Fakes, Forgeries, *and* Fictions

Writing Ancient and Modern Christian Apocrypha

Proceedings from the 2015 York University Christian Apocrypha Symposium

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Gender and the Academy Online

The Authentic Revelations of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*

— Caroline T. Schroeder —

Usually I write about dead people. Dead people cannot ostracize you, dead people cannot eviscerate you in another publication, dead people can be safer objects of inquiry than the living. This paper, however, analyzes the living—the way we as a field responded to the appearance of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* fragment (GJW) and what that says about Biblical Studies. In particular, I wish to look at issues of authenticity. The authenticity of the fragment itself lay at the center of the maelstrom. I seek to untangle more nebulous markers of authenticity as well. I argue that the debate about the authenticity of the document hinged in no small part on these *other* markers of authenticity (in addition to the traditional means of documenting an ancient text). First, GJW simultaneously exposed our society's privileging of "hard" scientific modes of inquiry to determine authenticity over traditional humanistic ones and the inadequacy of those scientific methods to provide the certainty we crave. Second, even our traditional humanist research methods proved unsatisfying in the absence of very particular political and ethical commitments—namely, transparency about provenance. Third, the debate demonstrated that deeply entrenched social markers of authenticity

of individuals—status, gender, identity—affect the academic production of knowledge. Finally, the authentic revelations of this text include the deep conservatism of our field, which includes a distrust of digital scholarship and digital publishing (including the openness it enables).

The GJW affair has taught us at least as much, if not more, about how authenticity operates in the academy as about authenticating ancient manuscripts. Moreover, I argue, these two are not separate issues—debates about *personal* authenticity in academia's prestige economy directly influence scholarly work regarding the authenticity of *texts*. As scholarship becomes more digital, as our work is increasingly conducted online, our awareness of our own political and ideological commitments—and how they matter—becomes increasingly important.

When I use the terms "authentic" and "authenticity" in this essay, when I talk about the authenticity of the *fragment itself*, I do not mean authenticity in terms of authorship (i.e., is this really a Gospel written by "Jesus' Wife"?) or even if it is authentically from someone who knew Jesus, or even if it provides authentic evidence that Jesus had a wife. Scholarly consensus from the beginning dismissed this text as historical evidence that Jesus had a wife, or as a document ultimately originating from Jesus' own time. When I speak of the authenticity of the fragment, I use the benchmark set by Karen King: whether this is an ancient text, written down in this form at some point in late antiquity.

MARKERS OF AUTHENTICITY FOR THE MANUSCRIPT

At this point, the scholarly conversation over the authenticity of the fragment itself is well documented online and in published journals, and James McGrath's essay in this same volume speaks to the role of bloggers in this conversation. I also refer readers to Michael W. Grondin's three-part timeline for a concise history.[1] I am on record stating that I believe the piece to be a forgery, or at the very least, not an ancient witness to an ancient text.[2] So I do not seek to re-argue points against or in favor of the *fragment's* authenticity here; rather, I wish to highlight the principle criteria for determining authenticity and weigh *their* significance.

The primary means of determining the authenticity of GJW proved to be related to questions about transparency regarding the collection of documents to which it belonged and provenance. Other methods for testing

1. Grondin, "Question of Content"; Grondin, "Jesus' Wife Fragment 2014"; Grondin, "Jesus' Wife Fragment 2015."

2. Le Donne, "Interview with Schroeder."

and studying the fragment in isolation proved inconclusive at worst and unsatisfying at best. In this section, I seek to review the primary criteria used to measure the fragment's authenticity and explore what the success or failure of those criteria says about our field. The methods and markers I will examine include scientific testing, paleography, philology and close reading, linguistics, and provenance studies.

Scientific Testing

Early press coverage of GJW quickly zeroed in on two measures of determining authenticity: the credentials of the scholars involved, and the availability of scientific testing.[3] Regarding the latter methodology, the first articles in the *New York Times* and the *Smithsonian* stated that Karen King and her colleagues believed the document to be authentic, but that scientific tests of the papyrus had yet to be conducted. Ink and carbon-dating tests, they noted, could possibly confirm or call into question King's dating of the document. Other scholars (including myself) maintained that such tests could quite likely prove inconclusive: a smart forger could use a scrap of old papyrus and concoct ink that could fool such tests. Nonetheless, the question remained pressing. So pressing that in April 2014 *Harvard Theological Review* published alongside King's article about the fragment several other articles dedicated to tests and examinations of the manuscript to determine its authenticity. Of the seven articles and one response devoted to GJW in the issue, four were dedicated to "scientific testing": chemical testing of the ink, infrared microspectroscopy of the papyrus, and two reports on radiocarbon dating.[4] Although the scientists conducting the tests and writing the reports remained circumspect about their findings—maintaining that the results were not proof of the text's antiquity—nonetheless these scientific tests were marshaled in arguments defending the fragment's authenticity as a late-antique document. King's own article made use of these findings as key evidence for her assertions that accusations of forgery were unwarranted (e.g., "Current testing thus supports the conclusion that the papyrus and ink of GJW are ancient").[5] The Harvard University website devoted to GJW still proclaims (as of 12 June 2016) as a main headline that "Testing

3. Goodstein, "Historian Says"; Goodstein, "Fresh Doubts"; Goodstein, "Papyrus"; and Sabar, "Inside Story."

4. Azzarelli, Goods, and Swager, "Study of Two Papyrus Fragments"; Hodgins, "Accelerated Mass Spectrometry"; Tuross, "Accelerated Mass Spectrometry"; Yardley and Hagadorn, "Characterization."

5. King, "'Jesus said to them,'" 7–8, 33–34 (quotation from p. 8).

indicates 'Gospel of Jesus's Wife' Papyrus Fragment to be Ancient" and that "scientific testing of the papyrus and ink . . . demonstrated that the material is ancient."[6] Antiquity here serves as proxy for authenticity; no mention is made of the emerging consensus regarding forgery, nor of the fact that a document could be forged while simultaneously "passing" the tests.

Even into 2016, media coverage continued to ask whether "scientific" inquiry can trump the more "fuzzy" humanities methods; can we find a test that will prove once and for all that the document was written in antiquity?[7] Although these tests have produced conclusions about the fragment, they have proven inconclusive in terms of determining authenticity.

Paleography

Another methodology applied to the fragment was paleography, the study of manuscript production and ancient handwriting. Paleography is often used to date manuscripts, although the accuracy of this methodology has come into question recently by papyrologists such as Brent Nongbri.[8] Speculation about the possible forgery of the fragment arose in no small part due to questions about the handwriting. Soon after the announcement about the text, Alin Suciu and Hugo Lundhaug on Suciu's blog, as well as others on the *Evangelical Textual Criticism* blog, raised questions about the shapes and strokes of the letters.[9] They simply did not look ancient.

In her original draft article entitled, "'Jesus said to them, "My wife. . ."': A New Coptic Gospel Papyrus," published on Harvard University's website in September 2012, King anticipated questions about paleography, noting that she had consulted experts in papyrology and addressing questions raised by the anonymous peer reviewers based on paleography. I quote the relevant passages:

> In March, 2012, she transported the papyrus to the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World in New York, where it was viewed by the Institute's director and renowned papyrologist, Roger Bagnall and by AnneMarie Luijendijk (Princeton). Our lengthy discussion about the characteristics of the papyrus (detailed below) concluded with the judgement that the papyrus was very likely an authentic ancient text that could be dated on paleographical grounds to circa 4th c. C.E. On this basis, work

6. Beasley, "Testing."
7. Baden and Moss, "Why Scientists."
8. Nongbri, "Limits of Palaeographic Dating"; Nongbri, "Use and Abuse of P^{52}."
9. Suciu and Lundhaug, "So-Called Gospel."

> began in earnest on a critical edition, translation, and interpretation of the fragment.
>
> In August, 2012, a version of the present article was submitted to the *Harvard Theological Review* for consideration for publication. In the course of the normal external review process, reviewers differed in their judgments about authenticity. One accepted the fragment, but two raised questions, without yet being entirely certain that it is a fake, and suggested review by experienced Coptic papyrologists and testing of the chemical composition of the ink. The third reviewer provided detailed comments on a number of difficulties with the text's grammar and paleography. Neither of the reviewers who questioned the fragment's authenticity was aware that Bagnall had already seen the actual fragment and judged it to be authentic. Their own views were based on relatively low resolution photographs of the fragment.[10]

I will return to this passage in a moment, when I address issues of authenticity in the academy, and particularly in the academic prestige economy, but for now I wish to focus on paleography. King did her due diligence in this area, consulting with Bagnall (a papyrologyist) and Luijendijk (a papyrologist with expertise in Coptic). Doubts about the fragment, however, were raised immediately by the peer reviewers, and in her article King displays transparency in acknowledging their questions, and determination in asserting nonetheless that the fragment is likely from the fourth century. This original draft article set the stage for the paleographical debate that would ensue for the next two years. Paleography alone could not be relied upon as an "objective" measure of authenticity. Discussion continued on social media and in the blogosphere, with the handwriting on the fragment emerging as a key source of doubt regarding its authenticity.[11]

The special issue of *HTR* focusing on GJW included one article devoted entirely to paleography. The piece was authored by one of the foremost experts in Coptic papyrology, Malcolm Choat. Ultimately, it concluded that elements of the fragment could be interpreted as pointing in the direction of a forgery, while other elements evinced characteristics of ancient handwriting.[12] The evaluation was inconclusive. King's revised version of her draft article was suitably updated to take this new research into account.

