The *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*: Textual Evidence of Modern Forgery[*]

ANDREW BERNHARD
Willamette University (Affiliated Scholar), Salem, Oregon, USA.
Email: andrew.bernhard@gmail.com

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). 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.

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 Suciu 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://gospelofjesusswife.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. Suciu, 'Christian Askeland Finds the "Smoking Gun"', *Patristics, Apocrypha, Coptic Literature and Manuscripts*, 24 April 2014, http://alinsuciu.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://alinsuciu.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 (ϥ: 'he', 'him') to their feminine equivalents (c: 'she', 'her'), and placed two key Coptic words (ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ: 'Mary'; ⲧⲁϩⲓⲙⲉ: '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'.

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.[30]

Text
Recto (along the fibres →)

1   ⲛⲁ]ⲉⲓ ⲁⲛ ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲁⲥϯ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲡⲱ[ⲛϩ
2   ]ⲥ̣ ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛ̅ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ϫⲉ ⲥ̣[
3   ] . ⲁⲣⲛⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ̣ ⲙ̅ⲡϣⲁ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲥ ⲁ[ⲛ (?)
4   ] . . . [vac. .] / ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲧⲁϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛ̣[
5   ] . . . ⲥⲛⲁϣⲣ̅ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲁⲩⲱ [
6   ]ⲓ̣ ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲁϥⲉ<ⲓ>ⲛⲉ[31] [
7   ] ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϯϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲥ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡ[
8   ] . ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ̣ . . [

Verso (against the fibres ↓)

1   ]ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲁⲩ[
2   ]ⲛ̅ⲙ̣ϣⲙ̣ⲛ̣ⲧ[
3   ]ⲁ̣ . ⲉ̣ . . . [
4   ]ⲉⲃⲱⲗ ⲉ̣ⲧⲛ̣[
5   ]ⲟ̣ⲡ . . . . [
6   ] . [.] . . ⲙ̣ⲙ̣[

30 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 ⲡⲉϫⲉ (rather than blank space before an oblique stroke). See Choat, 'Paleographical Assessment', 162; Peppard, 'One Year Later.'

31 For ϣⲁϥⲉ<ⲓ>ⲛⲉ, King has: ϣⲁϥⲉ ⲛⲉ.

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 be[33] able to be my disciple and . . . [[34]
6   ] . No wicked man brings (forth)[35] . . . [
7   ] . I dwell with her[36] 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: ϣⲁϥⲉ⟨ⲓ⟩ⲛⲉ rather than ϣⲁϥⲉ ⲛⲉ. 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 *GJW*.[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. Suciu 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://alinsuciu. com.
38 King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 136.
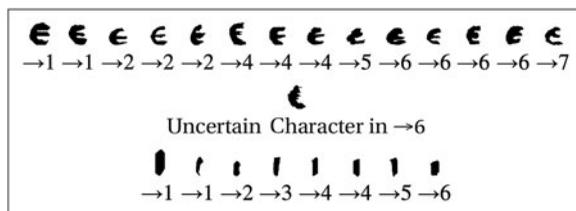39 Choat concurs, 'The letter in question should certainly be dotted' (pers. comm., 23 April 2014).

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

The third-from-last character in →6 is presented as ẹ 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 ẹ<ι> 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 ϣⲁϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ, 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 ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ in →3 and nu in ⲛⲁⲉⲓ 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. Markschies 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. ʿAbd al Masīḥ, *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	ⲡⲉϫⲉ·ⲓⲥ	ⲭⲉ	ⲁⲉⲓ·ⲛⲟⲩϫⲉ	ⲛ̄·ⲟⲩ·ⲕⲱϩⲧ̀	ⲉⲝⲛ̄·
10*	*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: ⲛⲁ]ⲉⲓ ⲁⲛ ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲁⲥϯ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲡⲱ[ⲛϩ
English:] 'not [to] me. My mother gave me li[fe . . . '

The text ⲉⲓ ⲁⲛ ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲁⲩ is found in *GTh* 101 (NHC II 49.36), as is ⲁⲥϯ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲛϩ (NHC II 50.1).[51] In both →1 and its parallels in *GTh*, the preposition ⲛⲁⲍ (ⲛ̄ 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 ⲛⲁⲍ is normally ï'.[52] In both →1 and NHC II 50.1, ϯⲛⲁⲍ ('a fusion of the infinitive ϯ "give" and the prepersonal preposition ⲛⲁⲍ "unto" in a single unit') is used; this double-object infinitive is 'synonymous with *the much more usual phrase* ϯ ⲛ̄-/ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲍ ⲛ̄-/ ⲛⲁⲍ 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 ⲛⲁⲉⲓ in the same place (with the letters ⲛⲁ 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 ⲁⲛ ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲁⲩ nor ⲁⲥϯ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲛϩ is found in any other passage in *GTh*.

