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


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

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text originally composed in the latter half of the second century. 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)*.

It became evident shortly after King revealed *GJW* that there were significant scholarly concerns about the possibility that it was a modern forgery. 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. 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. 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*.

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. 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

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 Watson)). 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.
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’.

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’. The predominant material in each fragment was identified as ‘oxidized cellulosic material, which is consistent with old papyrus’. 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. 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. Unpersuaded by textual arguments that GJW was a modern forgery, King asserted that the completed laboratory tests supported ‘the conclusion that the papyrus and ink of GJW are ancient’.

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.
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.
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. 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. Goodacre and Suciu swiftly illustrated the uncanny relationship between the John fragment and Thompson’s edition of the Qau codex (online since 2008).

Emmel then pointed out that the John fragment would have to be part of ‘the tallest (or widest) papyrus codex yet known’ if authentic. 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’. Clearly, a modern forger could prepare an ancient-looking papyrus fragment with ink not detectable as a recent fabrication in laboratory analysis. 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). As Askeland has now explained and

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’. 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 (ⲧ: ‘he’, ‘him’) to their feminine equivalents (ⲧⲥ: ‘she’, ‘her’), and placed two key Coptic words (ⲙⲣⲓⲁⲙ: ‘Mary’; ⲧⲓⲙⲧⲓ: ‘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. The dialect of GJW has been characterised as ‘standard Sahidic’, but the obviously clumsy handwriting has proved especially difficult to date palaeographically. 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). The text on the verso (↓) is largely


See King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 138.

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.

Cf. Peppard, ‘One Year Later’.
indecipherable; at best, three short words might be identified in the six discernible lines. The top edge of the fragment appears to have been deliberately cut. No margins are visible.

King’s April 2014 HTR article contains the only edition of GJW published in a peer-reviewed journal to date. The edition provided here follows King’s published edition almost in its entirety. Only a single update to the text (in →6) has been made to incorporate an observation made by experts in the study of Coptic papyri.

Text

Recto (along the fibres →)

1 Ⲫⲃⲓ ⲩⲧ Ⲩⲁ Ⲣⲧ Ⲧⲛ Ⲩⲣⲓ ⲧⲪ [ ]
2 ⲣⲓ Ⲩⲣⲓ ⲧⲪ Ⲧⲩ Ⲩⲣⲓ ⲧⲪ [ ]
3 ⲧ ⲧⲪ Ⲫⲣⲓ ⲧⲪ Ⲧⲩ Ⲩⲣⲓ ⲧⲪ [ ]
4 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
5 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
6 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
7 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
8 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]

Verso (against the fibres ↓)

1 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
2 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
3 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
4 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
5 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]
6 ⲧ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ ⲧⲪ [ ]

If further study of this papyrus fragment seems warranted, additional adjustments to King’s edition might become necessary. For example, the beginning of →4 probably contained text ending in an upsilon before paxe (rather than blank space before an oblique stroke).

See Choat, ‘Paleographical Assessment’, 162; Peppard, ‘One Year Later.’

For αἰαο<↓>ηε, King has: αἰαο ηε.
Translation

1] ‘not [to] me. My mother gave me li[fe . . . ’
2] ’. The disciples said to Jesus, ’. [ 
3] deny. Mary is n[ot (?)]12 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: Ϝ_Component rather than Ϝ_Component. As Suciu 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/J/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.’
38 King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 136.
39 Choat concurs, ‘The letter in question should certainly be dotted’ (pers. comm., 23 April 2014).
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 <i> 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. 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’, the suspicion that the copyist initially made a mistake in writing the end of ↓6 and then attempted to correct it seems fully justified. At this point in time, there can be little doubt that ↓6 was intended to conclude with ωκενει, a word taken from GTh (like almost every other word in GJW).