10. King, "'Jesus said to them'" (draft), 3–4.
11. Suciu and Lundhaug, "So-Called Gospel."
12. Choat, "Preliminary Paleographical Assessment."

Linguistics

Linguistic issues also arose as criteria for determining authenticity from the very beginning, but as with other methods, for the most part they pushed the evaluation in the direction of forgery. Leo Depuydt and Gesine Schenke Robinson immediately noted the grammatical problems with the text—errors that went beyond the possibility of a sloppy or under-educated ancient scribe.[13]

Slavomír Čéplö went so far as to conduct a computational study of the syntax of GJW back in 2012. Čéplö looked at the linguistic construction "peje-"—translated "(pronoun) said"—in GJW, and computed how many times the construction appears in the Sahidic versions of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Thomas, and with what combinations of following words.[14] The results of his computational study are that the construction in GJW has no parallels in the other five texts, and that such a construction is not only awkward but exceedingly unlikely in the wild. Now granted, a more definitive study would include all of the Nag Hammadi corpus, but I think these five gospels proved to be a good sample. Čéplö thus confirmed the nature of the text as forgery; late antique Egyptians simply did not speak and write in the way presented in the new "gospel" fragment. Unfortunately, Čéplö's work was not really discussed much in the blogosphere, despite its importance (in my opinion).

Philology & Close Reading

The backbone of scholarly humanistic inquiry—philology and close reading—dominated early exploration of the fragment's authenticity. Everyone noted the similarity of the vocabulary in the fragment to the vocabulary of the *Gospel of Thomas*. For King, the shared vocabulary corroborated the document's ancient milieu; it fit quite nicely with other fourth-century Coptic documents found at Nag Hammadi.[15] For skeptics, philological close reading provided mounting evidence of forgery. And the closer the skeptics read, the higher that mountain of evidence grew. Francis Watson of Durham University posted a number of online essays on Mark Goodacre's blog and helped launch the argument that GJW was a forgery based

13. Depuydt is quoted in Farrior, "Divorcing Mrs. Jesus"; see Robinson's comment on Halton's blog post ("'Gospel of Jesus's Wife' Saga"), reposted as its own blog post: Robinson and Halton, "Gesine Robinson."

14. Čéplö, "Tahime."

15. King, "'Jesus said to them'" (draft), inter alia.

on snippets copied from the *Gospel of Thomas*.[16] What began with very basic questions about vocabulary—such as, what is the likelihood of all these key words (Mary, Jesus, wife, mother, disciple, gave-me-life) occurring in such a small space?—soon turned to the realization by many that the fragment copied direct phrases from the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*. Ultimately this led to Andrew Bernhard's and Mark Goodacre's discovery that the fragment even reproduces a typographical error in Michael Grondin's online interlinear translation of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*.[17] Philology also helped pound the final nail in the coffin for the fragment: Christian Askeland concluded that GJW was a forgery because it was copied by the same hand as a fragment of the Gospel of John that accompanied GJW in the materials presented to King by the manuscripts' owner, and the John fragment was clearly a forgery—a copy of a Coptic version of John in Cambridge known as the Qau codex.[18] Askeland's philological expertise led to this discovery; he completed his dissertation on the Coptic Bible at Cambridge and published a book on the Coptic Gospel of John and was intimately familiar with the Qau codex.

Provenance

While the traditional humanistic methodologies of philology and linguistics pointed us to a clear conclusion to the question of authenticity, one other contributing factor must be mentioned: transparency about the fragment's ownership, collection history, and provenance. King agreed to keep the name of the owner and some of the documentation about the fragment and the rest of its collection private. Askeland was able to uncover the fraudulent John manuscript that was in the same collection *only* because an image of that papyrus was published online as part of the documentation for the scientific testing results published in *HTR*. Only because additional information about the collection was released could we arrive at our current state of knowledge regarding the fragment.

Roberta Mazza, a papyrologist at Manchester, has been outspoken on issues of provenance for the past several years, weighing in not only on this controversy but also regarding the Green collection of biblical papyri and private collections generally. Mazza maintains that holding back

16. See this revised version of a report first posted 20 September 2012: Watson, "Fake Gospel-Fragment." For a full account of Watson's work on Goodacre's blog, see Goodacre's roundup "Revised Versions of Francis Watson's Articles."

17. Bernhard, "Patchwork"

18. Askeland, "Jesus Had a Sister-in-Law."

information about an ancient object's provenance hinders scholarship and contributes to an unethical (and often illegal) antiquities market.[19] The war and political upheaval in the Middle East have resulted in a wave of unprovenanced, illegal antiquities for sale to predominantly wealthy Western buyers. Academics' responsibility, she argues, should be to eschew publication of private collections unless their provenance is assured and clearly documented. Doing otherwise feeds the antiquities market and undermines the production of knowledge at the heart of scholarship. Provenance and collection history lead scholars to important conclusions about the documents, and sometimes to matching fragmentary documents with their lost partner-fragments. In 2014 Mazza wrote:

> In presenting the results of research to peers and the public, academics use means of communication and follow rules that are centred on the values of trust and accountability. Good arguments in any scholarly discussion are based on a method that provides sources and data that not only proves the points, but is also reliable and verifiable . . .
>
> The lack of discussion on provenance, including acquisition history, is bad practice, and it is usually criticized by academics because it deprives the readers of important data for verifying the reliability of the arguments made in publications. It also goes against one of the principles of our profession, the advancement of scholarship and knowledge, because it denies the possibility to open (or exclude) further research on the above-mentioned manuscript's history and connections.
>
> Besides all this, to avoid discussion of provenance undermines trust: would you trust someone who conceals information?[20]

Mazza was not alone in calling on King to release all provenance information and collection history about the fragment. Certainly, if all of the collection had been released in 2012 when the existence of GJW was announced, we would have arrived at our current conclusions about the fragment far, far sooner. Moreover, Mazza's ethical and political questions about how our work with private, secret, or unprovenanced material might aid the antiquities markets have not received enough attention in Biblical Studies.

19. Like many of the participants in this scholarly conversations, Mazza publishes much of her work on these issues online, in her blog and on Twitter. Mazza has a collection of essays under the topic of "provenance" on her blog *Faces & Voices*: https://facesandvoices.wordpress.com/category/provenance/.

20. Mazza, "Provenance Issues."

She calls on us to reckon with the political and ethical consequences of our work—not an easy conversation, but a necessary one.

Mazza frames the current state of scholarship as one in which transparency and openness about provenance and collection history are the standards.

> For those who work with artefacts reliability and access to as many details as possible related to the ancient sources under scrutiny, often published for the first time, is particularly important. Images and other key-information are provided, including a clear discussion of the archaeological provenance and acquisition history of the object in question. In the case of papyrus editions, this has become the norm.[21]

I would argue, however, that this "norm" is still not as normative as we would like. In May 2015, the University of Virginia acquired a papyrus fragment.[22] The initial announcement made no mention of provenance; on Facebook I immediately raised the question of provenance and collection history. Brice Jones and Dorothy King e-mailed the university's library to inquire directly. As it turns out, the University of Virginia purchased the fragment without even thinking to ask for information about provenance—this in 2015, after controversies about the Sappho papyrus, Green collection, and GJW fragment, and after countless news stories about ISIS selling looted antiquities to support its war.[23]

Transparency about provenance and collection history, I would argue, is not as normative as it should be.[24] All of us working on papyri or Coptic literature have built our scholarly reputations on stolen or looted cultural heritage (and in Biblical Studies, exhibit A is Codex Sinaiticus.) Transparency is not currently a methodology but a political and ethical commitment. Ultimately, all the scholarly methodologies applied to GJW give us only a fraction of the information a political and ethical commitment to transparency could provide.

21. Ibid.

22. Whitesell, "Please Welcome P. Virginia 1."

23. Whitesell, "Problematic Provenance."

24. See also Robinson's mention of the *Gospel of Judas* as a similar cautionary tale in "How a Papyrus Fragment Became a Sensation."

