

Jesus' Wife: A New Controversy in the Study of Christian Study

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1. Introduction

The *International Association for Coptic Studies* (IACS) organized their regular international congress in Rome in 2012. The beginning of the conference was tranquil with the exchange of delightful greetings to each other. The announcement of the article, “Jesus said to them, ‘My wife ...’: a New Coptic Gospel Papyrus”, nevertheless, brought a deep impact, when Madeleine Scopello¹ chaired the Gnostic section in the evening of the second day (Tuesday, 18th September, 2012) at the *Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum* across the Vatican Square. Hugo Lund testified that there were about twenty colleagues in the place², but it ultimately became about thirty-five people including journalists at around 7: 15 p.m. The measure of the unknown papyrus was 4 cm in height and 8 cm in width. Each line of the *recto* (8(9) lines) and *verso* (6 (7) lines)³ was incomplete.⁴ The 30 minutes of the presentation was not good enough for a scholarly debate, but left many controversial questions. Wolf-Peter Funk, who eventually withdrew from the room even before the end of the section with other colleagues, had pointed out that there are so many Coptic fragments like this in Egypt to be discovered even now.⁵ Thus, the discovery of the unknown Coptic

¹ She edited the first book for Judas Studies. See Madeleine Scopello, *The Gospel of Judas in Context*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008.

² Alin Suci, “On the So- Called Gospel of Jesus’s Wife. Some Preliminary Thoughts,” last modified on 29th October, 2012, <http://alinsuciu.com/2012/09/26/on-the-so-called-gospel-of-jesus-wife-some-preliminary-thoughts>.

³ The line nine of the *recto* side and line seven of the *verso* side are not clear, but it is sure there is papyrological evidence of writing on these lines.

⁴ The half of the *verso* side is not used. The darkness of the ink in the *verso* side is not the same with the *recto* side. Laurie Goodstein, “Coptic Scholars Doubt and Hail a Reference to Jesus’ Wife,” last modified on 20th September, 2012. *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/21/us/papyrus-fragment-that-refers-to-jesus-wife-stirs-debate.html?_r=0.

⁵ My paper was delivered just before King at the same section of the conference in Rome. David W. Kim, ‘A New Branch Sprung: Judas Scholarship in Gnostic Studies’, *Augustinianum*, Vol 53 Issue 1 (June, 2013), 5-32.

papyrus not only surprised the congress audiences but only reminded the paper of Rodolphe Kasser of Switzerland who initially unveiled the secret existence of the Coptic *Gospel of Judas* (*A New Coptic Apocrypha Available to Science: Peuaggelion Nioudas*) at the 8th *International Congress of Coptic Studies* (ISCS) in Paris on July 1st, 2004.⁶

The fifty-two paged article of Karen King informed many new ideas about the (non-historical) figures of Jesus, leadership principles, and family concepts.⁷ The Coptic papyrus was considered as ‘a fragment of a fourth-century CE codex’ in presuming the original composition was from the second half of the second century CE. The observation was not a big surprise, for most of the ancient Coptic manuscripts were written in the third and fourth centuries with the perspective of the second century origination. One of the arguments was clear that the new papyrus does not prove any evidence of the *historical* Jesus. Nonetheless, with the line four (ΠΕΧΕ ΙϞ ΝΑΥ ΤΑΖΙΜΕ) of the *recto* side, the scholar’s warning was unconsciously misunderstood among readers of faith, that Jesus historically had a wife. King already presumed the fact that Jesus’ marital status was one of the disputable issues in the early Christian communities of the second century CE, but did not clearly demonstrate that the Coptic text were *gnostic* opposing the doctrines and decrees of the mainline Christianity. The Coptic version of the *Gospel of Jesus’ Wife* was thought to have originated from a Greek version like the case of the *Gospel of Thomas* for which we have three Greek fragments and a complete Coptic version. On the other hand, it is not definite that the Coptic version of *Jesus’ Wife* would be derived from a Greek version. The scenario the author or compiler of the Coptic text used various Greek materials of the Jesus tradition available in the ancient era, cannot be excluded. The title of the papyrus (*Gospel of Jesus’ Wife: GosJesWife* or *GJW*.) was also not literally written on the manuscript, but created by the Harvard scholar. Decisively, the interpretation of ΖΙΜΕ (‘wife’) that was previously assumed by a German scholar⁸, was a revolutionary exposition for every conference attendant.

⁶ Herb Krosney, *The Lost Gospel: the Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot*, (Washington: National Geographic, 2006) 237-241.

⁷ King is a historian of Christianity, but also teaches the intermediate Coptic language courses. Karen King, with contributions by AnneMarie Luijendijk, “Jesus said to them, ‘My wife ...’: a New Coptic Gospel Papyrus”, last modified on 19th September, 2012. http://news.hds.harvard.edu/files/King_JesusSaidToThem_draft_0917.pdf.

⁸ See the following section of this paper.

2. The Discovery of *Jesus' Wife*

Then, how was the mystical fragment uncovered in modern history? There is evidence that the papyrus has been surfaced for at least thirty-five years.⁹ The papyrus originally belonged to the early owner, H. U. Laukamp (Berlin) before 1977¹⁰, even though there is another hint that it was in the possession of a German-American collector in the communist side of the Eastern Germany in 1960s.¹¹ The German Coptologist, Gerhard Fecht (died in 2006) and Egyptologist, Peter Munro of the Ägyptologisches Seminar of Freie Universität of Berlin (died in January 2009) have professionally examined the condition and context of the papyrus (between 1977 and 1982)¹² and Fecht, based on observation, surmised the possible implication of 'a marriage' by the reference to having a wife.¹³ After the death of H. U. Laukamp in 2001 the papyrus fragment became in the possession of the current unknown owner (a German) who may be a relative of Mr Laukamp or an antiquity dealer in 1997.¹⁴

King had doubts about the value of the mystical manuscript and thought it was a forgery when the private collector approached her in 2010, because the Coptic grammar and syntax of the text were not regular and comprehensive.¹⁵ King did not make any decision by herself, but collaborated with a couple of experts (from December 2011). The modern history of its discovery and analysis continued as King requested Roger Nagnal of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW) in New York and Anne Marie Luijendijk of Princeton University the authenticity and date of the new fragment in March 2012. The authenticity of the text was positively judged as the palaeographical conclusion was set up in

⁹ Nicole Winfield, "Jesus Wife Papyrus Authentic," last modified on 19th September, 2012. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/harvard-claim-jesus-wife-papyrus-scrutinized>.

¹⁰ David Meadows, "Some More Nails for the Ossuary of the Gospel of Jesus' Wife," last modified on 21st October, 2012, <http://rogueclassicisism.com/2012/10/21/some-more-nails-for-the-ossuary-of-the-gospel-of-jesus-wife/>.

¹¹ Ariel Sabar, 'The Inside Story of a Controversial New Text about Jesus,' last modified on 18th September, 2012, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/The-Inside-Story-of-the-Controversial-New-Text-About-Jesus-170177076.html?c=y&story=fullstory>.

¹² Winfield, "Jesus Wife Papyrus Authentic".