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

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

manuscript of *GTh* might be attributed to coincidence.[54] Second, the direct object marker ⲙ̄– that would ordinarily be expected before ⲡⲱⲛ̄ⲍ has been omitted; this might be explained as one of the extremely rare examples of the use of the double-object infinitive †ⲛⲁⲍ '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.
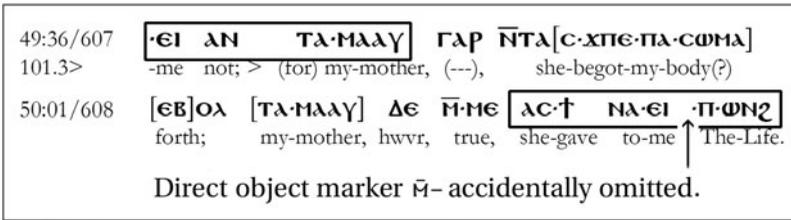

Figure 3. Annotated screen capture of GTh *101 (NHC II 49.36–50.1) in 'Grondin's Interlinear' with observations about its relationship to →1[56]*

Relying on Grondin's edition of *GTh*, a forger would have produced →1 of *GJW* simply by copying the pertinent text from two consecutive lines of NHC II. The PDF omits ⲙ̄ before ⲡⲱⲛ̄ⲍ as the result of a typographical error.[57]

3.2 *Recto (→), line 2*

Coptic:]ⲥ̣ ⲡⲉⲝⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛ̄ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲝⲉ ⲥ̣[
English   ] .' The disciples said to Jesus, '. [

The phrase ⲡⲉⲝⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛ̄ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲝⲉ 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 †ⲛⲁⲍ 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. I (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 ⲙ̄ 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 ⲡⲉⲝⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛ̄ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲝⲉ 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 ⲡⲉⲝⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ

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:] . ⲁⲣⲛⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ ⲙⲡϣⲁ ⲙⲙⲟⲥ ⲁ[ⲛ (?)
English:] deny. Mary is n[ot (?)] worthy of it [

The infinitive ⲁⲣⲛⲁ concludes *GTh* 81 (NHC II 47.17).[59] The name ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ does not appear as spelled in →3 anywhere in *GTh*. The phrase ⲙⲡϣⲁ ⲙⲙⲟⳚ ⲁⲛ appears in *GTh* 80 (NHC II 47.14–15).[60] The preposition ⲙⲙⲟⳚ (ⲛ in the prepersonal state) is completed by the third person masculine singular suffix (Ⳛ) 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 ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ in *GJW*. This does not appear to be a standard Sahidic spelling,[61] and the name is spelled ⲙⲁⲣⲓϩⲁⲙ 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 (ϩ) 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. .] / ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲧⲁϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲙⲛ̅[
English:] . . .' Jesus said to them, 'My wife . . [

The phrase ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ ϫⲉ appears in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.27–8).[62] The word ⲧⲁϩⲓⲙⲉ (possessive article ⲧⲁ– + noun ϩⲓⲙⲉ) does not appear in the form it takes in →4 anywhere in *GTh*. The final two letters (ⲙⲛ̅) appear in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.30).[63]

ϫⲉ in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.27–8; cf. →4), by ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ in 18 (36.11), and by ⲡⲉϫⲁⳚ ⲛⲁⲩ ϫⲉ in 20 (36.28).

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

60 The phrase ⲙⲡϣⲁ ⲙⲙⲟⳚ ⲁⲛ also appears in *GTh* 56 (NHC II 42.32) and 111 (NHC II 51.10).

61 The name 'Mary' is spelled ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ, ⲙⲁⲣⲓϩⲁⲙ or ⲙⲁⲣⲓϩⲁⲙⲙⲏ 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 ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ once (NHC V 40.25).