Conclusions

Of all these potential markers of authenticity, the "fuzzy" humanities methods have proven sharper than "hard science." Moreover, I would argue that scientific testing as a measure of authenticity has proven problematic in one important way: in directing our attention away from the most human and political means of determining authenticity—i.e., disclosing full information about the collection and the provenance of the fragment. The scholarly community has expressed our disappointment about the paucity of information regarding the owner and the provenance of the collection. However, King promised the fragment's owner anonymity, thus putting her in a strange bind: questionable for agreeing to keep the owner's identity private but laudable for keeping her promise in the face of enormous pressure.[25]

Unless a legal non-disclosure agreement has been signed, in the face of competing ethical obligations, the scholar's primary obligation should be to transparency of knowledge in the field. There are two issues here: 1) the continued secrecy about the identity of the owner, especially when a fraud has possibly been perpetrated not only on our scholarly community, but on the general public; and 2) the pursuit of expensive scientific testing that diverts both financial resources and scholarly attention away from other pursuits. As I have argued, such transparency has *not* been the norm in the field, and I find myself forced to consider that were I in King's position, I too might have agreed to non-disclosure, as well, at that time. Now, however, we are past that point. One of the revelations of the GJW controversy is that in the academic production of knowledge, our political commitments matter as much as our methodological expertise. As we move forward as a scholarly community, we need to apply self-scrutiny when we use the "pursuit of knowledge" to rationalize what we now know to be ethically murky work.

SCHOLARLY STATUS AND AUTHENTICITY

Equally important over the last three years, I argue, have been markers of authenticity that adhere to the participants in the conversation. Markers of authenticity in the academic prestige economy influenced the scholarly conversation in both predictable and surprising ways. In particular I am interested in the traditional peer review process compared to the digital publication cycle, the status markers of academics' physical and social

25. Andrew Bernhard ("Call for Closure"), who has called on King to release all the documents, has written: "I also respect that she has maintained her personal commitment not to (sic) the identity of the owner of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* for so long."

locations (both institutions and social networks), and gender. These markers of personal authenticity intersected and at times conflicted in interesting ways, with some actors in the GJW controversy privileging some measures of authenticity, and other actors privileging different measures. In particular, Harvard and King proceeded according to fairly traditional markers of personal and institutional authenticity, while in the blogging world and in social media, those markers held little weight. Gender, I will argue, cut across all of them.

The Traditional Publishing Cycle vs. Digital Publishing/Blogging

King's research on the papyrus fragment followed a traditional model of scholarly production. The initial essay adhered to a predictable process of authentication. King, the author, worked on her edition, translation, and article, consulting with known experts in the field, and submitted her work for peer review by *HTR*. King then responded to criticisms levied in the peer reviews and the article was accepted for publication. This is a fairly traditional publication cycle, and although one might think that the referees' criticisms were rather serious, one cannot argue that the process was entirely flawed: King was transparent in her initial *HTR* pre-publication essay regarding the major criticisms of the referees.[26]

I want to compare the subsequent online modes of scholarship with this process. One might be tempted to argue that they existed in conflict, or that they represented two distinctive modes of scholarly inquiry: blogging/social media in a digital ecosystem compared to traditional scholarly peer review, versus a more "democratic" or unregulated free-for-all online. However, I posit that the digital conversation online represented a kind of telescoping of traditional scholarly publication practices. Research and scholarly conversations that would normally have taken years to unfold occurred over the course of weeks or months online. Although particular *actors* in this scholarly conversation occupied different social and physical locations, and disseminated their work in these different locations, nevertheless, the online work in some ways mimicked traditional scholarship, except that it operated at a speed heretofore unseen in Biblical Studies because it was not bound by administrative structures of traditional peer reviewed publishing. Blogs such as *Evangelical Textual Criticism* and Mark Goodacre's *NT Blog* published research on the fragment, and the online scholarly community functioned essentially as crowd-sourced peer review

26. King, "'Jesus said to them'" (draft), 3–4.

in comments on the blogs and in social media discussion about the blog posts on Facebook and Twitter.[27]

The work that Watson, Grondin, Robinson, Bernhard, Goodacre, and Askeland conducted was in many cases the quality of work one would expect from traditional peer-reviewed scholarship. In fact, much of this work was later revised into articles in the peer-reviewed journal *New Testament Studies* in 2015, of which Watson is the editor. The impact of their work, however, peaked long before the publication of the *NTS* volume; the publication process lent the articles a patina of official authenticity, but the argumentation within these pieces had already been accepted by the scholarly community as authentic.

Returning to King's publication cycle, as online scholarship accumulated, King chose to continue publishing in traditional modes. Rather than engage with the blogosphere and social media by publishing responses online on Harvard's *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* website or on the blogs (ETC, Goodacre's blog) and social media sites (Twitter and Facebook), King chose to follow the path of peer review. The 2012 *HTR* essay was pulled—by whom I do not know, whether by King, *HTR*, Harvard, or by mutual agreement—and King pursued the route of scientific testing and private consultation with experts. This research culminated in the *HTR* issue in 2014, at which point King's article "'Jesus said to them, "My wife. . ."'" was finally officially published. Although King gave papers and talks on the fragment, and conducted media interviews with the *New York Times* and the *Smithsonian*, she chose not to engage on social media or blogs. The *HTR* issue addressed some of the concerns that had been raised online, but in the context of a traditional peer-reviewed journal article. Therefore, digital scholarship and traditional scholarship continued along somewhat parallel but separate tracks until this point.

One small adaptation to the new norms of digital scholarship ultimately led to the uncovering of the document as a fraud. When *HTR* published the articles on paleography, scientific testing, and King's own work, Harvard and King also released online the original reports and data from the ink and papyrus tests, including images of the aforementioned Gospel of John papyrus in the collection along with supplementary documentation. These materials appeared as a digital companion of sorts to the traditional journal release.

Since the *HTR* issue appeared, all of the significant analysis of the fragment has taken place on blogs, e-mail lists, and social media. As mentioned,

27. Note James McGrath's discussion of the speed and quality of this conversation in his contribution to this volume, below (ch. 16).

New Testament Studies published a recent issue with several articles arguing for forgery, almost all of which were once non-peer-reviewed, digital publications. Thus, the traditional peer-reviewed record recapitulated the original work of new media. One of the most remarkable turning points that signaled the shift in the location of scholarly knowledge production from the traditional to the digital occurred when renowned Coptologist Stephen Emmel posted a pdf on Alin Suciu's blog, documenting all the reasons he believed GJW to be a forgery.[28] In format and style, Emmel's essay resembled a traditional journal article, not a blog post or social media conversation; nonetheless, the fact that even Emmel, known for his cautious, traditional peer-reviewed scholarship, entered the online conversation signaled that scholarly knowledge production had moved online.

Professional Status

The academic currency of peer review goes hand in hand with other aspects of the academic prestige economy. Academic gossip has long held that the status of the institution rubs off on the status of a scholar, with a somewhat unofficial recognition that outstanding scholars may exist outside of elite institutions, but the reputation of an elite institution contributes further to the reputation of its scholars. Recent work on the prestige economy of higher education has revealed that the status of one's institution is indeed a factor in determining the career trajectory of individual scholars. One particular study of PhD programs has demonstrated that most hires at the most elite universities—so-called "Research 1" universities—come from a pool of PhD candidates at a few elite universities' graduate programs.[29] We all know that the resources at elite institutions—research funding, lower teaching loads, the ability to teach seminars in one's research area, etc.—also contribute to the academic prestige economy; faculty at these institutions produce more publications in part because they have more resources to do so.

During the GJW controversy, the status of most of the scholars producing new knowledge in online communities and the status of scholars working in the traditional peer review realm were quite distinct. With the exception of Mark Goodacre and Francis Watson, most of the bloggers and participants on social media producing new knowledge about the fragment were not established scholars at elite research universities.[30] Grondin and

28. Emmel, "Codicology."

29. Clauset, et al., "Systematic Inequality"; see also Oprisko, "Superpowers."

30. Candida Moss, as professor at the University of Notre Dame, is also quite high status by traditional metrics. Moss's work significantly influenced the public

Bernhard are independent scholars, and Christian Askeland was teaching at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal, a very small theological school in Germany. James McGrath is at Butler. Anthony Le Donne, one of the editors of *The Jesus Blog* who blogged about the document and then wrote a book about it, was an adjunct instructor at the University of the Pacific for a time before moving to a tenure-track position at the United Theological Seminary.[31] Gesine Schenke Robinson also circulated criticisms of the GJW publication process over e-mail and blogs; Robinson is a well-known Coptologist with a contract position at Claremont Graduate University. The experts consulted for King's original article, on the other hand, most definitively came from the realm of the academic elite: tenured or tenure-track faculty at premier research universities. King consulted with Roger Bagnall of New York University, AnneMarie Luijendijk of Princeton, and Ariel Shisha Halevy of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem before going public.

Moreover, Harvard's stature as "Harvard" enabled the massive publicity machine that accompanied the original press release about the document: a front page *New York Times* article appeared the day after King's first presentation on the document at the International Association of Coptic Studies Congress. Reporters also swarmed the Congress the day after the presentation, putting microphones in front of bewildered scholars who had come to discuss their own latest arcane research. And a Smithsonian Channel documentary was arranged. The publicity roll-out for this fragment reflected the importance of Harvard as much as it did the fragment, possibly even more so. In all, the initial publicity surrounding the announcement of the fragment reflected the high status of the scholar, her institution, and her network.

New Media as a Platform for Knowledge Production

This division in status between the scholars writing online and those producing traditional peer-reviewed publications is not unique to Biblical Studies. Bonnie Stewart's work on academic social media has demonstrated that markers of authenticity on academic social media differ from those in traditional scholarship.

