'; Yardley and Hagadorn, 'Micro-Raman Spectroscopy'.

19 C. Askeland, 'Jesus had a Sister-in-Law', *Evangelical Textual Criticism*, 24 April 2014, <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com>; cf. H. Thompson, *The Gospel of St John according to the Earliest Coptic Manuscript* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1924).

20 A. Suciú, 'Christian Askeland Finds the "Smoking Gun"', *Patristics, Apocrypha, Coptic Literature and Manuscripts*, 24 April 2014, <http://alinsuciú.com>; M. Goodacre, 'Illustrating the Forgery of Jesus' Wife's Sister Fragment', *NT Blog*, 25 April 2014, <http://ntweblog.blogspot.com>.

21 S. Emmel, 'The Codicology of the New Coptic (Lycopolitan) Gospel of John Fragment', *Patristics, Apocrypha, Coptic Literature and Manuscripts*, 22 June 2014, <http://alinsuciú.com>.

22 C. Askeland, 'A Fake Coptic John and its Implications for the "Gospel of Jesus's Wife"', *TynBul* 65 (2014) 1–10, at 4.

23 Blank pieces of papyrus 'are available for purchase on the antiquities market' and 'would pass a Carbon 14 dating test'. King, 'Coptic Gospel Papyrus', 11. Testing ink by spectroscopy 'can only falsify the document – it can't demonstrate authenticity, as many others have already noted. In addition, an ancient formula of carbon ink is not difficult to make.' M. Peppard, "'Gospel of Jesus' Wife" – One Year Later', *Commonweal Magazine*, 5 December 2013, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/gospel-jesus-wife-one-year-later>.

24 As Bagnall astutely noted, the two fragments 'are very similar and are likely to have been produced close in time ... [they] are if not in the same hand at least extremely close'. C. Allen, 'The

illustrated, ‘a distinct palaeographic pattern is shared by both fragments, confirming that the same hand has created them’.²⁵ Unless the similarities in handwriting are completely disregarded, both fragments must now be considered modern forgeries.

The present article will explain how the text of *GJW* was most likely prepared. Basically, someone rearranged words and short phrases from the only surviving Coptic version of *GTh* from antiquity, switched third person masculine singular affixes (ϣ: ‘he’, ‘him’) to their feminine equivalents (ϥ: ‘she’, ‘her’), and placed two key Coptic words (ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ: ‘Mary’; ⲧⲁⲗⲓⲙⲉ: ‘my wife’) into the ‘patchwork’ text. As will become evident, the verbal similarities between *GJW* and *GTh* are overwhelming, and *GJW* contains at least five notable textual features – unexpected features of the text that require at least some sort of explanation – suggesting that it is not genuinely ancient. *GJW* can be explained best as a forgery prepared recently by someone who relied heavily on ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’, a unique modern edition of the single surviving ancient manuscript that preserves *GTh* in Coptic.

2. Manuscripts and Editions

2.1 *The Gospel of Jesus’ Wife*

GJW is singularly attested by the papyrus fragment King revealed in Rome in 2012. The rectangular fragment measures *ca.* 4 cm in height by 8 cm in width. The papyrus itself has been dated to the seventh–ninth centuries CE and a type of carbon ‘lamp black’ ink has evidently been applied to the fragment with a brush.²⁶ The dialect of *GJW* has been characterised as ‘standard Sahidic’,²⁷ but the obviously clumsy handwriting has proved especially difficult to date palaeographically.²⁸ Eight partial lines of text are visible on the recto (→); there appears to be a bit of blank space where text would be expected at the right edge of at least two of these lines (→3, 6).²⁹ The text on the verso (↓) is largely

Deepening Mystery Of the “Jesus’ Wife” Papyrus’, *Weekly Standard*, 28 April 2014, http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/deepening-mystery-jesus-wife-papyrus_787462.html.

25 Askeland, ‘Fake Coptic John’, 7.

26 M. Choat, ‘*The Gospel of Jesus’s Wife: A Preliminary Paleographical Assessment*’, *HTR* 107 (2014) 160–2, at 161. It seems doubtful that a brush would have been used as a writing instrument during the seventh–ninth centuries CE. G. W. Schwendner, ‘The “Gospel of Jesus Wife” as a Questioned Document: What Would Simulated Ancient Writing Look Like?’, *Academia.edu* (2014) 1–13, at 4–5, https://www.academia.edu/6860965/THE_GOSPEL_OF_JESUS_WIFE_AS_A_QUESTIONED_DOCUMENT_What_Would_Simulated_Ancient_Writing_look_like.

27 See King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 138.

28 After analysing *GJW* directly, Malcolm Choat reported that he was unable to ‘adduce an exact parallel’ for the handwriting on the fragment and refrained from suggesting even an approximate date for it on the basis of palaeography. Choat, ‘Paleographical Assessment’, 160–2.