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 ουος in →3 and nu in παι 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

\textit{GTh} is attested by one nearly perfect Coptic manuscript and three fragmentary Greek papyri. The lone extant version of \textit{GTh} in Coptic is preserved in Nag Hammadi Codex II (NHC II), which likely dates from the late fourth or early fifth century CE. The text of \textit{GTh} appears on pages 32–51 of this 146-page papyrus codex in a form of Sahidic Coptic. Of course, the presentation of \textit{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 \textit{GTh} have been published. The \textit{editio princeps} presents each individual line of Coptic text as it appears in NHC II, but this edition has long since been superseded by others that divide \textit{GTh} into a prologue (incipit) and 114 sayings (or \textit{logia}). Most editions (and commentaries containing the Coptic text) now divide \textit{GTh} according to the modern textual divisions without printing each line of text from NHC II separately. In 1997, Michael W. Grondin posted online the first line-by-line edition of the Nag Hammadi version of \textit{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.

48 The only other publication that might be said to present the text line-by-line is apparently J. M. Robinson, \textit{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.).
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript Location</th>
<th>Coptic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34:14/067</td>
<td>$\text{ __(x) }$</td>
<td><em>Said-J509</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10(^{*})</td>
<td>this:</td>
<td>I-have-cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Textual Division</td>
<td>(a)fire</td>
<td>upon-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34:14/067</td>
<td>$\text{ __(x) }$</td>
<td><em>Said-J509</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10(^{*})</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Textual Division</td>
<td>(a)fire</td>
<td>upon-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modern Textual Division</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34:14/067</td>
<td><em>Said-J509</em></td>
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<td>10(^{*})</td>
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<tr>
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<td><em>Said-J509</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10(^{*})</td>
<td>this:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The text $\text{ ei } \alpha \eta \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \lambda \alpha \gamma$ is found in GTh 101 (NHC II 49.36), as is $\alpha \gamma \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi \pi$ (NHC II 50.1).\(^{51}\) In both $\rightarrow$1 and its parallels in GTh, the preposition $\alpha \gamma \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi$ (in the prepersonal state) is completed with a first person singular suffix spelled $\iota$; 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 $\alpha \gamma \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi$ is normally $\iota$’.\(^{52}\) In both $\rightarrow$1 and NHC II 50.1, $\iota \tau \alpha \nu \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi$ (‘a fusion of the infinitive $\iota$ “give” and the prepersonal preposition $\alpha \gamma \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi$ “unto” in a single unit’) is used; this double-object infinitive is ‘synonymous with the much more usual phrase $\tau \alpha \nu / \tau \alpha \nu \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi / \alpha \gamma \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi$ consisting of three separate groups’ (emphasis added).\(^{53}\)

There are two notable textual features in this line of text. First, both $\rightarrow$1 and NHC II 49.36 split the word $\alpha \gamma \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi$ in the same place (with the letters $\alpha \gamma \tau$ lost in a lacuna); this apparent replication of a line-break from the only extant Coptic

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51 Neither $\text{ ei } \alpha \eta \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \lambda \alpha \gamma$ nor $\alpha \gamma \tau \alpha \nu \alpha \iota \pi \nu \pi \pi$ is found in any other passage in GTh.


manuscript of GTh might be attributed to coincidence.\(^{54}\) Second, the direct object marker \(\text{ⲙ–}\) that would ordinarily be expected before \(\text{ⲡⲱⲛϩ}\) has been omitted; this might be explained as one of the extremely rare examples of the use of the double-object infinitive \(\text{ⲣⲏⲏⲕ} \text{ⲛⲁ} \text{ⲝⲏⲣⲟⲩⲏⲥ}\) ‘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 \(→\)\(^{56}\)](image)

Relying on Grondin’s edition of GTh, a forger would have produced \(→\) of GJW simply by copying the pertinent text from two consecutive lines of NHC II. The PDF omits \(\text{ⲙ–}\) before \(\text{ⲡⲱⲛϩ}\) as the result of a typographical error.\(^{57}\)

### 3.2 Recto (→ \(\rightarrow\)), line 2

Coptic: |\(\text{ⲥⲉⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲧ}\)\(\text{ⲓⲥ} \text{ⲩⲏ}\)

English | ‘The disciples said to Jesus, ‘\(\rightarrow\)’

The phrase \(\text{ⲥⲉⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲧ} \text{ⲓⲥ} \text{ⲩⲏ}\) indicates the beginning of speech by the disciples in GTh 12 (NHC II 34.25).\(^{58}\) A third person masculine singular suffix (\(\text{ⲣ}\)) is the final letter

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\(^{55}\) King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 140. King lists four analogous examples of the use of \(\text{ⲣⲏⲏⲕ} \text{ⲛⲁ} \text{ⲝⲏⲣⲟⲩⲏⲥ}\) 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 1997. For his current text, see: http://gospel-thomas.net/interlin/log101.htm.