On social media (including academic circles on social media) authenticity is not measured using the same criteria as in the traditional academic

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dissemination of GJW scholarship being produced online. In what follows, I examine the status of the scholars producing new knowledge about the fragment itself, rather than scholars producing knowledge about the controversy.

31. Le Donne, *Wife of Jesus*.

prestige economy. Social media participants judge authenticity by level of engagement, not traditional status markers. This holds true especially on so-called "academic Twitter," where Stewart's research has shown that the "the impression of capacity for meaningful contribution" to a conversation carries more weight than credentials such as university ranking or tenure status.[32] Stewart writes,

> How do scholars within open networks judge whether another scholar's signals are credible or worthy of engagement? . . . [they employ] complex logics of influence to assess the networked profiles and behaviors of peers and unknown entities. Significantly, these logics of influence depart from the codified terms of rank and bibliometric indexing on which conventional academic influence is judged. While some are numeric—participants recognized relatively large-scale accounts as a general signal of influence—recognizability and commonality are as important as or more important than quantifiable measures or credentials.[33]

Perceptions of engagement, shared interests, and shared viewpoints contribute to influence and status on social media.

Stewart's research on networked scholarship was vindicated in two ways during the GJW controversy. First, the logics of engagement and shared interests were at work on the *Evangelical Textual Criticism* blog, where Askeland published his research proving GJW was a forgery. *The Evangelical Textual Criticism* blog is a community that is exactly what it says it is: a site for Evangelical Christians with interests in text criticism to come together and discuss the Bible. A shared religious commitment is a key factor in this community's identity; the tagline reads, "A forum for people with knowledge of the Bible in its original languages to discuss its manuscripts and textual history from the perspective of historic evangelical theology." The vast majority of contributors to the blog are also male; of the 18 contributors currently listed on the website, only one is a woman.

When Askeland posted his "smoking gun" blog post, he originally titled it "Jesus's Wife had an ugly sister-in-law"; by sister-in-law he was referring to the aforementioned fragment of the Gospel of John in the same collection of materials as GJW. Eva Mroczek, Meredith Warren, and other feminist scholars began to question the title of Askeland's post. Mroczek stated that it "plays on old tropes that have long alienated and shamed women—not just scrutinizing them for their appearance, but allegorizing

32. Stewart, "Open to Influence."

33. Ibid., 287. The quotation is taken from the article's abstract.

them to make negative points." Additional comments were made in support of her initial post but some were removed by Askeland, who characterized them as "combative."[34] Some of the factors Stewart has identified as relevant for social networking and perceptions of authenticity online are operating here, in particular shared gender and religious identities. Askeland's status as a reputable Coptic scholar contributed to his authority in determining authenticity, but within this online community, so did his gender and religious commitments. Mroczek, Warren, and their allies (some of whom were men writing in support of the women scholars) were feminist outsiders and critics of evangelical Christian biblical interpretation. Noteworthy in this regard also is an e-mail sent by Brown University's Leo Depuydt to journalists and scholars stating his support of Askelend's findings and making serious accusations against King: "When is this papyrological pantomime, this Keystone Coptic, this academic farce, this philological burlesque finally going to stop? Is this academic misconduct or is this not academic misconduct?"[35]

Simultaneously on Twitter and Facebook, the views of scholars such as Alin Suciu, Hugo Lundhaug, Andrew Bernhard, Michael Grondin, Mark Goodacre, and myself gained traction. As I have noted already, with the exceptions of Watson and Goodacre, most of us commenting held low status positions in the academy. Yet our views were held in high regard, I would argue, either because we already had credibility on social media due to perceptions of "engagement and shared interest," or because the networked credibility of one scholar rubbed off on the others (e.g., Goodacre's reputation as a dynamic, responsive tweeter rubbed off on Grondin and Bernhard when he tweeted about their posts on his blog). Grondin and Bernhard also had reputations as digital scholars in Coptic due to their own websites, where Grondin's edition and translation of the *Gospel of Thomas* proved crucial in the argument that GJW was a forgery.

34. Mroczek, "Sexism," examines the discussion and reproduces some of the deleted comments.

35. The e-mail, dated 24 April 2014, was posted to Gregg W. Schwendner's blog *What's New in Papyrology* (http://papyrology.blogspot.ca/2014/04/christian-askeland-jesus-had-ugly.html/). Depuydt is similarly brusque in the final volley in an exchange with King that began with his own contribution to the *HTR* volume ("Alleged Gospel"), continued in King's response ("Response to Leo Depuydt"), and concluded with a further response by Depuydt posted on Mark Goodacre's *NT Blog* ("Papyrus Fragment"). In this last response, Depuydt marshals evidence to refute King's statement that Depuydt had made an "error of analysis" and in the process implies King is merely "a budding little grammarian" and concludes in a rather patronizing fashion with "So, my little friend, sleep soundly and dream sweetly because there has been no 'error of analysis'" (ibid., 4).

Two other social and digital media phenomena also deserve mention here. Candida Moss of Notre Dame published extensively in *The Daily Beast*, *CNN Belief Blog,* and *The Atlantic* about the GJW controversy.[36] Moss's writing brought a greater awareness to the general public of the scholarly conversations online. Without her work, arguably the world outside of "academic Twitter" would have little awareness of the contours of the scholarly controversy. Likewise, Eva Mroczek's article in *Religion Dispatches*, "'Gospel of Jesus' Wife' Less Durable than Sexism Surrounding It," earned quite a bit of attention. This piece likely had a substantial number of readers outside the Biblical Studies community and was widely shared and discussed by academics online.

The conversations on Twitter and Facebook contributed to the scholarly consensus on GJW's status as inauthentic, as a forgery. This coheres with Stewart's research on Twitter as a platform for the production of knowledge: scholarship produced in networked online communities is indeed scholarship. Scholars heavily invested in traditional markers of status in the academic prestige economy might dismiss digital platforms, but the scholars on networked media regard it as a legitimate and primary medium for knowledge production. Networked participatory scholarship takes multiple forms, including discovery:

> Participants appeared to carve out regular areas of discussion and investigation for which they become known, in their Twitter circles; peers would then send them links on those topics due to their expressed interests, and signal them into conversations in those areas, thereby extending participants' network reach and visibility. A majority of participants reported that this circulation of ideas and resources not only helped them build new knowledge and become aware of new literature in their fields, but also broadened their understanding of alternate viewpoints in their areas of expertise. Twitter was a site of learning and public scholarly contribution.[37]

Moreover, Twitter facilitates interdisciplinary work, because scholars encounter other modes of research online.[38] Finally, digital networks disproportionately engage scholars marked as lower status by various traditional academic criteria of authenticity; they comprise "a means by which women,

36. A few examples: Baden and Moss, "New Clues"; Baden and Moss, "Curious Case"; Moss, "Still as Big a Mystery."

37. Stewart, "In Abundance," 323

38. Ibid., 323.

minorities, and junior scholars could engage openly as public thinkers and experts," whereas senior scholars often eschew the platform.[39]

Gender

The last, but to my mind one of the most important, features of this debate has been gender. Although some of what I have had to say here may appear to be a critique of King, in particular, for choosing not to engage in the digital scholarly conversation, in fact her response (or lack of response) can be understood only when we examine gender as one of the primary markers of authenticity in the academy and in online scholarly communities. We can unpack gender's influence on the scholarly conversation by examining two ways gender operates as a marker of authenticity: women academics in Biblical Studies face pervasive, structural discrimination, and women encounter harassment online at a much higher rate than men.

Charles Haws of the Society of Biblical Literature has conducted several studies of demographic data available from the SBL and national surveys of student degree completion.[40] Women who earn undergraduate degrees in Religious Studies and Biblical Studies go on to complete PhDs at a lower rate than men. And although the raw ratio of women earning PhDs compared to men has increased since the 1990s, the data shows that fewer women than expected are completing their doctorates. In other words, despite an overall increase in women PhDs, the field exhibits a leaky pipeline. Haws took the data on the number of men and women earning Bachelors degrees in Religious Studies as a base cohort of people prepared to go on to graduate work in the field. Then he looked at PhD completion as a percentage of that cohort. The proportion of *prepared women* who go on to complete PhDs has *decreased* compared to *prepared men* who complete PhDs. Somewhere along the way over the past decade and a half, fewer women who are interested in Religious Studies and capable of doing graduate research in the field are completing doctorates compared to men. Women are being squeezed out of our field on a systematic basis.

Another data point on structural inequality involves publication. For two years, Ellen Muehlberger of the University of Michigan tracked the number of female authors in the *Review of Biblical Literature* (of both books and their reviewers), and the percentage of women contributors is consistently and significantly lower than the percentage of women in the Society.[41]

39. Ibid., 330.

40. Haws, "Women Earning Doctorates."

41. Muehlberger, "Review of Biblical Literature"; Muehlberger, "Thoughts after Two

Even the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, whose senior editor was a self-identified feminist, in 2014 published only two articles by women; less than 10 percent of 2014 *JECS* article authors were women. In other words: even for women who have survived the leaky pipeline, their voices are marginal to the field.[42] For scholars of color, this problem is further magnified. Some of this data, such as the *JECS* statistics, shows that the problem cannot be conveniently blamed on the population of more politically or theologically conservative biblical scholars.

