

On the Possible Relationship between *The Gospel of Jesus' Wife* and *The Gospel of Thomas*

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Since Francis Watson initially suggested that the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* (*GJW*) might have “been constructed out of small pieces – words or phrases – culled mostly from the *Coptic Gospel of Thomas* (*GTh*)” known from Nag Hammadi Codex II (NHC II),¹ it has become evident that practically every decipherable word of *GJW* could have been copied from *GTh*.² In fact, *GJW* could arguably be nothing more than a “collage” of short excerpts from *GTh*.

Assuming for the sake of simplicity that a modern author created the fragmentary text of *GJW* by just rearranging words and phrases from the *GTh* (even though this has not been established conclusively³), the formation of most lines on the recto of *GJW* can be easily explained:

1. This line was formed by combining words from different parts of *GTh* 101, εἰ ἀν ταμααυ from NHC II 49.36 and ἀετ̄ ναεἰ πω from NHC II 50.1. It is noteworthy that the line's first word can be restored to να]εἰ, just as it is in published editions of *GTh* 101, and the final word can be restored to πω[νε, which is what actually appears on the Nag Hammadi manuscript. The only difference between these parallels is the (accidental?) omission of ν̄ from ν̄π̄ωνε from NHC II 50.1.
2. This line was formed by copying the text πεχε ν̄μαθ̄ητης ν̄τ̄ς χε verbatim from either *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.25), 18 (NHC II 36.9), or 20 (NHC II 36.26), and then adding meaningless sigmas to the ends of the line.⁴
3. This line was formed by juxtaposing words found on page 51 of NHC II, αρνα from *GTh* 110 (NHC II 51.5), and ν̄αρ̄ῑε̄ᾱμ and ν̄π̄ωα from *GTh* 114 (NHC II 51.19 and 20, respectively). The only difference between these parallels is the (accidental?) omission of ε̄ from ν̄αρ̄ῑε̄ᾱμ from NHC II 50.1. The following word, ν̄μος, could have been copied from any of the eight places it appears in NHC II (including in 51.21). The ᾱ at the end of the line might also be restored as ᾱ[ν, which would indicate the copying of an additional word from NHC II 51.20.

¹ Watson's article first appeared online on September 21 at: <http://ntweblog.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-gospel-of-jesus-wife-how-fake.html>

² Possible parallels between *GJW* and *GTh* not initially noted by Watson (in the draft article that he remarkably researched and wrote in less than three days) have since been observed by others, including Mark Goodacre, Päivi Vähäkangas, Oli Hormon, and the present author. See: <http://ntweblog.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-gospel-of-jesus-wife-latest-news.html>

³ Although there is no definitive proof that a modern author composed *GJW*, this working hypothesis is assumed here in order to simplify analysis of how *GJW* might have been composed.

⁴ The initial c might actually be an alteration of the q found in the parallel in *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.25). If *GJW* was composed by a modern author using excerpts of *GTh*, he or she seems to have had a tendency to change masculine pronouns to their feminine equivalents (perhaps to ensure that the text remained focused on a female character).