62 As already noted, the phrase ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛ̅ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ϫⲉ indicates the beginning of speech by the disciples in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.25; cf. →2), and Jesus' response is introduced with ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ ϫⲉ (NHC II 34.27–28). The phrase ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ ϫⲉ also appears in *GTh* 14 (NHC II 35.14–15).

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

In →4, a phrase such as ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ might have been used to introduce Jesus' words; instead, the formula ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅, 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 ϫⲉ following ⲡⲉϫⲉ⸗ [*sic*] to introduce direct discourse'; such an omission of the conjunction is 'not standard' Coptic grammar.[64] The verb ⲡⲉϫⲉ– is 'almost always completed by ϫⲉ' 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 ⲡⲉϫⲉ⸗ [*sic*] with and without ϫⲉ'.[66] It is not impossible that *GJW* is one of these select texts.

Alternatively, the absence of ϫⲉ 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 ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ and ϫⲉ in his edition of *GTh*.
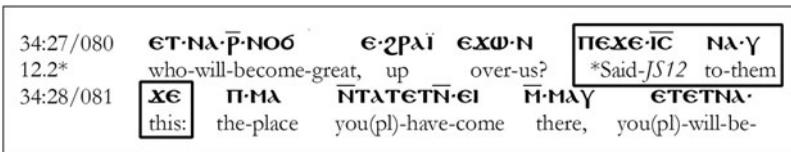

34:27/080	ⲈⲦ·ⲚⲀ·ⲢⲠⲚ̄ⲞϬ	Ⲉ·ϨⲢⲀⲒ	ⲈϪⲰ·Ⲛ	ⲠⲈϪⲈ·ⲓ̅ⲥ̅	ⲚⲀ·Ⲩ
12.2*	who-will-become-great,	up	over-us?	*Said-*JS12	to-them
34:28/081	ϪⲈ	Ⲡ·ⲘⲀ	Ⲛ̄ⲦⲀⲦⲈⲦⲚ̄·ⲈⲒ	Ⲙ̄·ⲘⲀⲨ	ⲈⲦⲈⲦⲚⲀ·
	this:	the-place	you(pl)-have-come	there,	you(pl)-will-be-

Figure 4. Annotated screen capture of GTh *12 (NHC II 34.27–8) in 'Grondin's Interlinear' showing that a line break separates* ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ *from* ϫⲉ

Since Grondin correctly indicated that ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ means 'Jesus said to them' (a complete phrase in English), a forger may easily have overlooked ϫⲉ on the next line.

The suggestion that the absence of ϫⲉ 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, ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ corresponds to 'Jesus said', ⲛⲁⲩ to 'to them', and ⲧⲁϩⲓⲙⲉ to 'My wife'. The only word that could correspond to 'this' seems to be ϫⲉ, and it is not only missing in *GJW* 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, ϫⲉ 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 ⲡⲉϫⲉ–, ⲡⲉϫⲁ⸗ 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 … '"'

'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 ϩιμε in →4 has been cited as evidence of the text's antiquity because it is not found in *GTh* and cϩιμε is a more commonly used word meaning 'wife'.[68] But it seems a forger with limited knowledge of Coptic would have been *more* likely to use ϩιμε than cϩιμε to ensure that Jesus *unequivocally* referred to his 'wife' in *GJW*. Since 'Grondin's Interlinear' does not indicate that cϩιμε can mean 'wife' (because the word is not used with this meaning in *GTh*), a forger would have needed to look up the word for 'wife'. Any forger who looked up 'wife' in the English index of Crum's *Coptic Dictionary* would have quickly located an entry indicating that cϩιμε means 'woman', 'wife' or 'female' but ϩιμε *specifically* means 'wife'.[69]

3.5 *Recto (→), line 5*

Coptic:] . . . cnaϣρмaθнтнc naει aүω [
English:] . . . she will be able to be my disciple and . . [

The phrase ϥnaϣρм[aθнт]нc naει a(n) aүω appears in *GTh* 101 (NHC ɪɪ 49.33–4).[70] In this phrase, the conjugated form of ρ̄–мaθнтнc begins with the third person masculine singular prefix (ϥ) in *GTh* 101; it begins with the third person feminine singular prefix (c) in the parallel in →5. In both →5 and its parallel in *GTh*, the preposition na⸗ (n̄ in the prepersonal state) is completed with a first person singular suffix spelled ει instead of ï.