Women on social media and women scholars who publish or appear in interviews in popular media outlets experience also a high degree of harassment and discrimination in the digital realm. In 2014, Pew released a major study about online harassment and concluded that while "men are more likely to experience online harassment," women experience more severe and sustained abuse. Men are called names more frequently, but women online are more likely to experience stalking, sexual harassment, and physical threats. Forty percent of women who had been harassed online reported that it was "extremely or very upsetting," compared to only 17% of men.[43] The sexism and trolling that Classics scholar Mary Beard experiences provides the clearest example of this phenomenon in academia. In one of the most egregious episodes, television critic A. A. Gill opined that Beard was too old and ugly to be on television. Beard, of course, fought back, charging him with clear and blatant misogyny.[44] Beard's response, however, did not end the torrent of sexist abuse sent her way; writers on the Internet continued to disparage her for her age, appearance, clothing, and style of speaking.[45] Beard's encounters with her sexist detractors in the media, on blogs, and on Twitter have been documented in a 2014 profile in the *New Yorker*. Beard fights back on social media (by retweeting and responding to even some of her most craven trolls), and in private, by e-mailing and messaging her detractors. The *New Yorker* profile reveals the amount of labor a high-profile woman academic on social media expends simply in combating misogyny. This time and the emotional labor constitute expenditures not faced by male academics, or at least not to such a degree.

The risks are high for women academics to engage their critics online. The costs run even higher—their emotional equilibrium, their productivity

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Years."

42. For an explanation of how institutional sexism affects the individual academic, see Bond, "Sexism and NT Scholarship."

43. Duggan, "Online Harassment."

44. Rojas, "Mary Beard."

45. Gill's column in the *Spectator* provides just one example. A Google search will uncover many more, such as Liddle, "It's Not Misogyny."

derailed. These two factors combined (sexism in the academy and online harassment) create a climate that encourages women not to engage in public scholarship, especially in popular online media venues, such as blogs and social media. The risks and costs for women of color run even higher, as Tressie McMillan Cottom has documented in her article, "'Who do you think you are?': When Marginality Meets Academic Microcelebrity"; McMillan Cottom cites the substantial harassment and threats against several Black women academics, including history of Christianity professor Dr. Anthea Butler.[46]

The Responsibilities of Universities

Finally, I wish to note how academic institutions affect these personal markers of authenticity. In the case of the GJW fragment, Harvard leveraged its status and reputation in order to "signal boost" King's scholarship on the manuscript. However, after Askeland and others raised questions about the manuscript's authenticity, King and Harvard both became silent, reacting to virtually none of the news circulating on Facebook, Twitter, and blogs about the manuscript. Harvard also did not publish the *HTR* article as originally planned. King was left in a bit of a lurch: on the forefront in the media about this controversial topic, yet unable to publish her work in *HTR*.

Tressie McMillan Cottom has written about higher education institutions' desire for their faculty to produce public, accessible scholarship, and their simultaneous discouragement of such work. In her blog post, "Everything but the Burden," McMillan Cottom charges that institutions essentially fatten up their faculty before throwing them to the wolves. Public scholarship, media appearances, and public engagement bring prestige and accolades to an institution. They also bring controversy. McMillan Cottom writes, "Basically, the scale of current media is so beyond anything academia can grasp that those with agendas get a leg up on pulling the levers of universities' inherent conservativism." When the inherent conservatism of the university kicks in, the public academic feels vulnerable and censured.[47] The stakes are higher for women and especially women of color than other faculty. And as Anthony Le Donne noted in his book, the online outrage machine was primed to react due to the very title given the papyrus. Writing about his participation on a panel I organized at the University of the Pacific, Le Donne reflects, "What I learned from this experience is that the topic of 'the wife of Jesus' brings a host of expectations with it. This topic has

46. McMillan Cottom, "'Who Do You Think You Are?'"

47. Ibid.; see also McMillan Cottom, "Everything but the Burden."

been sold as a scandal for so long that people can't help but be scandalized by it."[48]

Harvard bears no small amount of responsibility in this controversy—for winding it up and exposing King to the resulting maelstrom. As Eva Mroczek observed, King was subject to derogatory remarks about her appearance and her character.[49] Although I do not know what happened at Harvard, I submit that Harvard did King a disservice by not publishing the *HTR* article right away alongside the work of some of the critics, by not releasing the collection history and provenance information, by neither encouraging King to participate in the online digital scholarship about the fragment nor providing some mechanism for other university representatives to engage (and then supporting those who did), and by not addressing the ongoing social media conversation on the official Harvard GJW website and on social media itself.

From an outsider's perspective, it appears that Harvard did protect King in the ways McMillan Cottom argues all institutions must: by providing resources to deal with the wave of inquiries, academic freedom protections, and generally not throwing King under the bus (as arguably other institutions have done to their controversial faculty). However, Harvard protected its professor at a price, the price of privileging a model of academic knowledge production based on scarcity rather than one based on openness and abundance.[50]

CONCLUSION: CEDING THE TERRITORY

Bonnie Stewart's research suggests that scholarship will increasingly happen online, including in social media circles, because scholars find these venues useful and productive.[51] The groups of scholars who are practicing online scholarship do not always line up with the metrics of traditional academic credentialing. Research is happening online. In this case, it grew primarily on social media and on blogs, particularly on a more conservative, Evangelical blog, but that was not the only location: on Facebook and Twitter, scholars who did not identify as Evangelical exchanged theories about the

48. Le Donne, *Wife of Jesus*, x.

49. Mroczek, "Sexism."

50. Here I take language from Stewart's analysis of online networked scholarly practices ("In Abundance").

51. Stewart ("In Abundance") does note that academics on Twitter have expressed concerns that institutions and other pressures are beginning to constrain the networked participatory scholarship they value.

document. Academics who dismiss social media and digital publishing do so at their own peril—especially scholars who dismiss the conservatism or tone of the blogs. To dismiss this work is to cede the territory of future scholarly conversation. The transformation of blog posts into the *New Testament Studies* issue on GJW proves that the landscape is shifting, and that the digital production of knowledge bears fruit in the more traditional academic publishing pipeline. For women scholars, the territory can be a treacherous one, but I would argue that that is all the more reason for self-identified feminist, progressive scholars of early Christianity and the New Testament to engage online and support their female colleagues online, especially senior scholars. To leave this responsibility to women themselves or to early career scholars is unethical and does not contribute to the growth of knowledge in our field.

Finally, digital scholarship is pushing back against the habits of secrecy, seclusion, and private ownership upon which humanities scholarship is currently built: the scholar working in isolation until "ready" to present his/her work to the world, the anonymous peer review system, and mystery and dread about where many of our sources—especially in Coptic—come from. Many of us have made our names studying colonized and/or stolen material. I know I will never look at newly-published and newly-discovered manuscripts in the same way again, and many of my colleagues have shared with me the same sentiment.

The digital, of course, is not synonymous with openness. In *The Immanent Frame*, Kathryn Lofton argues that the digital is often "a place to hide." She presses, "We may see the Internet as an openness, an availability, a potential divulgence of privacy and overexposure of self. But what if it all is just song and dance relative to its basic proposition, namely that none of us never ever get to know what is really going on?"[52] Lofton has a point: digital records are easily confused, altered, and used to misdirect. The digital, as I have argued here, is also a place to bully, a place to force someone (especially a woman) into hiding. We delude ourselves, however, if we believe that the pillars of traditional academic work do not also frequently obscure "what is really going on." The leaky PhD pipeline and our field's publication records show that the traditional apparatus of the academic prestige economy has hidden quite a bit from our view. At this moment, I argue, to hide *from* the digital is to cede the territory to others who will then shape the contours of our field without us.

52. Lofton, "Digital."

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Responses to Mark Goodacre, James McGrath, and Caroline Schroeder on the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*

— Janet E. Spittler —

RESPONSE TO MARK GOODACRE

Mark Goodacre points to the enormous role that Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* and Ron Howard's film adaptation have played in at least the media's representation of the significance of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* (GJW), and I heartily agree: *The Da Vinci Code*'s role can hardly be overestimated. I agree with Goodacre, moreover, that "popular culture's obsession with *The Da Vinci Code* provided the ideal context for the reception of GJW" (p. 347 above) and share his suspicion that the forger had *The Da Vinci Code* in mind when producing the fragment.[1] In response, however, I hope to both

1. Like Goodacre and (as far as I can tell) the majority of New Testament scholars, I have been convinced by the evidence and arguments pointing towards forgery. I suspect Goodacre's final comment on GJW ("perhaps its creator was also a fan of Dan Brown," p. 348 above) is in some respect tongue-in-cheek, but—if Goodacre is correct that GJW was composed with *The Da Vinci Code* in mind—it is fair to ask what the forger's particular attitude towards the novel and the notions therein is, and what his/her purpose in creating the forgery was. Is s/he a "fan"? Was the purpose of the forgery to lend credence to an idea the forger approved of? Or does s/he disapprove of the notion of Jesus' marriage and/or Mary Magdalene's prominence in the early church? Could the forgery have been designed to be uncovered, intended as a device to

broaden and narrow Goodacre's focus: 1) broadening to include America's long history with the notion of (and controversy concerning) a married Jesus (substantially longer than Goodacre's account indicates), and 2) narrowing to look at a particular aspect of *The Da Vinci Code*—that is, the way it constructs the significance of Jesus' marriage vis-à-vis feminism—as the primary "contribution" of the novel to our collective reaction to GJW.