¹³ King, "Jesus said to them, 'My wife ...': a New Coptic Gospel Papyrus". James Tabor, "The Latest Twist on the Jesus 'Wife' Fragment: a Smoking Gun for the Forgery Case?," last modified on 13th, November, 2012. <http://jamestabor.com/2012/10/13/the-latest-twist-on-the-jesus-wife-fragment-a-smoking-gun-for-the-forgery-case/>.

¹⁴ The person would be a relative of H. U. Laukamp, unless it was sold to an antiquities dealer. Jaweed Kaleem, "The Gospel of Jesus' Wife,' New Early Christian Text, Indicates Jesus May Have Been Married," last modified on 24th September, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/18/the-gospel-of-jesus-wife-_n_1891325.html. Farrior, "Divorcing Mrs. Jesus".

¹⁵ Mary-Evelyn Farrior, "Divorcing Mrs. Jesus," last modified on 5th October, 2012, <http://ntweblog.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/divorcing-mrs-jesus-leo-depuydts-report.html>.

circa 4th century CE.¹⁶ The efforts of King did not stop here, but received another confirmation from one of the Coptic linguistic experts on September 7th, 2012. Ariel Shisha-Halevy of Hebrew University in Jerusalem likely denied the possibility of it being a forgery based on a study of the high resolution digital photograph¹⁷: “I believe – on the basis of language and grammar – the text is *authentic*. This is to say, all its grammatical ‘noteworthy’ features separately or conjointly do not warrant condemning it as forgery.”¹⁸ The new fragment was seen as an irregular manuscript in language and grammar, but the counteractive issues were not seen as any big deal to criticise the text as a fake, for there are many similar cases in Gnostic texts of the Jesus tradition.

Thus, the fragment has papyrologically and palaeographically been analysed by the world class experts, even though the scientific examination of the carbon 14 dating was not going to be performed due to the size (no margin) of the papyrus.¹⁹ The result of the chemical testing of the ink (‘spectroscopy’) was on its way, while the style of the *handwriting* that does not have ligatures was considered as ‘bilinear’.²⁰ The figures of the ‘faded ink of the *verso*’ and ‘the thick side of the *recto* were presumed as that the Coptic text like the earliest NT papyri could have come from an ancient garbage heap or burial sites. The geographical provenance and region of circulation were presumed to be in Upper Egypt, Syria, and Rome. The *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Mary*, and the *Gospel of Egyptians* were seen as the closest parallels to the *Gospel of Jesus’s Wife*. Such indications of the textual authenticity faintly maintained the perspective that there was an ancient religious group which kept the anti-Christian tradition of the earthly Jesus.

3. Reaction Against *Jesus’ Wife*

Such a careful approach was condemned soon after the official announcement. Although

¹⁶ even though it is not known what method was applied for this result.

¹⁷ The high resolution photographs were produced by the efforts of Nancy Richardson, Rose Lincoln, and B. D. Colen.

¹⁸ He was also at the Gnosticism and Manichaeism section of the Rome ICCS conference (2012). King, “Jesus said to them, ‘My wife ...’: a New Coptic Gospel Papyrus”, 5.

¹⁹ According to Bagnall, the case of no margin is presumed in that an antiquities dealer cuts or tears a large papyrus into small pieces in order to earn more money. If we could scientifically check the date of the edge of the fragment, we would know more about the condition of the fragment. King, “Jesus said to them, ‘My wife ...’: a New Coptic Gospel Papyrus,” 10.

²⁰ For the ink test, ‘if synthetic materials are found, then the new papyrus is invalidated, but if the ink is made of the organic materials, then the test remains inconclusive, since ink of the that kind could be made during any time period’. See more at Farrior, “Divorcing Mrs. Jesus”.

King and her colleagues took almost ten months to evaluate the papyrus, the first response emerged after just two days. The theory of a *fake* was that the papyrus belongs to a modern compiler who is not a native speaker of Coptic, but has a limited ability of the ancient Egyptian language.²¹ The first reaction provided three evidences²² that 1) the *Jesus' Wife* papyrus is a collection of phrases or words from the *Gospel of Thomas* (*Logia* 12, 18, 20, 30, 45, 81, 101, and 114).²³ Waston, along with Päivi Vähäkangas²⁴, could not find any relevant phrase of the *recto* lines six and seven from the Thomasine *Logia*, but the rest of them were able to be compared. Goodacre supported the dependent view through the case of the line seven; $\alpha\text{NOK } \tau\omega\text{OOTI } \text{NMM}\alpha\text{C } \epsilon\text{TBE } \pi$ (I am with her on the account of ...).²⁵ As the sentence was presumed with *Mt.* 28: 20b²⁶, the $\alpha\text{NOK } \tau\omega\text{OOTI } \text{NMM}\alpha\text{C}$ was seen to be from the *Logion* 30 ($\alpha\text{NOK } \tau\omega\text{OOTI } \text{NMM}\alpha\text{C}$).²⁷ The $\epsilon\text{TBE } \pi$ of *Jesus' Wife* was depicted as quoted from the *Logion* 29 ($\epsilon\text{TBE } \bar{\pi}\bar{\eta}\bar{\alpha}$ or $\epsilon\text{TBE } \pi\text{C}\omega\text{M}\alpha$). 2) The phrase ($\text{N}\alpha\epsilon\text{I}$) of line one is placed at the same location with the word (ϵI) of the *Logion* 101 (*GTh* 49: 35-36). 3) The *GosJesWife* is contextually disjointed, as having full of gaps (for some lines there are three letters missing on each side of each line).²⁸ Additionally, the insignificance of the ink test also added weight to the dependent view of Watson²⁹ even if there is a positive result of the ink test:

²¹ Francis Watson, "The Gospel of Jesus' Wife: How a Fake Gospel-Fragment was composed," last modified on 20th October, 2012. <http://markgoodacre.org/Watson.pdf>, 1.

²² Francis Watson, "Inventing Jesus' Wife," last modified 27th September 2012, <http://bibleinterp.com/articles/wat368023.shtml>.

²³ Watson, "The Gospel of Jesus' Wife: How a Fake Gospel-Fragment was composed." Ibid., "The Gospel of Jesus' Wife: How a Fake Gospel-Fragment was composed: Introduction and Summary," last modified on 21th September 2012, <http://markgoodacre.org/Watson2.pdf>. The *GJW* line one is from the *GTh* 49, 35-36 ($\epsilon\text{I } \alpha\text{N } \tau\alpha\text{M}\alpha\alpha\gamma$) and *GTh* 50.1 ($\alpha\text{CT } \text{N}\alpha\epsilon\text{I } \bar{\text{M}}\bar{\pi}\bar{\omega}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\zeta}$). The *GJW* line two is seen in *GTh* 34.25, *GTh* 36.9, and *GTh* 36.26. The *GJW* line three and four are from the *GTh* 45. 17; and 51. 5, 19-20. The *GJW* line five is from the *GTh* 49. 32-36 and *Lk.* 14: 16. The *GJW* line six is with *Mk.* 11: 14 (later he offered a reference of *GTh* 41. 1-2). The *GJW* line seven is with *Mt.* 28: 20b (later it was compared with *GTh* 39. 1-5). The *GJW* line eight ($\text{OY } \text{ZIK}\omega\text{N}$) is with the *Logia* of the *GTh* 37. 34, *GTh* 42. 1, *GTh* 47. 20, 22, 23, and *GTh* 47.27.