\(^{57}\) The missing \(\text{ⲙ–}\) 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 \(\text{ⲥⲉⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲧ} \text{ⲓⲥ} \text{ⲩⲏ}\) 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 \(\text{ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲧ} \text{ⲓⲥ} \text{ⲩⲏ}\)
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: ] . χρα ιναιας ιποκ ινος ω[?]
English: ] deny. Mary is n[ot (?)] worthy of it [ ]

The infinitive χρα concludes GTh 81 (NHC  ii 47.17). The name ιναιας does not appear as spelled in →3 anywhere in GTh. The phrase ιποκ ινος ω appears in GTh 80 (NHC  ii 47.14–15). The preposition ινος (ι in the prepersonal state) is completed by the third person masculine singular suffix (υ) 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 ιναιας in GJW. This does not appear to be a standard Sahidic spelling, and the name is spelled ιναιας 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 (ϡ) 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. .] / πεξε ποιος ταυτας ινι[ ]
English: ] . . . 'Jesus said to them, 'My wife . . [ ]

The phrase πεξε ποιος ταυτας ινι appears in GTh 12 (NHC  ii 34.27–8). The word ταυτας (possessive article τατ + noun ινι) does not appear in the form it takes in →4 anywhere in GTh. The final two letters (ινι) appear in GTh 12 (NHC  ii 34.30).

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59 The verb χρα 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, χρα must be intransitive because ιναιας is not preceded by a direct object marker (ν–). Cf. King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 140.

60 The phrase ιποκ ινος ω also appears in GTh 56 (NHC  ii 42.32) and 111 (NHC  ii 51.10).

61 The name 'Mary' is spelled ιναιας, ιναιας or ιναιας in the Sahidic New Testament, Papyrus Berolimensis 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 ιναιας once (NHC  ν 40.25).

62 As already noted, the phrase πεξε ιποκος τασ ινι indicates the beginning of speech by the disciples in GTh 12 (NHC  ii 34.25; cf. →2), and Jesus' response is introduced with πεξε ποιος τασ ινι (NHC  ii 34.27–28). The phrase πεξε ποιος τασ ινι also appears in GTh 14 (NHC  ii 35.14–15).

63 The letter sequence ινι appears as the beginning of a new word more than twenty-five times in GTh.
In →4, a phrase such as Ⲣⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲥⲁ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ ⲟⲝ might have been used to introduce Jesus’ words; instead, the formula Ⲣⲉ ⲧⲥⲉ, 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 χⲧ following Ⲩⲧⲉ [sic] to introduce direct discourse’; such an omission of the conjunction is ‘not standard’ Coptic grammar.64 The verb Ⲩⲧⲉ is ‘almost always completed by χⲧ’ 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 Ⲩⲧⲉ [sic] with and without χⲧ’.66 It is not impossible that GJW is one of these select texts.

Alternatively, the absence of χⲧ 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 Ⲩⲧⲉ ⲧⲥⲉ ⲡⲥ Y and ⲧⲥ in his edition of GTh.

Since Grondin correctly indicated that Ⲩⲧⲉ ⲧⲥⲉ ⲡⲥ Y means ‘Jesus said to them’ (a complete phrase in English), a forger may easily have overlooked χⲧ on the next line.

The suggestion that the absence of χⲧ 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, Ⲩⲧⲉ ⲧⲥⲉ corresponds to ‘Jesus said’, ⲡⲥ Y to ‘to them’, and ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ wireType
‘this’ as filler beneath the conjunction throughout his translation (see Figures 2 and 4). It appears that the ‘translation’ the owner provided King is derived directly from ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’ rather than being based on GJW itself.