Broadening the Focus: Jesus' Wife in America

America's history with the notion of a married Jesus reaches back a good bit further than the 1990s or even the last half of the twentieth century—well before the publication of *The Da Vinci Code* and Kazantzakis' *The Last Temptation of Christ.* The idea is found in mid-nineteenth-century Mormon circles, where a married Jesus, while never an official part of Latter-day Saints doctrine, was a commonly held notion.[2]

The notion is evident as early as the 1840s, when Brigham Young seemed to understand Mary Magdalene as the wife of Jesus in a reference to the resurrection appearance in John 20: "she fell right down at his feet—every woman will come right to her husband's feet same as Mary."[3] In 1853, Jedediah Grant, an LDS apostle and mayor of Salt Lake City, claimed that Jesus was persecuted and ultimately crucified for his polygamy: "The grand reason why the Gentiles and philosophers of his school persecuted Jesus Christ, was, because he had so many wives: there were Elizabeth, and Mary, and a host of others that followed him."[4] Also in 1853, Orson Pratt

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embarrass a prominent feminist scholar? Or did the forger simply have the popularity of *The Da Vinci Code* in mind, hoping to capitalize (literally) on its success by selling a forged papyrus that seemed to tie in to the novel's content? Cf. Christian Askeland's suspicions, note 53 below; see also Baden and Moss, "Curious Case."

2. In this section I am indebted to Turner, *Mormon Jesus,* especially pp. 217–46, as well as verbal and e-mail exchanges with Kathleen Flake (Richard Lyman Bushman Chair of Mormon Studies at the University of Virginia).

3. Brigham Young discourse of 27 December 1847, Box 1, Folder 61, GCM; quoted from Turner, *Mormon Jesus*, 230.

4. Jedediah Grant discourse of 7 August 1853, transcript by George D. Watt, in CR 100 317, Church History Library; this discourse was also published in Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:341–49, here 345; cited in Turner, *Mormon Jesus,* 231. Interestingly, Grant here claims to be quoting Celsus, whom he identifies as both a physician and a philosopher. As Anthony Le Donne has noted, Grant here confuses (or, perhaps better, conflates) the second-century philosopher Celsus (against whose *The True Word* Origen later wrote) and the first-century physician Aulus Cornelius Celsus (whose work *De medicina* is extant) (see Le Donne, *Wife of Jesus*, 76–79). Watt's transcript of the discourse perhaps reflects some of the confusion, when Celsus is identified as "a physician in the age of the apostles," the last phrase being crossed out and replaced with the

published a long essay titled "Celestial Marriage," offered in 12 monthly installments in *The Seer*. In the eleventh installment, Pratt finally takes up the notion of a married Jesus: "Now let us enquire whether there are any intimations in Scripture concerning the wives of Jesus."

Pratt is circumspect, but points (as Brigham Young did) to the resurrection appearances for traces of Jesus' marital status:

> The Evangelists do not particularly speak of the marriage of Jesus; but this is not to be wondered at, for St. John says: 'There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.' (John 21:25.) One thing is certain, that there were several holy women that greatly loved Jesus—such as Mary, and Martha her sister, and Mary Magdalene; and Jesus greatly loved them, and associated with them much; and when He arose from the dead, instead of first showing Himself to His chosen witnesses, the Apostles, He appeared first to these women, or at least to one of them—namely, Mary Magdalene. Now it would be very natural for a husband in the resurrection to appear first to his own dear wives, and afterwards show himself to his other friends. If all the acts of Jesus were written, we no doubt should learn that these beloved women were his wives.[5]

Pratt goes on to cite Psalm 45:8–9, translated as "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia: when thou comest out of the ivory palaces, where they have made thee glad, Kings' daughters were among thine honorable WIVES."[6] Pratt argues that this verse refers to "the Son of God and His Wives," pointing to the previous two verses (Ps 45:7–8) and their interpretation as referring to Jesus in Hebrews 1:8–9, concluding, "Let it be remembered, then, that the Son of God is expressly represented as having 'honorable Wives.'"[7]

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superscript "first century" (CR 100 317, Church History Library).

5. Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," 10:159.

6. Ibid., italics original.

7. Ibid., 160. Pratt then notes that his translation differs from the King James Version: "King James' translators were not willing that this passage should have a literal translation, according to the former English rendering, lest it should give countenance to Polygamy; therefore they altered the translation to honorable *women* instead of *wives*; but any person acquainted with the original can see that the first translators have given the true rendering of that passage."

Further, Pratt takes up the parable of the ten bridesmaids in Matthew 25:1–13, arguing that the five wise virgins are not wedding guests, but "females who are to be married to the Bridegroom." He concludes:

> Are not these five wise virgins the 'honorable Wives' which the Psalmist represents the Son of God as having taken from among kings' daughters? From the passage in the forty-fifth Psalm, it will be seen that the great Messiah who was the founder of the Christian religion, was a Polygamist, as well as the Patriarch Jacob and the prophet David from whom He descended according to the flesh. Paul says concerning Jesus, 'Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.' (Heb. 2:16.) Abraham the Polygamist being a friend of God, the Messiah chose to take upon himself his seed; and by marrying many honorable wives himself, show to all future generations that he approbated the plurality of Wives under the dispensations in which His Polygamist ancestors lived.[8]

In the final installment of the essay, Pratt includes the married Christ as one of 15 "questions for the consideration of such of our readers as may be opposed to the plurality system":

> If polygamy is to be considered sinful under the gospel dispensation, why did David speak of the honorable wives of the son of God himself and so particularly describe one of His Queens.

8. Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," 11:172. Pratt's essay on marriage is a fascinating read for scholars of the New Testament. Among his most interesting arguments for polygamy is a rather ingenious interpretation of 1 Tim 3 in combination with 1 Cor 7. Pratt takes the command that deacons and bishops be married to "only one wife" as taking for granted the existence (and desirability) of a plurality of wives; Pratt understands the limitation to one wife to reflect Paul's quite practical understanding of the demands of polygamy (also at play, according to Pratt, in 1 Cor 7): "Paul knew this to be the general disposition of mankind, and he knew that there were but a very few men to be found who would sacrifice houses and lands, wives and children, and everything else of an earthly nature for the sake of the gospel, therefore, he no doubt wrote his instructions to Timothy to select those among the church members who had but one wife, as they would be much more free from care than those who had several wives and children depending on them for their support." ("Celestial Marriage," 5:74). Further, Pratt notes the contradiction between 1 Cor 7:8 ("To the unmarried and widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am") and 1 Tim 5:14 ("I would have younger widows marry"), explaining that in Corinth, where "divisions, contentions, fornications, brother going to law with brother, and various other evils existed," Paul feared that few faithful might marry "wicked companions that would lead them away to destruction," and thus, under those circumstances, felt that the avoidance of marriage altogether was preferable. Elsewhere, however, "where such evils did not exist, it was his will that they should marry" (ibid.).

> Would Christ sanction a sinful institution by his own practice? and then command his disciples to follow him?[9]

A third early LDS leader, Orson Hyde, focused specifically on the question of whether Jesus was married in a sermon delivered at the Tabernacle on 6 October 1854 (printed in *The Deseret* on 19 October). Like Young, he points to Mary's interactions with the resurrected Jesus in John 20, this time making the lexical argument that the terms used by Mary to refer to and address Jesus in this passage are in fact terms used by a wife of her husband. He concludes: "Is there not here manifested the affections of a wife. Where will you find a family so nearly allied by the ties of common religion?"[10] Hyde anticipates objection: "'Well,' you say, 'that appears rather plausible, but I want a little more evidence, I want you to find where it says the Savior was actually married.'"[11] Hyde claims that there is such a passage, which he will read aloud "or you might not believe my words were I to say that there is indeed such a scripture."[12] He then reads John 2:1–11, the wedding at Cana, in the King James Version. Much like Orson Pratt, Hyde suggests that the original meaning of the passage had been obscured by translation and, perhaps, editing:

> Gentleman, that is as plain as the translators or different councils over this scripture, dare allow it to go to the world; but the thing is there; it is told; Jesus was the bridegroom at the marriage of Cana in Galilee, and he told them what to do. Now there was actually a marriage; and if Jesus was not the bridegroom on that occasion, please tell who was. If any man can show this, and prove that it was not the Savior of the world, then I will acknowledge I am in error.[13]

9. Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," 12:190.