²⁴ She mentioned it on her facebook. See Hugo Lundhaug and Alin Suci, "On the So-Called Gospel of Jesus's Wife. Some Preliminary Thoughts," last modified on 26th September, 2012. 5. <http://alinsuciu.com/2012/09/26/on-the-so-called-gospel-of-jesus-wife-some-preliminary-thoughts-by-hugo-lundhaug-and-alin-suciu/>. <http://www.facebook.com/paivi.vahakangas1>.

²⁵ Mark Goodacre, "Gospel of Jesus' Wife: the Last Line is also from Thomas," NT Blog, last modified on 24th September, 2012. <http://ntweblog.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/gospel-of-jesus-wife-last-line-is-also.html>.

²⁶ "I am with you..."

²⁷ Goodacre did not concern about the switch of the gender issue (from *f* to *c*).

²⁸ The *recto* lines five, seven and eight are about Jesus' wife' and discipleship, but the line six ('let the wicked man bring forth...') interrupts the main context of the discourse. Francic Watson, 'Addendum: The End of the Line?,' first posted on 22th September, revised on 26th September, p. 1. <http://markgoodacre.org/Watson3.pdf>.

²⁹ He himself denied being an expert on 'ink' technology, but has involved the ink issue of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* and *Letter to Theodore*. Watson, "Inventing Jesus' Wife".

‘Carbon-gum ink (while the ‘carbonless-iron-gal ink’ was used during the Middle Ages) was more common in antiquity and was probably the kind of ink used for the fragment. ... it may be possible to carbon-date the soot in this kind of ink but one should be aware that obtaining ancient carbon to make the soot for the ink is not difficult. So, ... testing the ink is likely conclusive, unless the forger made a mistake’.³⁰

There is another palaeographical view that the papyrus is authentic, but the *handwriting* is unauthentic. About the type of the *handwriting*, the *Gospel of Jesus’s Wife* reflects a character of irrelevance with other ancient Coptic manuscripts.³¹ The scribe(s) of the papyrus have been criticized for the lack of professionalism. The Coptic letters are roughly shaped (in particular ω , \circ , and ϵ) and inconsistent in writing. The style of τ is also seen not to be familiar with any other 4th century texts.³² It suggests that the papyrus was written not by a pen, but with a brush. The ϵ of the line six ($\omega\alpha\varrho\epsilon\eta\epsilon$) was suspicious as a mistake of the copyist.³³ The feature of the oblique stroke (/) just before the sentence ($\pi\epsilon\chi\epsilon\ \bar{\iota}\bar{\varsigma}\ \bar{\nu}\alpha\gamma\ \tau\alpha\zeta\iota\mu\epsilon\ \bar{\mu}\bar{\nu}$) in the line four of the papyrus was seen as being unusual.³⁴ The uncertainty of its provenance and unidentified ownership likely caused the papyrus to be a modern forgery.³⁵ The square formation of the papyrus is another external cause for mistrust along with the view that the papyrus is written without minimum spaces.

While the actual dialect of the Coptic language was not mentioned as either Bohairic or Sahidic³⁶, the scepticism was developed in the theory that the papyrus, though Goodacre once thought of a post-1945 (post-Nag Hammadi papyrus) writing³⁷, was created between 1956 (or 1975³⁸) and the present time. In particular, Watson in considering the impact of the *Da Vinci Code*³⁹ assumed *Jesus’ Wife* as a post-2003 modern papyrus. The suspected period of the Durham reader does not deny the time of 2006 where there were the publications of the

³⁰ “For example, one can obtain some (blank) ancient papyrus on the antiquities market and then cut and burn part of it to make the soot for the ink”. Watson, “Inventing Jesus’ Wife”.

³¹ Lundhaug, and Suci, “On the So-Called Gospel of Jesus’s Wife. Some Preliminary Thoughts”.

³² Gesine Robinson, “Rebuttal of the presentation of a Gospel of Jesus’ wife,” on 23th September, 2012, <http://alinsuciu.com/2012/09/26/on-the-so-called-gospel-of-jesus-wife-some-preliminary-thoughts-by-hugo-lundhaug-and-alin-suciu/>.

³³ Andrew Bernhard, “How the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife Might Have Been Forged: A Tentative Proposal,” [gospels.net](http://www.gospels.net). last modified on 10th October, 2012. 14. <http://www.gospels.net/gjw/mighthavebeenforged.pdf>.

³⁴ even though it is interpreted to symbolize the end of the sentence.

³⁵ Robinson, “Rebuttal of the presentation of a Gospel of Jesus’ wife”.

³⁶ The Bohairic is the modern Coptic dialect for the today Coptic church and its community and the Sahidic is the ancient Egyptian Christian dialect around 3-5 (8) centuries AD.

³⁷ Mark Goodacre, “NT Blog,” last modified on 29th October, 2012. <http://www.ntweblog.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/the-gospel-of-jesus-wife-lastest.html>.

³⁸ Watson, ‘Addendum: The End of the Line?’.

³⁹ Dan Brown, *Da Vinci Code*. (New York: Doubleday Group, 2003).

New-Age Christian culture: the *Gospel According to Judas: Myth and Parable*⁴⁰, the *Missing Gospels*⁴¹, and the *Jesus Papers*.⁴² The theory of a forgery was compared with the case of the so-called *Secret Gospel of Mark* which was discovered in 1958. The text of a Jerusalem monastery was interpreted as being composed by Morton Smith (died in 1991), who was also the supposed discoverer.⁴³ The material was eventually published in 1973, when Smith felt confident about the authenticity of the text. The homosexual Jesus of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* has been satirically paralleled with the heterosexual Jesus of the new *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*.⁴⁴

Further, the view of a *patchwork* supported the textual analysis of Watson that the Coptic fragment was reconstructed out of many words or phrases from the *Coptic Gospel of Thomas*.⁴⁵ The professional insights of the experts (Gerhard Fecht, Peter Munro, Karen King, AnneMarie Lujendijk, Roger Bagnall, and Ariel Shisha-Halevy) were treated as being a hoax by a modern forger.⁴⁶ Bernhard, like Leo Depuydt who was a formal student of Ariel Shisha-Halevy in the 1980s⁴⁷, supposed that the person(s) may be dependent on the *Grondin's Interlinear of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*.⁴⁸ The view led Bernhard to suspect

⁴⁰ It was about the figure of Judas from the various Jesus films. Richard Walsh, 'the Gospel According to Judas: Myth and Parable', *Biblical Interpretation*, 14 (2006), 37-53.

⁴¹ It described the earliest Christian history and the formation of the NT canon. Many subjects were concerned, such as the early Christian landscape, Gnosticism, the diversity, the nature of God and Creation, Jesus: Divine and/ or human. Darrell L. Bock, *the Missing Gospels: Understanding the Truth behind Alternative Christianities*, (Nashville: Nelson, 2006).

⁴² Jesus was seen as a mortal human being married with his female disciple Mary Magdalene and had a child. David M. Haskell, Kenneth Paradis, and Stephanie Burgoyne, 'Defending the Faith: Easter Sermon Reaction to Pop Culture Discourses,' *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 50. No. 2 (2008) 139-156.