The most noticeable difference between →5 and its parallel in *GTh* 101 is that the negative particle an ('not') is missing between naει and aүω in →5. The absence of an might be taken as an indication that →5 was not copied from *GTh*, but ρ̄–мaθнтнc ('be a disciple') is never used without an 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 an from a negative phrase.

3.6 *Recto (→), line 6*

Coptic:]ι маρεϥϣε εθοοу ϣaϥε‹ι›nε [
English:] . No wicked man brings (forth) . . . [72]

68 Peppard, 'Forgery?'; King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 156.

69 W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939) 385a, 877.

70 The similar phrase ϥnaϣρмaθнтнc an naει aүω is found in *GTh* 55 (NHC ɪɪ 42.26–7).

71 Cf. *GTh* 55 (NHC ɪɪ 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 ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ and ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ appear once in *GTh*, ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ in *GTh* 47 (NHC Ⅱ 41.17) and ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ in *GTh* 45 (NHC Ⅱ 41.3). The conjugated verb ϣⲁϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ is found in *GTh* 45 (NHC Ⅱ 41.2).[73]

There are two notable textual features in this line. First, the non-definite noun ⲣⲱⲙⲉ is followed by the relative clause ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ 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–, $^\varnothing$, etc.) by the circumstantial.'[74] The presence of ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ in →6 has only been explained as 'a rare attestation of an as yet only partially understood phenomenon'.[75] Second, two conjugation bases (ⲙⲁⲣⲉ– and ϣⲁϥ) are used with a single infinitive (ⲉⲓⲛⲉ). 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: ⳾ ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲁϥⲉ ⲛⲉ ('. Let wicked people swell up . . .').[76] In this reading, the conjugation base ⲙⲁⲣⲉ– is understood as a standard Sahidic jussive. Since the third-from-last character is read as a certain epsilon, the conjugation base ϣⲁϥ may be understood as part of the infinitive ϣⲁϥⲉ. With the letters ⲛⲉ regarded as the beginning of a new word, →6 is seen as having only one conjugation base (ⲙⲁⲣⲉ–) and one infinitive (ϣⲁϥⲉ). 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*, ϣⲁϥⲉ 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 Suciu and Lundhaug, 'Peculiar Dialectal Feature'.

81 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 610.

82 King seems to have recognised the interpretive problems associated with identifying ϣⲁϥⲉ as the infinitive in →6. She 'initially suggested that the infinitive might be ϣⲁϥ, a previously unattested form of ϣⲱϥ (be destroyed)'. King, 'Coptic Gospel Papyrus', 19–20. Yet, ϣⲁϥⲉ 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 ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲕⲟⲥ ⲣ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϣⲁϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ ('An evil man brings (forth) . . . ') found in *GTh* 45 (NHC ɪɪ 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 ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲁϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ 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*.

ⲙⲁ·ⲣⲉ·ⲣⲱⲙⲉ	ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ	ϣⲁϥ·ⲉⲓⲛⲉ
No-man	which-is-wicked,	does-he-bring
GTh 47	*GTh* 45	*GTh* 45
(NHC ɪɪ 41.17)	(NHC ɪɪ 41.3)	(NHC ɪɪ 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 ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲕⲟⲥ ⲣ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϣⲁϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ without recognising the serious Coptic grammatical problems in the line. Grondin did not explain that a relative clause (ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ) should not follow a non-definite noun (ⲣⲱⲙⲉ); his work was never intended to serve as a Coptic grammar. Also, Grondin's functional equivalent translation of ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ 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 ⲙⲁⲣⲉ–) and a noun (ⲣⲱⲙⲉ).[84]

3.7   *Recto (→), line 7*

Coptic:] ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϯϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲥ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡ[
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 prenominal negative aorist conjugation base can appear as ⲙⲁⲣⲉ– (rather than as the standard Sahidic ⲙⲉⲣⲉ–).

The phrase ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϯϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲙⲁϥ appears in *GTh* 30 (NHC ɪɪ 39.4–5),[85] and the preposition ⲉⲧⲃⲉ followed by a word beginning with ⲡ is found in *GTh* 29 (NHC ɪɪ 38.33).[86] In the phrase ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϯϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲙⲁϥ, the preposition ⲛⲙⲙⲁ⸗ (ⲙⲛ̄ in the prepersonal state) is completed by the third person masculine singular suffix (ϥ) in *GTh* 30; it is completed by the third person feminine singular suffix (ⲥ) in the parallel in →7.