10. Hyde, "Lecture, Tabernacle," 1. Hyde bases this argument on common English usage of the term "master," noting, "In England we frequently hear the wife say 'where is my master?' She did not mean a tyrant, but as Sarah called her husband Lord, she designated hers by the word master." Hyde—who interestingly claims to have memorized the Bible in English, German and Hebrew, but not Greek—understands Mary's reference to Jesus in 20:13 ("Lord" in the KJV and Hyde's quotation) and her address in 20:16 ("Rabboni, which is to say, Master" in KJV and Hyde's quotation) as equivalent to the English wife's "master" with reference to husband.

11. Ibid. Note that this is a sermon, delivered at the Tabernacle: does Hyde expect objections from within the Mormon congregation, or does the "you" here refer to an imagined outsider?

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

Moreover, Hyde continues, Jesus' marriage produced offspring, and their descendants may well survive to this day:

> We say it was Jesus Christ who was married; to be bro't into the relation whereby he could see his seed, before he was crucified . . . I do not despise to be called a son of Abraham, if he had a dozen wives; or to be called a brother, a son, a child of the Savior if he had Mary, and Martha, and several others, as wives; and tho' he did cast seven devils out of one of them, it is all the same to me.[14]

Particularly notable in comparison with the *The Da Vinci Code*[15] are Hyde's speculations about Jesus' children:

> I shall say here, that before the Savior died, he looked upon his own natural children, as we look upon ours; he saw his seed and immediately afterwards, he was cut off from the earth; but who shall declare his generation? They had no father to hold them in honorable remembrance; they passed into the shades of obscurity, never to be exposed to mortal eye as the seed of the blessed one. For no doubt had they been exposed to the eye of the world, those infants might have shared the same fate as the children in Jerusalem in the days of Herod, when all the children were ordered to be slain under such an age, with the hopes of slaying the infant Savior. They might have suffered by the hand of the assassin, as the sons of many kings have done who were heirs apparent to the thrones of their fathers.[16]

After Hyde spoke, Brigham Young (then President of the LDS) gave a response, fully approving of its content ("I do not wish to eradicate any items from the lecture Elder Hyde has given us this evening"), but quibbling with his interpretation of 1 Tim 3.[17]

14. Ibid.

15. See Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, 274–77. The character Leigh Teabing explains, "Mary Magdalene was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion. For the safety of Christ's unborn child, she had no choice but to flee the Holy Land. With the help of Jesus' trusted uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene secretly traveled to France, then known as Gaul. There she found safe refuge in the Jewish community. It was here in France that she gave birth to a daughter. Her name was Sarah" (275).

16. Hyde, "Lecture, Tabernacle," 1.

17. Young, "Remarks by President Brigham Young," 2, cited by Turner, *Mormon Jesus*, 233. Hyde had argued, much like Pratt, that 1 Tim 3 restricts bishops and deacons to one wife (while implicitly acknowledging the desirability of more); Young takes 1 Tim 3 differently: "Instead of my believing for a moment that Paul wished to signify to Timothy that he must select a man to fill the office of a bishop that would have but *one*

Anti-Mormon Response

The sermons on Jesus' marital status were not just read by members of the LDS community: these and other items printed in *The Deseret* were frequently reprinted, excerpted, and responded to in East Coast newspapers. Washington's *The Globe* printed extended excerpts from Hyde's sermon; *The New York Times* printed a response under the title "Mormon Shamelessness," railing against the "disgustingly obscene and blasphemous" speeches of the "Elders that rule over Utah." Referring to the recent printing of Hyde's and Young's discourses in *The Deseret*, the uncredited editor writes:

> On the 6th of October [Orson Hyde] delivered an address in the Mormon Tabernacle, in which the low depravity of the sect is more openly evident than in any other published document we have seen which originated there. He argues the right of the plurality of wives, from the patriarchal habit and the *example of Christ*. He shamelessly attempts to prove that Jesus was the bridegroom at Cana.[18]

John Hanson Beadle, harsh critic of the Latter-day Saints and author of *Polygamy: or, The Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism*, was similarly scandalized by Hyde's interpretation of John 2:1–11, which he refers to as "clear as mud": "Orson Hyde took for his specialty the case of Christ, and proved to his own satisfaction that the Saviour had five wives, including Martha and Mary."[19]

After the Latter-day Saints' official rejection of polygamy in the 1890 Manifesto, references to a married Jesus by leaders of the church rather abruptly halted,[20] though echoes remained. In 1912, for example, Charles

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wife, I believe directly the reverse; but his advice to Timothy amounts simply to this: It would not be wise for you to ordain a man to the office of a bishop unless he has a *wife*; you must not ordain a *single* or *unmarried* man to that calling."

18. "Mormon Shamelessness."

19. Beadle, *Polygamy*, 304. Note the full title of the work: *Polygamy: or, the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism, being a Full and Authentic History of Polygamy and the Mormon Sect from its origin to the present time, with a complete analysis of Mormon society and theocracy and an exposé of the secret rites and ceremonies of the Latter-day Saints.* Cf. Folk, *Mormon Monster*, 114 and 234; Oswalt, *Pen Pictures of Mormonism*, 77. See also discussion by Mason, *Mormon Menace,* 102–26.

20. Thus, for example, James Talmage's 1915 tome *Jesus the Christ* discusses the wedding at Cana (pp. 144–47) and Jesus' resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene (pp. 678–83) with no hint that the wedding might have been Jesus' own or that Mary might have been his wife. See discussion in Turner, *Mormon Jesus*, 236–37. On the complicated situation vis-à-vis polygamy left in the wake of the 1890 Manifesto, see Flake, *Politics*, 56–81, 130–35.

W. Penrose published in a Mormon periodical a list of "peculiar questions, evidently prompted by persons who desired to provoke controversy rather than to obtain information," along with brief responses. Several of the questions have to do with plural marriage; the second is: "Do you believe that Jesus was married?" to which Penrose replies, "We do not know anything about Jesus Christ being married. The Church has no authoritative declaration on the subject."[21] Relative silence from LDS members on the possibility of a married Jesus follows, though in 1948 the excommunicated fundamentalist Joseph White Musser published (in the journal that he edited) an article entitled "Did Jesus Marry, and Did He Live the Patriarchal Law?" in which he argues that Jesus had married Martha and Mary at Cana, and later Mary Magdalene.

Regardless of official LDS statements—or, rather, the lack thereof—on the marital status of Jesus, reference to the married Jesus by Evangelical anti-Mormon "countercult" writers continued unabated through the twentieth century.[22] According to J. B. Haws, there was a notable uptick in Evangelical anti-Mormon propaganda in the 1980s. While nineteenth-century anti-polygamy (and anti-Mormon) campaigns had been steered by Protestant leaders, "what had largely been a sectarian conflict bubbled to the surface of national consciousness, and Christian warnings about the Mormon 'cult' swayed opinions among new audiences *outside* of the religious community."[23] Particularly influential was Ed Decker's 1982 expensively produced anti-Mormon "documentary" *The God Makers*, which, in an easily excerptible animated short presented within the film as a summary of LDS teachings, refers to Pratt's claim that Jesus was married to Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene.[24] The film, which was originally distributed primarily through screenings before Evangelical Christian audiences, reached an enormous audience; according to contemporary media reports, "the movie was being shown to 'about 1,000 audiences a month,' often to 'standing-room only crowds.'"[25] The film's *Nachleben* has also been significant: sections of the animated short are shown, for example, in Bill Maher's 2008 film *Religulous*, and the short has been posted many times over on YouTube. One version, uploaded in October 2008, has since been viewed upwards of

21. Penrose, "Peculiar Questions," 1042. See discussion in Turner, *Mormon Jesus*, 236–37.

22. See, for example, van Baalen, *Chaos of Cults*, 139; Sanders, *Heresies*, 112–13; Hoekema, *Four Major Cults*, 56. See discussion in Turner, *Mormon Jesus*, 241–42.

23. Haws, *Mormon Image*, 100.

24. On the broad impact of *The God Makers* in American perceptions of the LDS, see Haws, *Mormon Image,* 112–25.

25. Ibid., 115.

900,000 times.[26] Similar anti-Mormon material, including reference to the married Jesus, continues to be produced in various Evangelical circles; the multiple publications of Richard Abanes are a good example.[27]

William Phipps, Ogden Kraut, and the Married Jesus

Interestingly, the arguments first articulated by Grant, Pratt, and Hyde also turn up in a few non-LDS sources, most prominently two articles and two books by New Testament scholar William Phipps.[28] Phipps, a professor of Religion and Philosophy at a Presbyterian liberal arts college in Pennsylvania, first published a short piece in 1968 on the plausibility of either Jesus or Paul having been married. His arguments—primarily based on the notion that Jesus' "marital outlook corresponded to that of other devout Jews" (marriage being the norm) and on the interpretation of the term *agamos* in 1 Cor 7:8 (which Phipps takes as "widower")—are not particularly persuasive.[29] But they did, according to Phipps's own account, elicit a "voluminous and overwhelmingly negative response," which led him to develop his ideas in two monographs.[30]

26. The clip is titled "What Mormons Really Believe" (online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HSlbuli7HM/) and is excerpted such that a more credulous viewer might take it to be an official LDS production.