⁴³ Watson, "Inventing Jesus' Wife". Ken Brown, "the Gospel of Jesus' Wife and the perils and Potential of Online Scholarship," on 23rd September, 2012. <http://corthodoxy.wordpress.com/2012/09/23/the-gospel-of-jesus-wife-and-the-perils-and-potential-of-online-scholarship/>.

⁴⁴ Watson, though many other *handwriting* experts disagree his view, postulated that there are many parallels between the *Secret Gospel of Mark* and texts of Papias' *Matthew* and the *Letter to Theodore* to draw the strong conclusion of a literary dependence. See King, "Jesus said to them, 'My wife ...': a New Coptic Gospel Papyrus". For the text of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* see [http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/theology.religion/Secret GospelofMark.pdf](http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/theology.religion/Secret%20GospelofMark.pdf). James F. McGrath, "Is the Gospel of Jesus' Wife a Fake?," Last Modified on 21st September, 2012. <http://markgoodacre.org/Watson.pdf>. Timo S. Paananen, "Another 'Fate' or Just a Problem of Method: What Francis Watson's Analysis Does to Papyrus Köln 255?," 4. <http://www.gospels.net/gjw/mighthavebeenforged.pdf>. Francis Watson, 'Beyond Suspicion: On the Authorship of the Mar Saba Letter and the Secret Gospel of Mark,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 61, Pt 1, (April, 2010) 128-170.

⁴⁵ Bernhard, "How the Gospel of Jesus's Wife Might Have Been Forged: A Tentative Proposal".

⁴⁶ King has already mentioned in many places of her article that *Jesus' Wife* has many common figures with *Thomas*. King, "Jesus said to them, 'My wife ...': a New Coptic Gospel Papyrus", 13, 16, 17, 22, 24, 25, 28, 32, 33, and 47.

⁴⁷ See more at Farrior, "Divorcing Mrs. Jesus".

⁴⁸ See, "Grondin's Interlinear Coptic-English Translation of the Gospel of Thomas," last modified 09th November, 2012. http://www.gospel-thomas.net/gtbypage_112702.pdf, (1997-2002 edited and updated) Mark Goodacre, "Jesus' Wife Fragment: Further Evidence of Modern Forgery," last modified on 11th

the Coptic papyrus as a post-1997 text while Tabor considered the year as being 2009.⁴⁹ Thus, Bernhard, though supporting the theory of a forgery, suggested that the lines three, four, five, six, and seven of the *rector* are equal with other Thomasine *Logia* rather than the ones Watson had previously mentioned.⁵⁰ For instance, the line three of the *GosJesWife* is from the **MMOC** of the *GTh* 51.21 (*Logion* 114). The word (**AN M̄MOY**) of the line four reconstructed is from the *GTh* 36. 17 (*Logion* 18) and *GTh* 36. 25 (*Logion* 19). The sentence of **πexε ic nAY** corresponds with the *GTh* 34. 27 (*Logion* 12). The line five is from the *GTh* 42. 26-27 (*Logion* 55), while the line six is from the *GTh* 41. 2-3 (*Logion* 45) and *GTh* 41. 17 (*Logion* 47). The line seven is similar with the *GTh* 39. 4-5 (*Logion* 30) and *GTh* 38. 33 (*Logion* 29).⁵¹

Nonetheless, it is very interesting that the two scholars (Watson and Bernhard) offer different sources of evidence in the process of comparing the *Gospel of Jesus's Wife* and the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*. Why did the author of the new papyrus copy the words or phrases only from *Thomas*? If the forger had a particular story of Jesus in their mind, what would the picture be that he/ she/ they wished to draw? Such inquiries seem like a mystical puzzle in which he/ she/ they picked up the right Thomasine words or phrases for the particular scenario. Then, is *Thomas* the only text he/ she/ they practically used? The two scholars indirectly deny the involvement of other texts. This fact does not prove the inauthenticity of the new Coptic papyrus. Instead, it reflects that the *Gospel of Thomas* contains the common words or phrases which could be found in the *GosJesWife* as the sayings tradition of Jesus in the history of early Christianity.⁵² The palaeographical condition of the *verso* side is another issue for the modern readers who see this papyrus a forgery. There is no plausible comment on how the modern technic of the foolish forger(s) was applied. If the forger(s) used an ancient papyrus and wrote the words or phrases of the *Gospel of Thomas* before known to King in July 2010, the ink of the *recto* side would have hardly been dried and the *verso* side

October, 2012, <http://ntweblog.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/jesus-wife-fragment-further-evidence-of.html>.

⁴⁹ Tabor, "The Latest Twist on the Jesus 'Wife' Fragment: a Smoking Gun for the Forgery Case?"

⁵⁰ Bernhard, "How the Gospel of Jesus's Wife Might Have Been Forged: A Tentative Proposal".

⁵¹ Alin Suci-Hugo Lundhaug, *A Peculiar Dialectal Feature in the Gospel of Jesus's Wife, Line 6*. last modified on 29th October, 2012. <http://alinsuciu.com/2012/09/27/alin-suciu-hugo-lundhaug-an-interesting-dialectal-feature-in-the-gospel-of-jesus-wife-line-6/>.

⁵² Since the Sahidic Coptic language had been used from the second century to the early fourth century AD (until the time of the great persecution of Diocletian), one can infer that the skills of the Egyptian Gnostic Christian scribes would be often unprofessional. Hany N. Takla, "the History of the Coptic Language," last modified 10th November, 2012. <http://www.stshenouda.com/coptlang/copthist.htm>.

would not be easy to identify as being an original as old as a fourth century fragment.⁵³

Watson previously explored Papyrus Köln 255 and also concluded that the text is a modern forgery.⁵⁴ The *verso* side of Papyrus Köln 255 that contains six lines was compared with the passages of *John*.⁵⁵ Watson, in using the modern tool of *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG)⁵⁶, argued that the *verso* lines from two to four are directly from the Johannine passage with two minor modifications. The forger, with a limited knowledge of Greek, adopted the passage of *John* 4: 21-22 for the lines five and six of Papyrus Köln 255. The forgery view of Watson was based on the *non-sequitur* theory of Aristotle: “if forgery, then patchwork. If patchwork, then possible of verbal parallels. If there are verbal parallels, then it is a patchwork, so it is forgery”.⁵⁷ However, the composition of the Greek papyrus could possibly be written in late 20 AD (at the earliest).⁵⁸ And the line one (ΤΟΙΣ ΥΠΙ ΑΥΤΟΥ) is familiar with the phrase (ΤΟΙΣ ΥΠΙ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΛΟΓ ΟΙΣ) of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 9. 6.⁵⁹ Paananen, therefore, insisted on the authenticity of the Papyrus Köln 255 because it is in fact the lower part of the first fragment of *Papyrus Egerton 2*.⁶⁰

Paananen of Helsinki, likewise, asserted that the *GosJesWife* is coincidentally similar with the *Gospel of Thomas*, not the deliberate actions of the complier.⁶¹ The similarity of the new papyrus is not a good reason to label the text as a forgery, because the forgery issue is the norm in the field of the New Testament studies.⁶² The *Gospel of Judas*, when it was surfaced in 2006, was critically condemned as a forgery by Richard L. Arthur.⁶³ However, no one supported his view afterwards, rather the Judas studies with the reconstruction of the lost Ohio fragments (2010-11) was progressively developed based on the Coptic text of

⁵³ James Tabor, “The Latest Twist on the Jesus ‘Wife’ Fragment: a Smoking Gun for the Forgery Case?”.