29 Cf. Peppard, ‘One Year Later’.

Translation

1] ‘not [to] me. My mother gave me li[fe . . . ’
 2] .’ The disciples said to Jesus, ‘. [
 3] deny. Mary is n[ot (?)]³² worthy of it [
 4] . . .’ Jesus said to them, ‘My wife . . [
 5] . . . she will be³³ able to be my disciple and . . . [³⁴
 6] . No wicked man brings (forth)³⁵ . . . [
 7] . I dwell with her³⁶ in order to . [
 8] . an image . . . [

1] my moth[er
 2] thr[ee
 3] . . . [
 4] forth . . . [
 5–6] (untranslatable) [

The Coptic text above differs from King’s edition only at the end of →6: $\omega\alpha\eta\epsilon<\iota>\neq$ rather than $\omega\alpha\eta\epsilon \neq$. As Suciú and Hugo Lundhaug first observed and [Figure 1](#) shows, the third-from-last character in →6 differs significantly in appearance from other epsilons in *G/W*.³⁷ All fifteen certain epsilons on the recto (→) appear as a semicircle with a distinct crossbar between clearly discernible extensions of the curve; they seem ‘wide and round’.³⁸ Yet, the third-from-last character in →6 is barely concave and only extends significantly on the bottom. Its crossbar is almost non-existent and there is no noticeable extension of the curve at the top. The identity of this character remains uncertain, and it should at least be marked with a dot beneath it in any critical edition.³⁹

32 For ‘n[ot (?)]’, King has: ‘(not?)’.

33 For ‘will be’, King has: ‘is.’

34 King omits ‘and’.

35 For ‘No wicked man brings (forth)’, King has: ‘Let wicked people swell up.’ The difference in English versions is the result of different readings of the Coptic text. The English text given here is not a translation but a rendering of what the line was apparently intended to mean (see discussion of →6 below).

36 For ‘I dwell with her’, King has: ‘As for me, I am with her.’

37 A. Suciú and H. Lundhaug, ‘A Peculiar Dialectal Feature in the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife, Line 6’, *Patristics, Apocrypha, Coptic Literature and Manuscripts*, 27 September 2012, <http://alinsuciú.com>.

38 King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 136.

39 Choat concurs, ‘The letter in question should certainly be dotted’ (pers. comm., 23 April 2014).

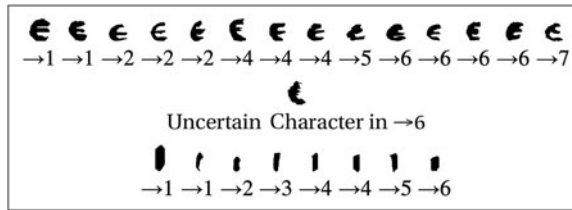


Figure 1. Tracings of epsilons, iotas and the uncertain character in →6

The third-from-last character in →6 is presented as ϵ above because it resembles epsilon more than any other Coptic letter. The character's height is about what would be expected for an epsilon on this papyrus: the undisputed epsilons measure between *ca.* 3.0 and 4.5 mm in height, and the uncertain character in →6 measures *ca.* 4.5 mm in height. Moreover, the horizontal distances from the back of the uncertain character's curve to the ends of its extensions and crossbar are surprisingly similar to those of undisputed epsilons on the fragment. The various extensions and crossbars of those epsilons stretch between *ca.* 2.5 and 4.5 mm horizontally, but they are always within *ca.* 1.0 mm of each other in any individual letter. In the uncertain character in →6, the visually non-existent top extension reaches *ca.* 2.9 mm horizontally from the back of the curve, the crossbar *ca.* 2.5 mm, and the bottom extension *ca.* 3.4 mm.

The third-from-last character in →6 has been emended to $\epsilon\langle\iota\rangle$ because its peculiar appearance seems to be the result of the obliteration of the expected blank space between an epsilon's upper extension and crossbar. The character can be explained as some kind of epsilon-iota hybrid.⁴⁰ Since digital, microscopic and multi-spectral images of the fragment suggest that the character in question (and the characters on either side of it) have been 'overwritten' or 'patched',⁴¹ the suspicion that the copyist initially made a mistake in writing the end of →6 and then attempted to correct it seems fully justified.⁴² At this point in time, there can be little doubt that →6 was intended to conclude with $\omega\lambda\varphi\epsilon\iota\eta\epsilon$, a word taken from *GTh* (like almost every other word in *GJW*).⁴³

40 The iota would have had a shape similar to the second iota in →1 or the iota in →3. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine with certainty what kind of epsilon-iota hybrid was intended: an iota corrected to an epsilon, an epsilon corrected to an iota, or a combined epsilon and iota.

41 Gregg Schwendner deserves credit for calling attention to the phenomenon of 'patching' in *GJW* in 'A Questioned Document', 7-11.

42 There are two clear examples of correction by overwriting in *GJW*: sigma in $\mu\sigma\sigma$ in →3 and nu in $\nu\lambda\epsilon\iota$ in →5.

43 Even if the third-from-last character in →6 is regarded as an epsilon, the omission of iota could still be a simple copying error.

2.2 The Gospel of Thomas

GTh is attested by one nearly perfect Coptic manuscript and three fragmentary Greek papyri. The lone extant version of *GTh* in Coptic is preserved in Nag Hammadi Codex II (NHC II), which likely dates from the late fourth or early fifth century CE.⁴⁴ The text of *GTh* appears on pages 32–51 of this 146-page papyrus codex in a form of Sahidic Coptic.⁴⁵ Of course, the presentation of *GTh* in NHC II is unique. As a result of differences in page size, margin space, handwriting, textual modifications, scribal errors and a variety of other factors, no two manuscripts of any significant size are identical.