The appearance of the word ωιεω in →4 has been cited as evidence of the text’s antiquity because it is not found in GTh and ωιεω is a more commonly used word meaning ‘wife’. But it seems a forger with limited knowledge of Coptic would have been more likely to use ωιεω than ωιεω to ensure that Jesus unequivocally referred to his ‘wife’ in GJW. Since ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’ does not indicate that ωιεω can mean ‘woman’, ‘wife’ or ‘female’ but ωιεω specifically means ‘wife’.68

3.5 Recto (→), line 5

Coptic: ] . . . ρⲩⲧⲓⲧⲉⲧⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲑⲉⲣⲙⲉ ⲉⲑⲟⲩ ⲉⲑⲉ ramifications ⲉⲑⲉⲣⲙⲉ ⲉⲑⲟⲩ ⲉⲑⲉ ramifications ⲉⲑⲉⲈⲱ ⲉⲑⲟⲩ ⲉⲑⲉ ramifications ⲉⲑⲉⲣⲙⲉ [ English: ] . . . she will be able to be my disciple and . . [ ]

The phrase ρⲩⲧⲓⲧⲉⲧⲟⲟⲩ ϋⲧⲉⲧⲟⲟⲩ appears in GTh 101 (NHC II 1.49.33–4).70 In this phrase, the conjugated form of ϩⲧⲓⲧⲟⲟⲩ begins with the third person masculine singular prefix (ι) in GTh 101; it begins with the third person feminine singular prefix (ει) in the parallel in →5. In both →5 and its parallel in GTh, the preposition ρⲧⲉ (ι in the prepersonal state) is completed with a first person singular suffix spelled ει instead of ι.

The most noticeable difference between →5 and its parallel in GTh 101 is that the negative particle ωι (‘not’) is missing between ρⲧⲉ and ρⲧⲉ in →5. The absence of ωι might be taken as an indication that →5 was not copied from GTh, but ϩⲧⲓⲧⲟⲟⲩ (‘be a disciple’) is never used without ωι in GTh.71 For a modern forger to create a positive phrase describing someone’s ability to be a disciple using text from GTh, it would have been impossible to avoid deleting ωι from a negative phrase.

3.6 Recto (→), line 6

Coptic: ]ι ϐⲉⲣⲕⲟⲩⲩ ⲉⲟⲟⲩ Ⲧⲟⲟⲩ Ⲧⲟⲟⲩ [ English: ] . . . No wicked man brings (forth) . . . [ ]

68 Peppard, ‘Forgery?’; King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 156.
70 The similar phrase ρⲩⲧⲓⲧⲉⲧⲟⲟⲩ ϋⲧⲉⲧⲟⲟⲩ is found in GTh 55 (NHC II 42.26–7).
71 Cf. GTh 55 (NHC II 42.26) and 101 (49.33, 35–6).
72 The English given here is not a translation but a rendering of what the line was apparently intended to mean.
Both ḫⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ and ⲟⲩⲟⲟⲩ appear once in GTh, ḫⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ in GTh 47 (NHC II 41.17) and ⲟⲩⲟⲟⲩ in GTh 45 (NHC II 41.3). The conjugated verb ϡⲟⲩⲕⲓⲥⲓⲏ is found in GTh 45 (NHC II 41.2).  

There are two notable textual features in this line. First, the non-definite noun ρⲱⲙⲉ is followed by the relative clause ⲑⲑⲟⲟⲩ in a simple attributive construction. The standard rule is: ‘After definite antecedents (ⲡ– etc.) the attributive role is filled by a relative clause, after non-definites (ⲟⲩ–, ∅, etc.) by the circumstantial.’ The presence of ρⲱⲙⲉ ⲑⲑⲟⲟⲩ in →6 has only been explained as ‘a rare attestation of an as yet only partially understood phenomenon’. Second, two conjugation bases (ⲁⲣⲉ– and ⲟⲩⲏ) are used with a single infinitive (ⲑⲓⲛⲉ). The sequence of words in →6 is ungrammatical and would not be found in any authentic Coptic text.