⁵⁴ Paananen, “Another ‘Fate’ or Just a Problem of Method: What Francis Watson’s Analysis Does to Papyrus Köln 255?”.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See the University of California Digital Library of Greek Literature provides the ancient texts written in Greek from Homer to the fall of Byzantium in AD 1453. <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/>.

⁵⁷ Paananen, “Another ‘Fate’ or Just a Problem of Method: What Francis Watson’s Analysis Does to Papyrus Köln 255?”.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ The method of Watson ‘does not tell the difference between authentic and fake passages’. Ibid. Also see the same view of Wieland Willker, http://www-user.uni-bremen.de/~wie/Egerton_home.html.

⁶¹ Paananen, “Another ‘Fate’ or Just a Problem of Method: What Francis Watson’s Analysis Does to Papyrus Köln 255?”.

⁶² See Meadows, “Some More Nails for the Ossuary of the Gospel of Jesus’ Wife”.

⁶³ Richard L. Arthur, ‘the Gospel of Judas: Is it a Hoax?’ *Journal of Unification Studies*. Vol. 9, 2008, 35-47.

Tchacos Codex 33-57.⁶⁴ The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) were also declared as forgeries. So the team of academics led by several priests kept the scrolls hidden from the public for decades. It was only reopened to the public when Robert Eiseman and Hershel of the *Biblical Archaeology Review* ‘illegally’ published these scrolls.⁶⁵ Therefore, contemporary readers should use Watson’s method of literary parallels for searching the origin and religious characteristics of the ancient text: with which texts is the *Gospel of Jesus’ Wife* familiar? If there are familiar texts, what kind of the ancient community wrote or used it? What was the reason the text was written? What would the historical situation of the people who applied the text? It would not be an easy task, but if one is interested in the identity of the mystical text, it would be better to approach the text with other familiar texts rather than prematurely judging it as a fake. The small size of the papyrus (a piece of 4cm x 8cm) does not seem to bring a big fortune to the forger as well even if the work is recognised as a perfect deceit. If money is not the main purpose of this fraud, what would the main reason?

4. *Alternative Insight: Another Notorious Gnostic Fragment*

The couple narrative of Prisca and Aquila is described in the *Acts of Apostles* in the first century CE⁶⁶ and is well known in the early Christian communities. By the Lukan narrative one could think that a second century Christian would find it easy to perceive Jesus as having a husband-wife partnership.⁶⁷ However, the NT texts do not externally introduce the married life of Jesus, but the spiritual unity of Jesus is generalized in term of purity, genuineness, and incorruption. The Pauline letter of *Ephesians*, based on the *Genesis* tradition (*Gen. 2: 24*)⁶⁸, demonstrates the marriage culture in relation to the relationship of Jesus and His church (*Eph. 5: 22-33*). Jesus is seen as the Bridegroom and the church is His bride. Such a mystical teaching is reflected in the Book of *Revelation* where there is a vision of the *bride*, the wife of the *Lamb* (a *Revelation* image for Jesus).⁶⁹ The Johannine author depicts the spiritual desire

⁶⁴ Johanna Brankaer, and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, *Codex Tchacos: Texte und Analysen*. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

⁶⁵ The Christianity, “Jesus Wife Papyrus Authentic, last modified on 20th September, <http://thechristianity.wordpress.com/2012/09/20/the-jesus-wife-papyrus-is-authentic/>.

⁶⁶ *Acts* 18:1-5.

⁶⁷ Kate Cooper, “The Gospel of Jesus’ Wife,” last modified on 24th September, 2012. <http://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/the-gospel-of-jesus-wife/>.

⁶⁸ ‘A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two will become one flesh’.

⁶⁹ See Hurtado, “The Gospel of Jesus’ Wife’. Maybe... Maybe not”.

of the bride toward the bridegroom.⁷⁰

Among the early Christians, celibacy was preferred as the highest sexual virtue, while marriage was conditionally required for the sake of reproduction. It is well depicted in the teaching of Clement of Alexandria that ‘marriage was a fornication put in place by the devil, and that people emulate Jesus by not marrying’ (*Stromateis* 3. 49. 1).⁷¹ The text shows that Jesus’ marriage ‘was invented as a reason to justify marriage’.⁷² Tertullian of Carthage of North Africa (200 AD) also argued of the unmarried Jesus and encouraged the Christians to stay single. It was not about the first virgin marriage, but was against divorce and remarriage after the death of a spouse as being an overindulgence.⁷³ The marriage status of Jesus was continuously denied by Augustine as it has a spiritual meaning. Sexuality was one the major obstacles for the spiritual character of a person.⁷⁴ The leader of the early church taught that the female body was as ‘substandard, subhuman, and naturally deficient’.⁷⁵ ‘The sexual desire was perceived to be the penalty for sin’.⁷⁶

The view of a forgery was established within the mentality that the historical Jesus was ‘the supreme celibate’ and that the Coptic papyrus was created in the 2000s. The comprehension, however, is not quite theoretical or reliable if one accepts the pre-1982 view that the papyrus has been surfaced at least more than three decades.⁷⁷ Richard Bauckham once mentioned that ‘even if Watson’s observations fall short of proving that this (*GosJesWife*) is a modern forgery... that would suggest, to me, one of two conclusions: either it is a later Gnostic text composed in the fourth century, or ...’.⁷⁸ Bauckham included the possibility of a Gnostic papyrus showing the existence of anti-Christian groups like the Sethian groups. The marginalized group(s) paganized wanted to believe the humanized Jesus through marriage. The new fragment proves neither the celibacy nor marriage of the historical Jesus, but it is still a precious source for the readers who study the life, belief and

⁷⁰ The sister-wife (-woman) terminology is developed in the context of monastic-type folks in that a strictly spiritual relationship does not involve sexual intimacy. Ben Witherington III, ‘Mary, Mary Extrordinary’, <http://www.leaderu.com/theology/maryandjesus.html>. See also ‘Was Jesus Married?: Who Was Mary Magdalene? Last modified on 06th December, 2012, <http://www.ankerberg.org/Articles/historical-Jesus/DaVinci/HJ-davinci-Was-Jesus-Married.htm>.

⁷¹ Otto Stählin, and Ludwig Früchtel, *Clemens Alexandrinus Zweiter Band Stromata Buch I-VI*. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960). 237-238.

⁷² Gathercole, “Did Jesus Have a Wife?”, by Tyndale House. <http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/ReJesusWife>.

⁷³ Kaleem, “The Gospel of Jesus’ Wife,” New Early Christian Text, Indicates Jesus May Have Been Married”.

⁷⁴ Tony Campolo, “Did Jesus Have a Wife?”, last modified on 11th October, 2012, <http://www.redletterchristians.org/did-jesus-have-a-wife/>.

⁷⁵ DeConick, “Is Jesus ‘Too Holy’ For Sex?”.

⁷⁶ DeConick, “Is Jesus ‘Too Holy’ For Sex?”.

⁷⁷ See the previous section of the ‘Discovery of *Jesus’ Wife*’.