Since images of NHC II were first published in 1956, many editions of *GTh* have been published.⁴⁶ The *editio princeps* presents each individual line of Coptic text as it appears in NHC II,⁴⁷ but this edition has long since been superseded by others that divide *GTh* into a prologue (incipit) and 114 sayings (or *logia*).⁴⁸ Most editions (and commentaries containing the Coptic text) now divide *GTh* according to the modern textual divisions without printing each line of text from NHC II separately.⁴⁹ In 1997, Michael W. Grondin posted online the first line-by-line edition of the Nag Hammadi version of *GTh* that had been prepared in nearly forty years. As Figure 2 shows, ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’ presents each pertinent line of text from NHC II individually with an English translation of every Coptic word or phrase beneath it.

44 H. Lundhaug, ‘Shenoute of Atripe and Nag Hammadi Codex II’, *Zugänge zur Gnosis* (ed. C. Marksches and J. van Oort; Leuven: Peeters, 2013) 201–26, at 209–10.

45 For a discussion of the dialect of NHC II, see B. Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7 together with XIII, 2**, *Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, vol. I (NHS XX; Leiden: Brill, 1989) 3, 6–14.

46 Images of the Nag Hammadi manuscript of *GTh* were first published in P. Labib, *Coptic Gnostic Papyri in the Coptic Museum at Old Cairo*, vol. I (Cairo: Government Press, 1956). For an annotated bibliography of modern editions of *GTh*, see <http://www.gospels.net/thomas>.

47 The first modern edition of *GTh* containing the Coptic text was published in English, French, German, and Dutch in 1959. The English version is A. Guillaumont, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till, Y. ‘Abd al Masīh, *The Gospel according to Thomas* (New York: Harper, 1959).

48 The only other publication that might be said to present the text line-by-line is apparently J. M. Robinson, *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Codex II* (Leiden: Brill, 1974). This volume contains images of all the pages of NHC II, but it is not what would usually be considered an edition (with critical text, translation, etc.).

49 Notably, the standard critical edition by Bentley Layton and the popular edition by Marvin Meyer segment *GTh* by modern textual divisions but also use vertical lines within the Coptic text to indicate manuscript line-breaks. See Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 52–93; M. Meyer, *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992) 22–65. Layton’s edition was reprinted in J. M. Robinson, *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, vol. II (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

Manuscript Location				Coptic Text	
↓				↓	
34:14/067 10*	ⲡⲈⲪⲈⲓⲈ̅	ⲪⲈ	ⲕⲈⲓⲛⲟⲩⲪⲈ	ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲕⲱⲗⲧⲛ̅	ⲈⲪⲛ̅
	*Said-JS09	this:	I-have-cast	(a) fire	upon-
↑				↑	
Modern Textual Division				English Translation	

Figure 2. Annotated screen capture of *GTh 10* (NHC II 34.14) in ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’

Since ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’ provides each line of text from NHC II separately, it vividly reproduces certain features of the manuscript itself (e.g. line-breaks) in a way that most other editions do not. Grondin posted a single PDF version of his edition of *GTh* on 22 November 2002, which has remained available online ever since. He continues to hone his interlinear translation in an interactive, web-based format.⁵⁰

3. Similarities and Differences between *GJW* and *GTh*

3.1 *Recto* (→), line 1

Coptic: ⲛⲕⲓⲈⲓ ⲕⲛ ⲧⲕⲙⲕⲕⲩ ⲕⲥⲧ ⲛⲕⲈⲓ ⲡⲱⲛⲗ
 English:] ‘not [to] me. My mother gave me li[fe . . . ’

The text Ⲉⲓ ⲕⲛ ⲧⲕⲙⲕⲕⲩ is found in *GTh* 101 (NHC II 49.36), as is ⲕⲥⲧ ⲛⲕⲈⲓ ⲛⲡⲱⲛⲗ (NHC II 50.1).⁵¹ In both →1 and its parallels in *GTh*, the preposition ⲛⲕⲥ (ⲛ̅ in the prepersonal state) is completed with a first person singular suffix spelled Ⲉⲓ; this is one spelling of the suffix used in Sahidic Coptic, but ‘the orthography of the first person singular suffix pronoun as object of the preposition ⲛⲕⲥ is normally ⲓ’.⁵² In both →1 and NHC II 50.1, ⲧⲛⲕⲥ (‘a fusion of the infinitive ⲧ “give” and the prepersonal preposition ⲛⲕⲥ “unto” in a single unit’) is used; this double-object infinitive is ‘synonymous with *the much more usual phrase* ⲧ ⲛ̅-/ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲥ ⲛ̅-/ⲛⲕⲥ consisting of three separate groups’ (emphasis added).⁵³

There are two notable textual features in this line of text. First, both →1 and NHC II 49.36 split the word ⲛⲕⲈⲓ in the same place (with the letters ⲛⲕ lost in a lacuna); this apparent replication of a line-break from the only extant Coptic

50 M. W. Grondin, ‘An Interlinear Coptic-English Translation of the Gospel of Thomas’, *The Gospel of Thomas Resource Center*, http://gospel-thomas.net/x_transl.htm.

51 Neither Ⲉⲓ ⲕⲛ ⲧⲕⲙⲕⲕⲩ ⲛⲟⲓ ⲕⲥⲧ ⲛⲕⲈⲓ ⲛⲡⲱⲛⲗ is found in any other passage in *GTh*.

52 King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 138. Cf. B. Layton, *A Coptic Grammar* (Porta Linguarum Orientalium 2/20; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011³) 68–70 (ⲕⲕ 85–6); 17 (ⲕ 16[a]).