3.8   *Recto (→), line 8*

Coptic:] . ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ . . [
English:] . an image . . . [

The phrase ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ appears in *GTh* 22 (NHC ɪɪ 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 ɪɪ page and line numbers in parentheses) are noted beneath the Coptic text. Third person singular female personal affixes (ⲥ: 'she', 'her') in *GJW* that are masculine (ϥ: 'he', 'him') in their parallels in *GTh* are printed in *gray italics*. Words in *GJW* that do not appear in identical form in *GTh* are printed in **bold**. An asterisk indicates where ⲁⲛ ('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*]'.[87] 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 ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϯϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲙⲁϥ does not appear in any other passage in *GTh*.

86 The preposition ⲉⲧⲃⲉ before a word beginning with ⲡ is also found in *GTh* 4 (NHC ɪɪ 33.8), 29 (38.32) and 61 (43.31).

87 King, 'Coptic Papyrus Fragment', 156. Cf. Peppard, 'Forgery?'; T. S. Paananen, 'Another "Fake" Or Just a Problem of Method: What Francis Watson's Analysis Does to Papyrus Köln 255?', *Exploring Our Matrix* (2012) 1–5, http://blue.butler.edu/~jfmcgrat/GJW/Another Fake Or Just a Problem of Method by Timo S. Paananen.pdf.

1	na]ei^a an тамаау аст наеι пω[ng^b
	GTh 101 (49.36) GTh 101 (50.1)

2	]ϛ пехе ммаθнтнϲ ν̄ιϲ хε ϛ[
	GTh 12 (34.25)

3	] . арна мариам мпωа ммоϲ а[ν (?)
	GTh 81 (47.17) GTh 80 (47.14-5)

4	] . . . [vac. .] / пехе ῑϲ нау^c таgιμе μ̄ν̄ [
	GTh 12 (34.27) GTh 12 (34.30)

5	] . . . ϲναωр̄μαθнтнϲ наеι * αγω [
	GTh 101 (49.33-4)

6	]ι̣ марерωμε εθοογ^d ωαϥε<ι>νε^e [
	GTh 47 (41.17) GTh 45 (41.3) GTh 45 (41.2)

7	] анок тωοοп нмнаϲ ετβε п̣[
	GTh 30 (39.4-5) GTh 29 (38.33)

8	] . оygικων . . [
	GTh 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 ϊ for the first person singular suffix (twice in →1 and once in →5), use the double-object infinitive тνα⸗ instead of the more usual т ν̄-/м̄мο⸗ ν̄-/να⸗ in →1, and introduce Jesus' words with пехε ῑϲ (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 GJW is an ancient artifact	Explanation if GJW 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 ⲛ̄– missing before ⲡⲱⲛϩ in →1	'Rare' grammatical construction	Dependence on 'Grondin's Interlinear'
c. Conjunction ϫⲉ missing before direct speech with ⲡⲉϫⲉ– in →4	'Rare' grammatical construction	Dependence on 'Grondin's Interlinear'
d. Relative clause ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ after non-definite noun ⲣⲱⲙⲉ in →6	'Rare' grammatical construction	Dependence on 'Grondin's Interlinear'
e. Two conjugational bases (ⲙⲁⲣⲉ– and ϣⲁϩ) 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 ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ ('Mary') and ⲧⲁϩⲓⲙⲉ ('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 ɪɪ 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 ɪɪ 49.36 because it is reproduced in Grondin's edition of *GTh*, (b) omitted the expected direct object marker (ᴍ–) before ⲡⲱⲛϩ because it was accidentally omitted in the pertinent passage in Grondin's 2002 PDF, (c) used ⲡⲉϫⲉ– to introduce direct speech without ϫⲉ because Grondin followed NHC ɪɪ and separated the seemingly complete phrase ⲡⲉϫⲉ ɪ̄ⲥ̄ ⲛⲁⲩ from the conjunction ϫⲉ 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.[95] *GJW* is not dependent on just any version of *GTh*: it is derived from the version found in NHC ɪɪ. 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 ɪɪ 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 ɪɪ, 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.