⁷⁸ Brown, “the Gospel of Jesus’ Wife and the Perils and Potential of Online Scholarship”.

culture of those anti-Christian practitioners (so called, ancient Egyptian Gnostics).⁷⁹

The gnostic group of the post-second century CE was familiar with the marriage tradition of Jesus. The ancient tradition of Mary (Magdalene) being Jesus' wife was not a unique phenomenon because such Gnostic texts commonly contain a strong feminist perspective.⁸⁰ In this regard, the *recto* phrases of the line one (ΤΑΜΑΛΥ ΑΣΤ ΝΑΕΙ ΠΩΘΝΖ (my mother gave to me life)), the line three (ΜΑΡΙΑΜ ΜΠΩΑ ΜΜΟΣ ΑΘΝ (Mary is worthy of it)), the line five (CΝΑΥΡ̄ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ ΝΑΕΙ ΑΥΩ (she will be able to be my disciple)), and the line seven (ΑΝΟΚ ΤΥΟΟΠ ΝΜΜΑΣ ΕΤΒΕ ΠΙ (as for me, I dwell with her in order to)), are quite feminine.⁸¹ The phrases of the new papyrus are consistent within the Gnostic view, particularly to ΜΑΡΙΑΜ (Mary (Magdalene)).⁸² The *Gospel Mary* that has Greek and Coptic versions from 1896 (Schmidt), 1955 (Till), and 1972 (Till-Schenke) represents the figure of Mary.⁸³ The Gnostic *Gospel of Mary* is divided into two parts: the first one is the conversation of Jesus with his disciples and the second one is the words of Jesus to Mary. The appearance of Mary is composed within the narrative where the risen Jesus provides the answers to his disciples. When the disciples asked Mary to share the words of Savior which she alone received, Peter became jealous: “Peter said to Mary; Sister, we know that the Savior loved you more than the rest of women (ΠΕΧΕ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΜΜΑΡΙΖΑΜ ΧΕ ΤΩ ΝΕ Τ̄ΝCΟΟΥΝ ΧΕ ΝΕΡΕΠ̄CΩ̄Ρ̄ ΟΥΑΥΕ ΝΖΟΥΟ ΠΑΡΑ ΠΚΕCΕΕΠΕ Ν̄ΖΙΜΕ (BG, I: 1-3)).⁸⁴ Although it is not known which Mary she was among Mary Magdalene, Mary the sister of Martha, or Mary the Mother of Jesus, the Mary of the text parallels with the Mary of the Coptic *GosJesWife* in that she ‘has become an alternative channel of revelation’.⁸⁵ Her role

⁷⁹ Meantime, for faith communities it is nothing but a spiritual challenge over their belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man.

⁸⁰ The Gnostic works proliferated among Egyptian Christian monasteries were condemned by the time of Athanasius of Alexandria (in around 367). DeConick, “Is Jesus ‘Too Holy’ For Sex?”. Gathercole, “Did Jesus Have a Wife?”, by Tyndale House. <http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/ReJesusWife>.

⁸¹ Such figures of the text are not from the canonical tradition, but a Gnostic Egyptian Christian approach of late Antiquity where the females were more recognised within the discourses of Jesus.

⁸² Alan Boyle, ‘Reality Check on Jesus and His Wife’, last modified on 18th September, 2012. http://cosmiclog.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/09/18/13945001-reality-check-on-jesus-and-his-wife?lite.

⁸³ Among them the Greek fragment (Papyrus Ryl. 463) of the Rylands collection was written in the early third century, while the Coptic MS was written in the early fifth century. R. McL. Wilson, and George W. MacRae, “The Gospel According to Mary BG, I: 7, I-19, 5,” in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices Volume 3*, ed. by James M. Robinson. (Leiden, Boston, and Köln: Brill, 2000). 452-471. Cooper, “The Gospel of Jesus’ Wife,”

⁸⁴ Wilson and MacRae, (2000). 453-454.

⁸⁵ Gathercole, “Did Jesus Have a Wife?”, by Tyndale House.

functioned like ‘a mouthpiece for an alternative treatment of salvation’ (BG, I: 9. 12-24)⁸⁶:

“He (Peter) questioned them about the Savior: did he really speak with a woman without our knowledge and not openly? ... Did he prefer her to us? ... Then Mary wept and said to Peter: ...Do you think that ... I am lying about the Savior? Levi answered and said to Peter: Peter, ... if the Savior made *her worthy* (C ΝΑΞΙΟC), who are you indeed to reject her? ... Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us.⁸⁷

The debating narrative does not show any trace of a sexual relationship between Jesus and Mary. Rather, the influence of Mary was equal with Peter. It is one of the Gnostic figures in the non-canonical tradition. The negative attitude of the disciples also corresponds to that ascribed in the Gnostic book of *Pistis Sophia (the Dialogue of Savior)* (NHC III, 5).⁸⁸ The ancient Gnostic text that was used in the Egyptian Coptic Christian churches of the second century CE, describes the dialogues between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Many parts of the Gnostic text illustrate the role of Mary with Matthew and Judas: NHC III, 5, 13, 41, 53, 60, 62, 64, 69, 79, 88, 93, and 97.⁸⁹ Such scenes of *Pistis Sophia (the Dialogue of Savior)* challenge readers with the question of ‘was there a secret marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene?’ or ‘did Jesus have female disciples?’ The *GosJesWife* demonstrating a special relationship between Jesus and Mary is also portrayed in the Coptic *Gospel of Philip (Gos.Phil.)* where Mary Magdalene among other Marys of Jesus’ mother and sister is closer to Jesus than any other disciples.⁹⁰ This text of the Nag Hammadi Codices is a collection of excerpts in the arrangement of materials. Isenberg presupposes that the compiler of *Philip* purposely disjoined paragraphs of ‘a Christian Gnostic sacramental catechesis’ or a Gnostic gospel that ‘had a continuity of thought and deposited the pieces in diverse places in the work’.⁹¹ For example, the passage of ‘there are three who always walked with the Lord. Mary, his mother, her sister and Magdalene, the one who was called his companion’ (*Gos.*

⁸⁶ “Then Mary stood up, greeted them all, and said to her brethren: do not weep and do not grieve nor be irresolute, for his grace will be entirely with you and will protect you. But rather let us praise his greatness, for he has prepared us and made us into men. When Mary said this, she turned their hearts to the Good and they began to discuss the words of the Savior” Ibid.

⁸⁷ BG, I: 17. 7-9 and 17. 16-18.15.

⁸⁸ Tom Verenna, “Two days Later: Another Evaluation of the Jesus’ Wife’ Papyrus,” last modified on 20th September, 2012. <http://tomverenna.wordpress.com/2012/09/20/two-days-later-another-evaluation-of-the-jesus-wife-papyrus/>.

⁸⁹ Stephen Emmel, Helmut Koester, and Elaine Pagels, “The Dialogue of the Savior,” in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices Volume 3*, ed., by James M. Robinson. (Leiden, Boston, and Köln: Brill, 2000). 40-95

⁹⁰ Gathercole, “Did Jesus Have a Wife?, by Tyndale House.

⁹¹ For example, the passage of 75: 13-14 is prefixed to 61: 36: 62:5. Bentley Layton, and Wesley Isenberg, “The Gospel According to Philip,” in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices Volume 2*, Ed. James M. Robinson. Leiden, Boston, and Köln: Brill, 2000. 133 and 143.