53 Layton, *Coptic Grammar*, 135 (ⲕ 173).

manuscript of *GTh* might be attributed to coincidence.⁵⁴ Second, the direct object marker $\bar{\mu}$ - that would ordinarily be expected before $\bar{\rho}\omega\bar{\nu}\zeta$ has been omitted; this might be explained as one of the extremely rare examples of the use of the double-object infinitive $\bar{\tau}\bar{\nu}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\nu}$ ‘without the mediating direct object marker before the definite or possessive article + noun’.⁵⁵

Alternatively, both notable textual features can be explained by a modern forger’s dependence on ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’. As Figure 3 shows, someone viewing the PDF on a computer screen would have seen NHC II 49.36 and 50.1 adjacent to each other.

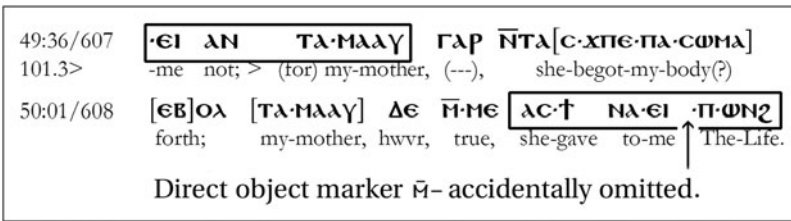


Figure 3. Annotated screen capture of *GTh* 101 (NHC II 49.36–50.1) in ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’ with observations about its relationship to \rightarrow_1 ⁵⁶

Relying on Grondin’s edition of *GTh*, a forger would have produced \rightarrow_1 of *GJW* simply by copying the pertinent text from two consecutive lines of NHC II. The PDF omits $\bar{\mu}$ before $\bar{\rho}\omega\bar{\nu}\zeta$ as the result of a typographical error.⁵⁷

3.2 Recto (\rightarrow), line 2

Coptic:]ϣ πεχε ε̄μαθητης̄ ν̄ιτ̄ χε ϣ[
English:] .’ The disciples said to Jesus, ‘. [

The phrase $\bar{\rho}\epsilon\chi\epsilon\ \bar{\epsilon}\bar{\mu}\bar{\alpha}\theta\eta\tau\eta\varsigma\ \bar{\nu}\bar{\iota}\bar{\tau}\ \chi\epsilon$ is found at the beginning of *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.25).⁵⁸ A third person masculine singular suffix (q) is the final letter

54 M. Peppard, ‘Is the “Jesus’s Wife” Papyrus a Forgery? And Other Queries’, *Commonweal Magazine*, 25 September 2012, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/jesuss-wife-papyrus-forgery-and-other-queries>.

55 King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 140. King lists four analogous examples of the use of $\bar{\tau}\bar{\nu}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\nu}$ without the direct object marker from three fourth-century personal letters (P.Kell.Copt. 22.42, 54; 34.16; 36.18–19). Cf. I. Gardner, A. Alcock, W.-P. Funk, *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis*, vol. 1 (Dakhleh Oasis Project Monographs 9; Oxford: Oxbow, 1999) 176, 221, 229.

56 Grondin has polished *GTh* 101 in his interlinear since 2002. For his current text, see: <http://gospel-thomas.net/interlin/log101.htm>.

57 The missing $\bar{\mu}$ in NHC II 50.1 has appeared in all non-PDF versions of ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’ from 1997 through the present. It was evidently deleted by accident in the creation of the 2002 PDF version. M. W. Grondin, ‘Did a Forger Use my Interlinear?’, *The Gospel of Thomas Resource Center*, http://www.gospel-thomas.net/x_gjw_ps2.htm.

58 The phrase $\bar{\rho}\epsilon\chi\epsilon\ \bar{\epsilon}\bar{\mu}\bar{\alpha}\theta\eta\tau\eta\varsigma\ \bar{\nu}\bar{\iota}\bar{\tau}\ \chi\epsilon$ indicates the beginning of speech by the disciples in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.25), 18 (36.9) and 20 (36.26). Jesus’ response is introduced by the phrase $\bar{\rho}\epsilon\chi\epsilon\ \bar{\tau}\bar{\epsilon}\ \bar{\nu}\bar{\alpha}\gamma$

of *GTh* 11 (NHC II 34.25); what could be a third person feminine singular suffix (c) is the final letter before the parallel to *GTh* 12 in →2.

3.3 *Recto* (→), line 3

Coptic:] . ἀρνα μαριαμ ἵπρωα ἕμοσ λ[η (?)
English:] deny. Mary is n[ot (?)] worthy of it [

The infinitive ἀρνα concludes *GTh* 81 (NHC II 47.17).⁵⁹ The name μαριαμ does not appear as spelled in →3 anywhere in *GTh*. The phrase ἵπρωα ἕμοσ λη appears in *GTh* 80 (NHC II 47.14–15).⁶⁰ The preposition ἕμοσ (ἕ in the prepersonal state) is completed by the third person masculine singular suffix (ϥ) in *GTh* 80; it is completed by the third person feminine singular suffix (c) in the parallel in →3.