It has been suggested that the line could be read: ḫⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲑⲑⲟⲟⲩ ϡⲟⲩⲕⲓⲥⲓⲏ ⲁ (‘. Let wicked people swell up . . . ’). In this reading, the conjugation base ϡⲱⲣⲉ– is understood as a standard Sahidic jussive. Since the third-from-last character is read as a certain epsilon, the conjugation base ϡⲟⲩⲏ may be understood as part of the infinitive ϡⲟⲩⲕⲓⲥⲓⲏ. With the letters ⲁ regarded as the beginning of a new word, →6 is seen as having only one conjugation base (ⲁⲣⲉ–) and one infinitive (ⲑⲓⲛⲉ). 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’. Some have speculated that the presence of a curse might be explainable if the fragment were part of an amulet, but nothing about the extant papyrus suggests that it was. In addition, the proposed reading still ‘would constitute an awkward and unparalleled cursing formula’. According to Crum’s *Coptic Dictionary*, ϡⲟⲩⲕⲓⲥⲓⲏ simply means ‘to swell’ and is used in *describing* many types of physical and non-physical swelling. 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.

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73 It also appears two additional times in GTh 45 (NHC II 40.34, 41.5).
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.
80 Suciu and Lundhaug, ‘Peculiar Dialectal Feature’.
82 King seems to have recognised the interpretive problems associated with identifying ϡⲟⲩⲕⲓⲥⲓⲏ as the infinitive in →6. She ‘initially suggested that the infinitive might be ϡⲟⲩⲏ, a previously unattested form of ϡⲟⲩⲏ (be destroyed)’. King, ‘Coptic Gospel Papyrus’, 19-20. Yet, ϡⲟⲩⲕⲓⲥⲓⲏ 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 οὐκ ἄρωμεν ὁμείρησε (‘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), and ἀπερωμένε ἕεοοου ὁμείρησε 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.

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

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 οὐκ ἄρωμεν ὁμείρησε without recognising the serious Coptic grammatical problems in the line. Grondin did not explain that a relative clause (ὠθοῦ) should not follow a non-definite noun (Ρωμι); his work was never intended to serve as a Coptic grammar. Also, Grondin’s functional equivalent translation of ἀπερωμένε 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 ἀπε-) and a noun (Ῥωμε).  

### 3.7 Recto (←), line 7

| Coptic: | Ἀν ἡ τισομον ην ἡμᾶς ἐτῆ πη | English: | I dwell with her in order to . |


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 prenominal negative aorist conjugation base can appear as ἀπε- (rather than as the standard Sahidic ἀπε-).
The phrase ⲛⲣⲓⲟⲩ ⲛⲡⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲁ Ⲣ appears in GTh 30 (NHC II 39.4–5), the preposition ⲡⲩⲧⲃⲉ followed by a word beginning with ⲩ is found in GTh 29 (NHC II 38.33). In the phrase ⲛⲣⲓⲟⲩ ⲛⲡⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲁ Ⲣ, the preposition ⲛⲙⲁ (ⲙⲛ in the prepersonal state) is completed by the third person masculine singular suffix (ⲥ) in GTh 30; it is completed by the third person feminine singular suffix (ⲡ) in the parallel in → 7.

3.8 Recto (→), line 8

Coptic: Ⲝⲩⲛⲡⲓⲥⲃⲏ ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲡ ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲡⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲁ Ⲣ
English: an image...[...]

The phrase Ⲝⲟⲩⲛⲡⲓⲥⲃⲏ appears in GTh 22 (NHC II 37.34 (2x)) and 50 (42.1).

3.9 Verso (↓)

With only three possibly identifiable words in six lines, the verso (↓) cannot provide any significant information about the relationship between GJW and GTh.

4. Textual Evidence of Modern Forgery in GJW

Figure 6 summarises the similarities and differences between GJW and GTh. Text in GJW that could have been copied verbatim from GTh is underlined (double underlined if it might easily have differed). Parallels in GTh (with NHC II page and line numbers in parentheses) are noted beneath the Coptic text. Third person singular female personal affixes (ⲡ: ‘she’, ‘her’) in GJW that are masculine (ⲡ: ‘he’, ‘him’) in their parallels in GTh are printed in grey italics. Words in GJW that do not appear in identical form in GTh are printed in bold. An asterisk indicates where ⲛⲃ (‘not’) appears in the parallel in GTh. Notable textual features are denoted by superscript Latin letters; these are listed in Table 1 and discussed below.