Phil. 59: 6-10⁹²), is not connected with the following phrase which is about the heavenly characters of the ‘father’ and ‘the son’, and ‘the Holy Spirit’. The compiler of the text describes that the father and the son have single names, but the Holy Spirit has a double name.⁹³ Further, the *Gospel of Philip* contains a form of Jesus sayings like the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁹⁴ The 127 sayings tradition (but the sayings of Jesus are only fifteen) of *catchwords* parallels with the 114 sayings tradition of *Thomas* where there are also *catchwords*.⁹⁵ The Valentinian gnostic text that was used among Egyptian Gnostics of the fourth century CE, mentions the unique scene where Jesus kisses Mary as his spouse in the context of a discussion about discipleship⁹⁶:

“[... loved] her more than [all] the disciples [and used to] kiss her [often] on her [...]⁹⁷. The rest of [the disciples ...]. They said to him, ‘why do you love her more than all of us?’ The savior answered and said to them, ‘why do you not love you like her? (63: 34-64:9).⁹⁸

Like the *GosJesWife*, marriage ‘is referred in the *Gospel of Philip* rather than singlehood or maleness’.⁹⁹ Such view proves that the new Coptic papyrus of King is not unique in the Gnostic way of partnership, but for the mainline Christians it was the major issue of heresiology.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, DeConick evinces that this papyrus, if authentic, would be the text of early Valentinian Gnostic Christians.¹⁰¹ The Valentinian Gnostics whose author was aware of the alternative sayings tradition, ‘envisioned marriage and sex as the greatest of sacred mysteries’. The human marriage was seen to represent the style of the divine marriages. The Jesus of Valentinians was remembered as a married man with a sexual life. The word (ΟΥ ΖΙΚΩΝ: an image) of the *recto* line eight, if the reference is connected with the

⁹² ΝΕ ΟΥΝ ΨΟΜΤΕ ΜΟΩΥΕ ΜΝ ΠΧΟΕΙC ΟΥΟΕΙΩ ΝΙΜ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΕΦΜΑΛΥ ΑΥΩ ΤΕCΣΩΝΕ ΑΥΩ ΜΑΓΔΑΛΗΝΗ ΤΑΖΕΙ ΕΤΟΥΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟC ΧΕ ΤΕΦΚΟΙΝΩΝΟC ΜΑΡΙΑ ΓΑΡ ΤΕ ΤΕΦΩΝΕ ΑΥΩ ΤΕΦΜΑΛΥ ΤΕ ΑΥΩ ΤΕΦΖΩΤΡΕ ΤΕ. Layton, and Isenberg, (2000) 131-132.

⁹³ *Gos. Phil.* 59: 11-19. Ibid., 158-159.

⁹⁴ H.-M. Schenke, “Das Evangelium nach Philippus,” in *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften aus den Papyrus-Codices von Nag Hammadi*[sic], ed., by J. Leipoldt, H.-M. Schenke, (Hamburg-Bergstedt: Reich-Evangelischer Verlag, 1960) 38-65.

⁹⁵ There are about forty-four catchwords in the *Gospel of Thomas*. See Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*. (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1993). 99–102.

⁹⁶ See Heresiologist Epiphanius’ *Haer.* 26. 13.2-3. Layton and Isenberg (2000) 131-132.

⁹⁷ This lost part could possibly be interpreted as on her (mouth), on her (feet), on her (cheek), or on her (forehead). Ibid., 169.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 166-169.

⁹⁹ April DeConick, “Is Jesus ‘Too Holy’ For Sex?“. Chuck Grantham, “The Gospel of Jesus’s Wife: Texts It Reminds One of,” last modified on 19th September, 2012. <http://goulablogger.wordpress.com/2012/09/19/the-gospel-of-Jesus-wife-texts-it-reminds-one-of/>.

¹⁰⁰ Further, the literary development about Jesus’ sexuality has been overemphasised in the text called, the *Greater Questions of Mary* that includes the sex scene of Jesus with a woman in front of Mary Magdalene, and that Jesus eventually produced his side.

¹⁰¹ DeConick, “Is Jesus ‘Too Holy’ For Sex?,”

phrase of $\epsilon\tau\beta\epsilon\ \pi$ ('in order to' or 'because of'), is 'evidence for a Valentinian Gnostic worldview where Jesus and Mary's early marriage is an image of their future *aeonic* marriage'.¹⁰²

While Mary is depicted as the most dominant female figure in ancient Gnosticism, there are other references of Jesus in similar relationships. Salome is a very minor character in the canonical tradition. The *Gospel of Mark* mentions the character only twice at the very end of Jesus' time on earth. The Markan author describes the presence of Salome at the crucifixion and tomb of Jesus. She followed her master from Galilee with other women including Mary Magdalene (*Mk.* 15: 41).¹⁰³ But, her close relationship with Jesus is mystically enlarged in the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*.¹⁰⁴

*G.Th.*61-a.) Jesus said, "Two will rest on a couch: the one will die, and the other will live."
*G.Th.*61-b.) Salome said, "Who are you, man, that you have come up on *my couch* and eaten from my table?"
*G.Th.*61-c.) Jesus said to her, "I am he who exists from the undivided. I was given some of the things of *my father*."
*G.Th.*61-d.) <Salome said> "I am your $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$.
*G.Th.*61-e.) <Jesus said (to her)> "Therefore I say, if he is destroyed he will be filled with light, but if he is divided, he will be filled with darkness."

GTh 1: The Logion 61 of Thomas

The *Logion* 61 of *Thomas* can be divided into the five sayings of Jesus and Salome. In the saying tradition, the passage ('who are you, man, that you have come up on *my couch*') of *G.Th.* 61-b reflects an erotical discourse that is a general genre of Gnostic texts. If the Gnostics were familiar with the sexuality of Jesus, the line four of the *GosJesWife* ($\pi\epsilon\chi\epsilon\ \bar{\iota}\bar{\varsigma}\ \bar{\nu}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\gamma}\ \tau\bar{\alpha}\bar{\zeta}\bar{\iota}\bar{\mu}\bar{\epsilon}\ \bar{\mu}\bar{\nu}$: Jesus said to them (disciples), 'My wife ...') would not be a new trauma to the readers of the ancient era. The term, $\tau\bar{\alpha}\bar{\mu}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\lambda}\bar{\gamma}$ (my mother) of the *recto* line one and *verso* line one are not also unusual if one regards the *G.Th.* 61-c ('I was given some of the things of *my father*') as a humanised saying of Jesus. Salome's saying, 'I am your $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ (*G.Th.* 61-d) in terms of 'female discipleship' accords the sayings of the *GosJesWife*:

¹⁰² Ibid.,

¹⁰³ "In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there".

¹⁰⁴ It is unknown what the Greek version of *Thomas* says about this part, for the Oxyrhynchus papyri do not contain this narrative.

ΜΑΡΙΑΜ ΜΠΥΑ ΜΜΟΣ ΔΙΝ (Mary is (not) worthy of it) and ΣΝΑΥΡΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ ΝΔΕΙ (she will be able to be my disciple).