It is somewhat puzzling why the name ‘Mary’ is spelled μαριαμ in *GJW*. This does not appear to be a standard Sahidic spelling,⁶¹ and the name is spelled μαριζαμ in *GTh* 21 (NHC II 36.34) and 114 (NHC II 51.19). The simplest explanation is that a forger accidentally omitted the Coptic letter hori (ϣ) while copying from *GTh*, but there are also other possibilities. Regardless, since the name ‘Mary’ is not found in close proximity to the other parallels to *GTh* in →3, it appears to have been specifically placed in *GJW*. In every other line of *GJW*, all the parallels to *GTh* can be found in close proximity to each other.

3.4 *Recto* (→), line 4

Coptic:] . . . [vac. .] / πεχεε ἵε ναγ ταζιμε μη[
English:] . . . ‘Jesus said to them, ‘My wife . . . [

The phrase πεχεε ἵε ναγ χε appears in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.27–8).⁶² The word ταζιμε (possessive article τα- + noun ζιμε) does not appear in the form it takes in →4 anywhere in *GTh*. The final two letters (μη) appear in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.30).⁶³

χε in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.27–8; cf. →4), by πεχεε ἵε in 18 (36.11), and by πεχαϥ ναγ χε in 20 (36.28).

⁵⁹ The verb ἀρνα can be either intransitive or transitive. It is intransitive in *GTh* 81 (NHC II 47.17) and transitive in *GTh* 110 (NHC II 51.5). In →3, ἀρνα must be intransitive because μαριαμ is not preceded by a direct object marker (ἕ-). Cf. King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 140.

⁶⁰ The phrase ἵπρωα ἕμοσ λη also appears in *GTh* 56 (NHC II 42.32) and 111 (NHC II 51.10).

⁶¹ The name ‘Mary’ is spelled μαρια, μαριζαμ or μαριζαμμη in the Sahidic New Testament, Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, Codex Askewianus, Codex Tchacos and all the pertinent Nag Hammadi texts with only a single exception. In the version of the *First Apocalypse of James* in Nag Hammadi Codex v, the name is spelled μαριαμ once (NHC v 40.25).

⁶² As already noted, the phrase πεχεε ἕμοσ ἵε ταζιμε ἵε χε indicates the beginning of speech by the disciples in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.25; cf. →2), and Jesus’ response is introduced with πεχεε ἵε ναγ χε (NHC II 34.27–28). The phrase πεχεε ἵε ναγ χε also appears in *GTh* 14 (NHC II 35.14–15).

⁶³ The letter sequence μη appears as the beginning of a new word more than twenty-five times in *GTh*.

In →4, a phrase such as πεχαϩ ναγ ἵβι τ̄ might have been used to introduce Jesus' words; instead, the formula πεχε τ̄, which is used more than 85 times in the 114 sayings of *GTh*, has been employed.

There is one notable textual feature in this line: 'the absence of χε following πεχε: [sic] to introduce direct discourse'; such an omission of the conjunction is 'not standard' Coptic grammar.⁶⁴ The verb πεχε- is 'almost always completed by χε' when introducing reported discourse, as it is in →2.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, as has been pointed out, there are authentic ancient Coptic writings that 'vary their usage of πεχε: [sic] with and without χε'.⁶⁶ It is not impossible that *G/W* is one of these select texts.

Alternatively, the absence of χε in →4 could be the result of a forger's use of 'Grondin's Interlinear'. As Figure 4 shows, Grondin reproduced the line-break in NHC II between πεχε τ̄ ναγ and χε in his edition of *GTh*.

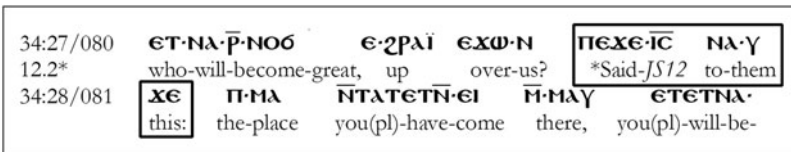


Figure 4. Annotated screen capture of *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.27-8) in 'Grondin's Interlinear' showing that a line break separates πεχε τ̄ ναγ from χε

Since Grondin correctly indicated that πεχε τ̄ ναγ means 'Jesus said to them' (a complete phrase in English), a forger may easily have overlooked χε on the next line.

The suggestion that the absence of χε in →4 is due to a forger's careless copying from Grondin's edition of *GTh* seems to be supported by the English translation that the owner gave King in 2010. In the translation, →4 is reportedly rendered: 'Jesus said *this* to them: My wife ...' (emphasis added).⁶⁷ Clearly, πεχε τ̄ corresponds to 'Jesus said', ναγ to 'to them', and τ̄αḓḓε to 'My wife'. The only word that could correspond to 'this' seems to be χε, and it is not only missing in *G/W* but would also be untranslatable in introducing a direct statement (as in →4) and would never actually be translated by the English word, 'this'. Yet, χε is present in the parallel to →4 in NHC II, and Grondin has used the word

64 King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 140.

65 King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 140. Cf. Layton, *Coptic Grammar*, 297 (¶ 373), 302-3 (¶ 380). Layton classifies πεχε-, πεχαϩ as a 'suffixally conjugated verboid'.

66 E.g. *GTh* and the Manichaean *Kephalaia*. King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 140.

67 Sabar, 'Inside Story'. Sabar reproduced the translation of this line in his original *Smithsonian* article, noting specifically that 'King would refine the translation as "Jesus said to them, 'My wife ...'"