The verbal similarities between GJW and GTh are, at the very least, suggestive of GJW being a modern forgery. GJW does not merely share common vocabulary with GTh, nor does it consist simply of ‘parallels dispersed throughout [GTh]’. Each line of GJW contains one or more snippet(s) of text found in close proximity to each other in GTh. All the words in → 1 and → 5 can be traced back to GTh 101. Both → 2 and → 4 contain phrases found in identical form in GTh 12. The text of

85 The phrase ⲛⲣⲓⲟⲩ ⲛⲡⲟⲡ ⲛⲡⲟⲡ does not appear in any other passage in GTh.
86 The preposition ⲡⲩⲧⲃⲉ before a word beginning with ⲩ is also found in GTh 4 (NHC II 33.8), 29 (38.32) and 61 (43.31).
→3 appears mostly derived from \textit{GTh} 81 and 80, and the text of →7 appears
derived entirely from \textit{GTh} 30 and 29. Even →6, the most ‘patchwork’ line of
text in \textit{GJW}, consists exclusively of words from a single page of NHC II (41).

In addition, \textit{GJW} and \textit{GTh} consistently use identical spellings and
grammatical constructions when common alternatives could have been used instead. Both
texts use the spelling ⲉⲓ rather than :${\text{i}}$ for the first person singular suffix (twice
in →1 and once in →5), use the double-object infinitive Ⲭⲫⲱ instead of the
more usual Ⲯⲱ/ⲫⲱ Ⲭⲱ/ⲫⲱ in →1, and introduce Jesus’ words with ཽⲏ ⲋ (an extremely common formula in \textit{GTh}) in →4. These textual similarities
cannot be accounted for by ‘ancient compositional practices’.

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 \textit{GJW}.\footnote{88 Cf. King, ‘Coptic Papyrus Fragment’, 156.}

\footnote{89 The simple ‘cut and paste’ method used to create \textit{GJW} can hardly be compared to the complica
ted compositional strategy employed in the later Synoptic Gospels. Cf. F. Watson,
Mark – the same story, dialogue, or saying is usually recast in significantly different words.
In the \textit{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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notable textual feature</th>
<th>Explanation if GJW is an ancient artifact</th>
<th>Explanation if GJW is a modern forgery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Shared line break in ( \rightarrow 1 ) and NHC II 49.36 (split ( \text{nəw} ) in same place)</td>
<td>Coincidence</td>
<td>Dependence on ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Direct object marker ( \text{ɾ} )– missing before ( \text{nəw} ) in ( \rightarrow 1 )</td>
<td>‘Rare’ grammatical construction</td>
<td>Dependence on ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Conjunction ( \text{x̆e} ) missing before direct speech with ( \text{nəxe-} ) in ( \rightarrow 4 )</td>
<td>‘Rare’ grammatical construction</td>
<td>Dependence on ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Relative clause ( \text{əλους} ) after non-definite noun ( \text{ρομε-} ) in ( \rightarrow 6 )</td>
<td>‘Rare’ grammatical construction</td>
<td>Dependence on ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Two conjugational bases (( \text{μαρ-} ) and ( \text{фа} )) used with single infinitive (( \text{ενε} )) in ( \rightarrow 6 )</td>
<td>Odd and out of place ‘swelling curse’</td>
<td>Dependence on ‘Grondin’s Interlinear’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. Switching Coptic masculine pronouns in GTh to feminine, removing \( \text{ⲅⲉ} \) (‘not’) from one parallel in GTh, and placing \( \text{ⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ} \) (‘Mary’) and \( \text{ⲧⲁ} \) \( \text{ⲓⲙⲉ} \) (‘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...”’

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, 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’. 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). 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 (ⲉⲃⲉ) before ⲛⲓⲡⲉⲡ because it was accidentally omitted in the pertinent passage in Grondin’s 2002 PDF, (c) used ⲛⲉⲓⲉ to introduce direct speech without ⲓⲣ because Grondin followed NHC II and separated the seemingly complete phrase ⲛⲉⲓⲉ ⲛⲓⲡⲉⲡ from the conjunction ⲓⲣ with a line-break, (d) violated a well-established rule of Coptic grammar by placing a relative clause (ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ) after a non-definite noun (ⲣⲱⲙⲉ) 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. 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

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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.
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 \( \rightarrow 6 \) (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 \( \rightarrow 1 \) (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 \( \rightarrow 4 \) above.