4. This line was constructed to give the impression that some unidentified individual finishes speaking and then Jesus replies. The apparent $\alpha\bar{\nu}$ $\bar{\nu}\mu\omicron\upsilon$ indicates the end of a saying in *GTh* 18 (NHC II 36.17) and 19 (NHC II 36.25). The words $\pi\epsilon\chi\epsilon$ $\bar{\tau}\epsilon$ $\bar{\nu}\alpha\upsilon$ mark the beginning of Jesus' statement and were likely copied verbatim from *GTh* 12 (NHC II 34.27). The key word $\tau\alpha\zeta\iota\mu\epsilon$ (which is not found in *GTh*) has been inserted for dramatic effect. It is followed by the letters $\mu\bar{\nu}$ (which appear more than 50 times in *GTh* and cannot be deciphered without additional context).
5. This line was formed by copying $\varsigma\eta\alpha\vartheta\bar{\nu}\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\eta\alpha\epsilon\iota$ $\delta\upsilon\omega$ from *GTh* 55 (NHC II 42.26-27). The initial ς (intentionally?) replaces the υ that would be expected on the basis of the parallel and the negative $\alpha\bar{\nu}$ has (also intentionally?) been omitted.
7. This first part of this line was formed by copying $\delta\eta\omicron\kappa$ $\dagger\vartheta\omicron\omicron\pi$ $\eta\mu\mu\alpha\varsigma$ from *GTh* 30 (NHC II 30.4-5); the text is verbatim except that a ς (intentionally?) replaces the υ that would be expected on the basis of the parallel. The $\epsilon\tau\upsilon\epsilon$ π at the end of the line was probably copied from *GTh* 29, which appears nearby in the Nag Hammadi manuscript (NHC II 38.33).
8. This line was formed by copying $\omicron\upsilon\zeta\iota\kappa\omega\bar{\nu}$ from *GTh* 22 (NHC 37.34).

Thus, it appears that *GJW* 1-3, 5, 7-8 all could have been formed simply by bringing together words and short phrases found in close proximity in *GTh*. And if *GJW* was prepared by a modern author, line 4 was probably deliberately constructed to feature Jesus saying $\tau\alpha\zeta\iota\mu\epsilon$ (my wife). See the synopsis on page 3 for a systematic presentation of the parallels between *GJW* and *GTh*.

Only line 6 presents any problem for the thesis that *GJW* is nothing more than a “collage” of words and short phrases from *GTh* with the word $\tau\alpha\zeta\iota\mu\epsilon$ inserted for theatrical impact. One might be inclined to regard this line as a simple compilation of words from page 41 of NHC II: $\mu\alpha\rho\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$ from *GTh* 47 (NHC II 41.17), $\epsilon\theta\omicron\omicron\upsilon$ from *GTh* 45 (NHC II 41.3), and $\vartheta\alpha\varphi\epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon$ from *GTh* 45 (NHC II 41.5).⁵ The line would then seem to have been formed just like all the others (except 4): by culling words and short phrases in close proximity to each other in *GTh*.

However, such a view is problematic because the ι has been omitted from the $\vartheta\alpha\varphi\epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon$ found in NHC II 41.5. Thus, King has presented the line as it must be read: $\mu\alpha\rho\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$ $\epsilon\theta\omicron\omicron\upsilon$ $\vartheta\alpha\varphi\epsilon$ $\eta\epsilon$. . . with a word ($\vartheta\alpha\varphi\epsilon$) that is not found in *GTh*. And it cannot be assumed that the ι was omitted accidentally. If the ι were reinserted, *GJW* 6 would read $\mu\alpha\rho\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$ $\epsilon\theta\omicron\omicron\upsilon$ $\vartheta\alpha\varphi\epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon$. . . with the verb $\epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon$ modified by two prefixes $\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon$ - and $\vartheta\alpha\varphi$ -, which is not grammatically allowable. Scholars advocating that *GJW* could be simply a “patchwork” of excerpts from *GTh* created by a modern author still need to explain the construction of *GJW* 6 for their case to be airtight.

⁵ The present author himself noted that the $\vartheta\alpha\varphi\epsilon$ $\eta\epsilon$ in *GJW* 6 might be a corruption of $\vartheta\alpha\varphi\epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon$ in *GTh* 45 (NHC II 41.5) in a synopsis posted on September 25: [http://www.gospels.net/gjw/GJW-Synopsis\(Bernhard\).pdf](http://www.gospels.net/gjw/GJW-Synopsis(Bernhard).pdf). At the time, he was unaware that Oli Hormon had already made the same observation in a comment on Mark Goodacre's blog post of September 21: <http://ntweblog.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-gospel-of-jesus-wife-how-fake.html?showComment=1348568760503#c1175619749860438507>. The image Hormon created for illustrative purposes can be found at: <http://i.imgur.com/9DDCJ.jpg>.