Both $\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$ and $\epsilon\theta\theta\omicron\gamma$ appear once in *GTh*, $\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$ in *GTh* 47 (NHC II 41.17) and $\epsilon\theta\theta\omicron\gamma$ in *GTh* 45 (NHC II 41.3). The conjugated verb $\omega\lambda\upsilon\epsilon\iota\sigma$ is found in *GTh* 45 (NHC II 41.2).⁷³

There are two notable textual features in this line. First, the non-definite noun $\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$ is followed by the relative clause $\epsilon\theta\theta\omicron\gamma$ in a simple attributive construction. The standard rule is: 'After definite antecedents (π - etc.) the attributive role is filled by a relative clause, after non-definites ($\omicron\gamma$ -, \emptyset , etc.) by the circumstantial.'⁷⁴ The presence of $\rho\omega\mu\epsilon \epsilon\theta\theta\omicron\gamma$ in $\rightarrow 6$ has only been explained as 'a rare attestation of an as yet only partially understood phenomenon'.⁷⁵ Second, two conjugation bases ($\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon$ - and $\omega\lambda\upsilon$) are used with a single infinitive ($\epsilon\iota\iota\epsilon$). The sequence of words in $\rightarrow 6$ is ungrammatical and would not be found in any authentic Coptic text.

It has been suggested that the line could be read: $\iota \mu\alpha\rho\epsilon\rho\omega\mu\epsilon \epsilon\theta\theta\omicron\gamma \omega\lambda\upsilon\epsilon \nu\epsilon$ ('. Let wicked people swell up . . .').⁷⁶ In this reading, the conjugation base $\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon$ - is understood as a standard Sahidic jussive. Since the third-from-last character is read as a certain epsilon, the conjugation base $\omega\lambda\upsilon$ may be understood as part of the infinitive $\omega\lambda\upsilon\epsilon$. With the letters $\nu\epsilon$ regarded as the beginning of a new word, $\rightarrow 6$ is seen as having only one conjugation base ($\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon$ -) and one infinitive ($\omega\lambda\upsilon\epsilon$). Such a reading is at least grammatically possible.

Yet, it would be 'seemingly odd' for Jesus to invoke a curse in the midst of a short statement that probably 'concerns the discipleship of women'.⁷⁷ Some have speculated that the presence of a curse might be explainable if the fragment were part of an amulet,⁷⁸ but nothing about the extant papyrus suggests that it was.⁷⁹ In addition, the proposed reading still 'would constitute an awkward and unparalleled cursing formula'.⁸⁰ According to Crum's *Coptic Dictionary*, $\omega\lambda\upsilon\epsilon$ simply means 'to swell' and is used in *describing* many types of physical and non-physical swelling.⁸¹ It is difficult to imagine that anyone intended to portray Jesus as *wishing* 'swelling' on the wicked. At least, Crum lists no instances in which this rare verb appears in the jussive, and no additional examples of its use have been provided.⁸²

73 It also appears two additional times in *GTh* 45 (NHC II 40.34, 41.5).

74 Layton, *Coptic Grammar*, 327 (¶ 404).

75 King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 142.

76 King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 132-3.

77 King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 138, 152.

78 King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 138.

79 King, 'Coptic Gospel Papyrus', 10.

80 Suci and Lundhaug, 'Peculiar Dialectal Feature'.

81 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 610.

82 King seems to have recognised the interpretive problems associated with identifying $\omega\lambda\upsilon\epsilon$ as the infinitive in $\rightarrow 6$. She 'initially suggested that the infinitive might be $\omega\lambda\upsilon$, a previously unattested form of $\omega\lambda\upsilon$ (be destroyed)'. King, 'Coptic Gospel Papyrus', 19-20. Yet, $\omega\lambda\upsilon\epsilon$ really was the only available option if the fragment were to be regarded as authentic.

Alternatively, →6 could be explained as a line of ungrammatical Coptic text created by someone who misunderstood ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’. If a forger transformed a negative phrase in *GTh* to a positive phrase in *GJW* →5, the reverse transformation has been attempted here. The positive phrase οὐκακος ῥωμε φραεινε (‘An evil man brings (forth) . . .’) found in *GTh* 45 (NHC II 41.1–2) is part of a well-known Christian saying that makes sense in a discussion of discipleship (cf. Luke 6.40, 45),⁸³ and μαρερωμε εθοογ φραεινε seems to be intended as a negative version of it.

The three words in →6 are found in close proximity to each other in *GTh* and, when juxtaposed using ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’, they appear to mean: ‘No man which is wicked does bring . . .’ (i.e. ‘No wicked man brings (forth) . . .’) in *English*.

μα·ρε·ρωμε	εθοογ	φρα·εινε
No-man	which-is-wicked,	does-he-bring
<i>GTh</i> 47	<i>GTh</i> 45	<i>GTh</i> 45
(NHC II 41.17)	(NHC II 41.3)	(NHC II 41.2)

Figure 5. Screen capture of the three Coptic words juxtaposed in →6, as they appear (with English translations beneath) in ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’

It is not difficult to see how someone dependent on the English of ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’ could have believed that →6 contained a negative version of οὐκακος ῥωμε φραεινε without recognising the serious Coptic grammatical problems in the line. Grondin did not explain that a relative clause (εθοογ) should not follow a non-definite noun (ρωμε); his work was never intended to serve as a Coptic grammar. Also, Grondin’s functional equivalent translation of μαρερωμε as ‘no man’ has inadvertently suggested that it could function as the subject of a sentence when it cannot; it is actually a combination of a verbal element (a negative aorist conjugation base μαρε-) and a noun (ρωμε).⁸⁴

3.7 *Recto* (→), line 7

Coptic:] ΔΝΟΚ †ϣΟΟΠ ΝΜΜΔΣ ΕΤΒΕ Π[
English:] . I dwell with her in order to . [

83 The saying (‘An evil person brings forth evil things . . .’) in *GTh* 45 has close parallels in Matt 12.35 and Luke 6.45. Jesus uses this saying in the context of teachings related to discipleship in Luke 6.39–45.