The Thomasine *Logion* 114 also shows a feminine scene where ΜΑΡΙ(Σ)ΑΜ (Mary) who originally “came from Magdala, a village between Tiberius and Capernaum on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee”¹⁰⁵, was recognized by her master: “Simon Peter said to them, ‘Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘I myself shall lead her in order to make her male ...’” Peter complained about the gender of leadership within the dissatisfaction of Mary Magdalene’s influence.¹⁰⁶ The Thomasine Mary, like the Mary of the *GosJesWife* is not actually involved in the conversation, but the *Logiographer* discloses a certain right of the Thomasine Mary in the leadership role. The ΜΑΡΙΣΑΜ of Thomas definitely challenged the leadership of Peter, who was generally recognised as one of the three senior disciples (with James and John).¹⁰⁷ This scene of both texts of *Thomas* and *GosJesWife* implies the anti-feminist concept of Judaism. However, Jesus corrected the issue by showing a personal compassion for the futuristic destiny of ΜΑΡΙΣΑΜ (Mary): “I Myself shall lead her ..., so that she too may become a living spirit ...” The status of ΜΑΡΙΣΑΜ is demonstrated in the beginning of *Logion* 21 where the Thomasine Mary inquired about the true nature of discipleship: “ΕΝΕΚΜΑΘΟΤΉ ΗΣ ΕΙΝΕ ΝΝΙΜ’ (whom are your disciples like?)”. Mary’s question to her master was not for herself, but it was on behalf of all followers. It is a well-known fact that the three Greek fragments of the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 654, 1, 655 is not Gnostic, but the Nag Hammadi Thomas (NHC 2, II, 43: 23–34) contains such ingredients gnostlized. The Thomasine scene of ΜΑΡΙΣΑΜ is nothing unique in comparing with the line five of the *GosJesWife* (‘ΣΝΑΥΡΝΑΘΗΤΗΣ ΝΔΕΙ: she will be able to be my disciple’), but both of them are commonly a *polemical* narrative against the apostolic Christianity in the history of Late Antiquity.

¹⁰⁵ See David W. Kim, ‘Who Authorised You?: Mary and Her Public Actions in Thomas’ in *Perspectives on Power: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars’ Publishing, 2010). 189-202. Leonard Griffith, *Gospel Characters: The Personalities Around Jesus*. (London, Sydney, Auckland and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton), 1976. 184.

¹⁰⁶ Marjanen, (1998). 89–105. Ibid., (1996). 32–55. Anne McGuire, ‘Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions.’ in *Women and Christian Origins*. Edited by Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D’Angelo. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1999. 277–282. Marvin W. Meyer, “Making Mary Male: The Categories ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ in the Gospel of Thomas.” *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 31 Num. 4 (Oct., 1985), 562–570.

¹⁰⁷ It has already been mentioned in Kim (2010). 200-202.

5. Conclusion

Ultimately, the historical Jesus or Jesus of the canonical tradition often gets challenged by modern media or readers. The last half century experienced the socio-religious disputes by the discovery of Nag Hammadi Codex. Those non-canonical materials effectively increased the popularity of the New-Age Christian culture in 2000s. The novels of *The Da Vinci Code* and *Jesus Papers* depicted Jesus as a mortal human being married with his female follower Mary Magdalene and having a child.¹⁰⁸ The *Gospel of Judas* from Tchacos Codex also motivated readers in the context of Sethian Gnosticism, even though the relationship of Jesus with Mary or Salome was not practically included in the anti-Christian Coptic text of the second or third century CE. The critical debate on the sexuality of the historical Jesus continued with the emergence of the *GosJesWife* in September, 2012. The new Coptic manuscript does not include any clue about the author or compiler. No title has been written in the ancient papyrus. Further, the innovative interpretation of the possessive word (ΤΑΞΙΜΕ) became the major concern even though it could be less emphasized as ‘my woman’ or ‘my female follower’.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, the theory of a forgery is quite premature because the opponents never offered any principle or a standard by which a forger or forgers tried to copy the similar words or phrase of the *Gospel of Thomas*. There is no response about the reason why he/she or they imitated the Coptic *Thomas* only. The simple theory that a forger or forgers copied various parts of the Thomas tradition is not good enough to prove the hypothesis that the *GosJesWife* is an imperfect forgery.¹¹⁰ The fact that the *Harvard Theological Review* has pulled the work of King and her collaborators for scientific evidence, should not underestimate the value of the new papyrus, since the chemical test of the ink is

¹⁰⁸ His resurrection experience was denied in the narratives. Haskell, Paradis, and Burgoyne, (2008) 139-156.

¹⁰⁹ As recalling the Johannine term of ‘John the beloved one’ among readers. Elaine H. Pagels, “Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John.” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 118 Is. 3 (Fall, 1999) 483–487. April D. DeConick, ‘Voice of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospel of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature’ in *JSNTSS* 157. (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 79-95. April DeConick, “Is Jesus ‘Too Holy’ For Sex?,” last modified on 24th September, 2012. <http://forbiddengospels.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/is-jesus-is-too-holy-for-sex.html>. Larry Hurtado, “The Gospel of Jesus’ Wife’. Maybe... Maybe not,” last modified on 20th September, 2012, <http://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2012/09/20/>. Michael F. Bird, “Coptic Fragment of Jesus’ Wife,” last modified on 21st September, 2012. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/euangelion/2012/09/coptic-fragment-of-jesus-wife/>. Alberto Camplani, “Coptic Text with the Supposed Allusion to Jesus’ Wife: a Papyrus Adrift,” in *Culture, from L’osservatore Romano, Vatican City, 29th October, 2012*, last modified on 10th November, 2012. <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/portal/dt?JSPTabContainer.setSelected=JSPTabContainer%2FDetail&last=false=&path=/news/cultura/2012/223q12-II-testo-copto-con-la-presunta-allusione.html&title=A%20papyrus%20adrift%C2%A0&locale=en>.

¹¹⁰ The critics also never explored or commented on the *verso* lines one to five of the new Coptic papyrus.

not the alternative solution for the authenticity of the Coptic fragment.¹¹¹

Relatively, the popularization of the feminine perspective supports the view that the context of the Coptic *GosJesWife* is not unique or a distinctive character, but the concept of Jesus's relationship was a generalised understanding among the Egyptian Gnostic Christians of the second or third century CE.¹¹² From a historian's view, Jesus is seen as a family man who was interested in the role of women.¹¹³ Jesus honoured his human mother as the life giver. He respected his woman and made her as a disciple and provided her a special role to dwell near him. Yet, it is true, as King apparently gave a caution, that the new Coptic papyrus does not say anything about the marital status of the *historical* Jesus. It rarely demonstrates a marginalised community of the ancient era where the anti-Christian tradition was exercised in a *religio-polemical* way against the apostolic Christianity. The *GosJesWife* does not externally introduce a Sethian vestige, but the peculiar terminology of ΤΑΖΙΜΕ at least manifests that the new Coptic papyrus is *another notorious Gnostic fragment* within the Valentinian Gnosticism of Egyptian Christianity.

¹¹¹ Jeanna Bryner, "Gospel of Jesus' Wife Faces Authenticity Tests," last modified on 19th October, 2012, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/49483231/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/gospel-jesus-wife-faces-authenticity-tests/.

¹¹² Lundhaug and Suciu, "On the So-Called Gospel of Jesus's Wife. Some Preliminary Thoughts by Hugo".

¹¹³ Cooper, "the Gospel of Jesus' Wife".