84 The dialect of *GTh* is ‘Sahidic with a fluctuating mixture of features from Lycopolitan’. B. Layton, *Coptic Gnostic Chrestomathy* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004) 189. As a result, the pronominal negative aorist conjugation base can appear as μαρε- (rather than as the standard Sahidic μερε-).

1	<u>να]ει^a αν ταμααυ</u> <u>αc† ναει πο[νε^b</u> <i>GTh</i> 101 (49.36) <i>GTh</i> 101 (50.1)
2]ϙ <u>πεχε ἡμαθης ἡς χε ϙ[</u> <i>GTh</i> 12 (34.25)
3] . <u>αρνα</u> <u>μαριαμ</u> <u>ἡποα</u> <u>ἡμοc</u> <u>α[η (?)</u> <i>GTh</i> 81 (47.17) <i>GTh</i> 80 (47.14-5)
4] . . . [vac. .] / <u>πεχε ἡc ναυ^c</u> <u>ταριμε</u> <u>μη [</u> <i>GTh</i> 12 (34.27) <i>GTh</i> 12(34.30)
5] . . . <u>σναορῆμαθης ναει</u> * <u>αυω [</u> <i>GTh</i> 101 (49.33-4)
6]! <u>μαρεωμε</u> <u>εοογ^d</u> <u>αααε<ι>νε^e</u> [<i>GTh</i> 47 (41.17) <i>GTh</i> 45(41.3) <i>GTh</i> 45 (41.2)
7] <u>ανοκ</u> <u>†ωροπ</u> <u>ηηαc</u> <u>ετβε</u> <u>π[</u> <i>GTh</i> 30 (39.4-5) <i>GTh</i> 29 (38.33)
8] . <u>ουρικων</u> . . . [<i>GTh</i> 22 (37.34)

Figure 6. A key to the ‘patchwork’ text (GJW)

→3 appears mostly derived from *GTh* 81 and 80, and the text of →7 appears derived entirely from *GTh* 30 and 29. Even →6, the most ‘patchwork’ line of text in *GJW*, consists exclusively of words from a single page of NHC II (41).

In addition, *GJW* and *GTh* consistently use identical spellings and grammatical constructions when common alternatives could have been used instead. Both texts use the spelling ει rather than ἰ for the first person singular suffix (twice in →1 and once in →5), use the double-object infinitive †ναε instead of the more usual † ἡ-/ἡμοε ἡ-/ηαε in →1, and introduce Jesus’ words with πεχε ἡc (an extremely common formula in *GTh*) in →4. These textual similarities cannot be accounted for by ‘ancient compositional practices’.⁸⁸ It seems unlikely that any ancient text was ever created by patching together disjointed and rearranged words and short phrases from another text. Certainly, no such text has been mentioned in the discussion of *GJW*.⁸⁹

88 Cf. King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 156.

89 The simple ‘cut and paste’ method used to create *GJW* can hardly be compared to the complicated compositional strategy employed in the later Synoptic Gospels. Cf. F. Watson, ‘Inventing Jesus’ Wife’, *The Bible and Interpretation*, 27 September 2012, <http://bibleinterp.com/articles/wat368023.shtml>: ‘Where one gospel rewrites another – as Matthew rewrites Mark – the same story, dialogue, or saying is usually recast in significantly different words. In the *Jesus’ Wife* fragment, the relationship of sameness and difference is reversed: the same words and phrases are used to construct a quite different dialogue.’

Table 1. Possible explanations for the notable textual features in *GJW*

Notable textual feature	Explanation if <i>GJW</i> is an ancient artifact	Explanation if <i>GJW</i> is a modern forgery
a. Shared line break in →1 and NHC II 49.36 (split ⲛⲁⲉⲓ in same place)	Coincidence	Dependence on 'Grondin's Interlinear'
b. Direct object marker ⲛ- missing before ⲛⲟⲛⲉ in →1	'Rare' grammatical construction	Dependence on 'Grondin's Interlinear'
c. Conjunction ⲁⲉ missing before direct speech with ⲛⲉⲁⲉ- in →4	'Rare' grammatical construction	Dependence on 'Grondin's Interlinear'
d. Relative clause ⲉⲟⲟⲩ after non-definite noun ⲣⲟⲛⲉ in →6	'Rare' grammatical construction	Dependence on 'Grondin's Interlinear'
e. Two conjugational bases (ⲛⲁⲣⲉ- and ⲩⲁⲛ) used with single infinitive (ⲉⲓⲛⲉ) in →6	Odd and out of place 'swelling curse'	Dependence on 'Grondin's Interlinear'

The apparently deliberate textual differences between *GJW* and *GTh* contribute further to the impression that *GJW* is a modern forgery. The text seems aimed specifically at an audience of our own era, the time in Christian history when the idea of a marriage between Jesus and Mary (Magdalene) is undeniably most popular.⁹⁰ Switching Coptic masculine pronouns in *GTh* to feminine, removing ⲁⲛ ('not') from one parallel in *GTh*, and placing ⲛⲁⲣⲓⲁⲛ ('Mary') and ⲧⲁⲗⲓⲛⲉ ('my wife') in *GJW*, has created a dialogue in which the Coptic text states: 'The disciples said to Jesus, "... Mary is not worthy of it ..." Jesus said to them, "My wife ... she will be able to be my disciple ... I dwell with her ..."'⁹¹

90 As King notes, '[T]he claim that Jesus had a human wife is rare, if not unique' in ancient Christian texts. King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 157. In 2003, Dan Brown popularised the idea that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married in his novel *The Da Vinci Code*, which was on the New York Times bestsellers list for more than two years (2003–5) and made into a major motion picture in 2006. D. Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

91 It is remarkable that such a suggestive, content-rich dialogue could be created out of snippets of *GTh* with only minimal alterations to the text. Someone with internet access to 'Grondin's Interlinear' and Crum's *Coptic Dictionary* (online since 2004) could have prepared *GJW* with nothing more than rudimentary knowledge of Coptic. For the date Crum's *Coptic Dictionary* was posted online, see https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.metalog.org/files/crum.html.

The notable textual features provide decisive evidence that *GJW* is a modern forgery,⁹² ensuring that the method used to establish that *GJW* is a ‘patchwork’ of snippets from *GTh* is not merely one that ‘assumes forgery and then produces similarities between the two works’.⁹³ As Table 1 shows, the notable textual features can be explained in a more satisfactory manner if *GJW* is regarded as a modern forgery rather than as an ancient text.

It seems implausible that *GJW* is an ancient text that coincidentally replicates a line break from NHC II 49.36 (notable textual feature a), contains three different grammatical constructions that have been generously labelled as ‘rare’ (features b–d), and includes a seemingly odd and out of place ‘swelling curse’ (rather than feature e, which is ungrammatical).⁹⁴ No genuinely ancient writing would be likely to compress so many suspicious textual features into just eight short, partial lines of text. *GJW* is better understood as a modern forgery that contains numerous indications of its recent origin: all five notable textual features can be explained well as the result of a forger’s dependence on ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’.

A forger with limited knowledge of Coptic could easily have (a) copied a line break from NHC II 49.36 because it is reproduced in Grondin’s edition of *GTh*, (b) omitted the expected direct object marker (ⲙ-) before ⲛⲟⲛⲉ because it was accidentally omitted in the pertinent passage in Grondin’s 2002 PDF, (c) used ⲛⲉⲗⲉ- to introduce direct speech without ⲗⲉ because Grondin followed NHC II and separated the seemingly complete phrase ⲛⲉⲗⲉ ⲛⲉⲗⲉⲛⲉⲗⲉ from the conjunction ⲗⲉ with a line-break, (d) violated a well-established rule of Coptic grammar by placing a relative clause (ⲉⲟⲟⲟⲩ) after a non-definite noun (ⲣⲟⲙⲉ) because Grondin did not (attempt to) explain this rule, and (e) created a wholly ungrammatical Coptic phrase with two conjugation bases and one infinitive because it seemed to make sense in the English translation in ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’.

There is no reasonable way to explain the significant similarities and minor differences between *GJW* and *GTh* as the result of some kind of literary dependence in antiquity.⁹⁵ *GJW* is not dependent on just any version of *GTh*: it is derived from the version found in NHC II. This manuscript was almost certainly buried in the ground by the second half of the seventh century, the earliest time when *GJW* could have been copied. It also happens to contain the single Coptic version of *GTh* that has survived from antiquity and would be available for use in a modern forgery.

More specifically, *GJW* seems undeniably dependent on a specific edition of NHC II that was posted online in 2002. Two of the notable textual features in

92 Bernhard pointed out all five of the suspicious textual features mentioned in this article in the ‘Notes on *The Gospel of Jesus’s Wife* Forgery’ that he posted online on 9 November 2012. See <http://gospels.net/gjw/notesonforgery.pdf>.

93 Cf. King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 156.

94 Even if they are attested a few times in all of Coptic literature, notable textual features b and d should really be labelled ‘grammatical errors’; the presence of notable textual feature e must be denied altogether for *GJW* even to be considered an authentic ancient text.

95 Cf. King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 157.

GJW (a and c) can be attributed to line-breaks in NHC II, which are repeated in Grondin's edition of *GTh*, and both of the grammatically problematic features in →6 (d and e) can be explained well by a forger's reliance on the English of the same modern edition of the text. In addition, *GJW* appears to contain a grammatical error in →1 (notable textual feature b) because it repeats a typographical error that Grondin accidentally made when creating the PDF version of his work. Finally, *GJW* can even be connected to 'Grondin's Interlinear' through the English translation of the fragment that the unidentified collector gave King.⁹⁶

Perhaps, in time, more light will be shed on the identity and motivation of the person(s) responsible for *GJW*. If not, at least we can say with certainty that *GJW* is a forgery that has no place in any discussion of ancient Christianity. It is a part of modern Christian history now.

⁹⁶ See discussion of →4 above.