27. E.g., Abanes, *Inside Today's Mormonism*, 239–41.

28. Another example, cited by Phipps, is Columbia University professor of English John Erskine, one of the early proponents of the "Great Books" movement. In 1945, Erskine published a work titled *The Human Life of Jesus*. He writes, "It has been suggested also that . . . [Jesus] was moved by the hopes and ambitions proper to mankind—love, marriage, parenthood—and that in equal measure he suffered disappointment or bereavement. There is no basis in fact for these theories any more than for the fancy that he traveled through the East, yet just because man's normal emotional life is near to us all, it does not seem improbable that he did fall in love and had some experience of parenthood. Here I try to choose my words carefully, not to start unworthy thoughts or to seem to invent for the Saviour any acquaintance with cheap romance. But reading his words carefully as I have done all my life, I long ago had the impression that he understood women well indeed, with the special understanding of a man who has been hurt by one of them . . . I think he early met someone who charmed but who was unworthy, someone he idealized, and by whom he was cruelly disillusioned" (ibid., 27). I admit I am rather at a loss as to which sayings of Jesus Erskine has in mind here; in any case, Erskine concludes "whether, as some people would like to believe, he ever married and had a son, is an irrelevant question" (ibid., 28), but without noting the identity of these "people."

29. Phipps, "Did Jesus or Paul Marry?"

30. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?,* 2.

There is no indication in the initial article that Phipps was aware of the matter of a married Jesus within Mormon circles, but he would soon become acquainted. In 1969, fundamentalist Ogden Kraut picked up Phipps's arguments, citing them with enthusiasm in his essay "Jesus was Married."[31] Kraut writes:

> Jesus lived through a constant barrage of attacks against his birth, character, authority, law and doctrine. Yet if He had lived a celibate life, that alone would have given his enemies their greatest advantage to dispute His claims, for it was against the traditional and scriptural law for a Rabbi to remain single. Jesus could only have avoided this pitfall by obeying the Rabbinical law of marriage.[32]

Kraut also points to apocryphal texts as evidence of a married Jesus. Either confusing or conflating Qumran and Nag Hammadi, Kraut writes: "Recent manuscripts found in Qumran and other excavations have introduced further information to substantiate Christ's marriage. In The Gospel According to Thomas there are significant references to the marriage of Jesus . . . and in another apocryphal manuscript called the Gospel of Philip."[33] Kraut then quotes the *Gospel of Thomas* logia 22 and 114 (from A. Guillaumont's 1959 translation), and the *Gospel of Philip* sections 32 and 35 (from R. McL. Wilson's 1962 translation).

Phipps, in turn, cites Orson Hyde in his 1970 monograph *Was Jesus Married?*[34] and cites both Kraut and Hyde in an article for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. Notably, Phipps now reports (seemingly with appreciation) Hyde's suggestion that the wedding at Cana was Jesus' own. Moreover, he takes up the fact that Hyde had done missionary work among Jews in Palestine as evidence that he and Hyde were ultimately driven by the same basic observation:

> That cultural association doubtless made [Hyde] more aware than most Christians that marriage in traditional Judaism—either single or plural—was prerequisite to righteous manhood. Since Jesus was addressed as "Rabbi" and was a devout Jew, he would in all probability have married.[35]

31. See discussion in Turner, *Mormon Jesus,* 240–42.

32. Kraut, *Jesus Was Married*, ch. 3.

33. Ibid., ch. 4.

34. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?,* 9–10.

35. Phipps, "Case for a Married Jesus," 44. Phipps's arguments (in both articles and both monographs on the topic) are largely anti-Catholic, ultimately arriving at a new version of the familiar nineteenth-century American Protestant position, which

Further, Phipps goes beyond the canonical New Testament material discussed in his initial article to include the *Gospel of Philip*—first raised as evidence of a married Jesus (as far as I can tell) by Ogden Kraut—as well as the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Pistis Sophia*.[36]

In an interesting turn, we find Charles A. Davis, a prominent English theologian and Roman Catholic priest, citing Phipps's *Was Jesus Married?* in a 1971 article in *The Observer*.[37] Davis, who in 1966 had left the priesthood to marry, was very much a public figure; he announced his departure—not just from the priesthood but also from the Catholic Church—quite vocally, offering an essay of explanation, which was condensed and reprinted in a wide variety of publications.[38] Davis is not entirely persuaded by Phipps's arguments, and criticizes what he sees as "[Phipps's] strong personal views" that "are so clearly present and operative from the outset."[39] Nevertheless, Davis writes as follows:

> The wife of Jesus might have died before his ministry, so that he began his public life as a widower. His wife might have remained in Nazareth, possibly hostile to her husband's mission and preaching. The Gospels report such hostility on the part of Jesus's brothers and the inhabitants of Nazareth. The recently discovered 'Gospel of Philip', a second-century work, which some scholars think can be used as an independent historical witness, gives Mary Magdalene as the wife of Jesus. Perhaps Jesus, like the prophet Hosea, had to endure an unfaithful wife and draw her back by the constancy of his own love.

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took a majority of Catholic doctrine (and other theological developments of the preceding millennia) as "Platonizing" accretions to an otherwise pure original Christianity. Thus, in this article, Phipps explains: "Sexual asceticism was found in early Greek philosophy and it became increasingly prominent in the Hellenistic age . . . In the Roman era an extreme ethic was popular among eclectic philosophers who drew on the earlier asceticism of Pythagoreanism, Platonism, and Cynic-Stoicism. Philosophers such as Cicero, Philo, Plotinus and Porphyry—all scathing in their denunciation of physical pleasure—had a powerful impact on what came to be known as the Christian ethic. This ascetic tendency among philosophers, coupled with the popular veneration for virginity in cults of the Mediterranean area, partially eclipsed the biblical belief in the sanctity of the physical" (ibid., 47). On the tracing and critique of "Platonizing" elements of early Christianity in nineteenth-century America, see Smith, "On the Origin of Origins," in *Drudgery Divine,* 1–35.

36. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?,* 135–38. Note John P. Meier's extended and thoughtful response to Phipps's work in *A Marginal Jew*, 332–45.

37. Davis, "Was Jesus Married?"

38. See, for example, Davis, "Priest Explains Why he Left Church."

39. Davis, "Was Jesus Married?"

> As for children, the marriage might well have been childless. Or the children may have remained unbelievers and never become disciples. In that case, having no part of place in the Christian Church, they would not have been mentioned in the gospels or Christian literature. All this is playing with hypotheses, but I am merely showing that the silence of the Gospels on Jesus's marriage does not prove his celibacy.[40]

In yet another twist, Davis's article was introduced as evidence for the defense at the 2006 trial in which Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh accused Dan Brown of plagiarizing their non-fiction (so-to-speak) work *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*.[41] As Goodacre has noted, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* was, by Dan Brown's admission, a primary source in the composition of *The Da Vinci Code*.[42] But what were Baigent and Leigh's sources for the notion of a married Jesus? They cite the works of two authors who argue for a married Jesus: the *Observer* article by Charles Davis and the second monograph of William Phipps—that is, one of the works Phipps wrote after his acquaintance with the arguments of Orson Hyde and Ogden Kraut.[43]

The Da Vinci Code and the Latter-day Saints

It may be helpful, now, to remember the specific evidence for Jesus' marriage to Mary Magdalene according to *The Da Vinci Code*. The big reveal takes place in chapter 58; the mystery is unveiled to the reader as Leigh Teabing explains it to the novel's heroine, Sophie. As the book's title suggests,

40. Ibid.

41. See Smith, "Rebel Theologian."

42. Note that the name of Brown's clever professor ("Leigh Teabing") is a reference to the *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* authors' last names (Teabing being an anagram of Baigent).

43. See Baigent, et al., *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, ch. 12, nn. 10 and 11. Notably, the authors first quote Géza Vermès's *Jesus the Jew* as writing, "'There is complete silence in the Gospels concerning the marital status of Jesus . . . Such a state of affairs is sufficiently unusual in ancient Jewry to prompt further enquiry.'" The full quotation from Vermès reads, "There is complete silence in the Gospels concerning the marital status of Jesus. No wife accompanies him in his public career, or, for that matter, stays at home, as the wives of his followers were expected to do. Such a state of affairs is sufficiently unusual in ancient Jewry to prompt further enquiry, for the Hebrew Bible, though it prescribes temporary sexual abstinence in certain circumstances, never orders a life of total celibacy" (*Jesus the Jew*, 99). The unusual "state of affairs" is "Jesus' apparent voluntary embrace of celibacy" (ibid., 101); what Vermès attempts to understand through enquiry is *not* (as Baigent et al. lead their reader to believe) whether or not Jesus was married, but why he made the (unusual in his context) choice to be celibate.

Leonardo da Vinci was aware of Jesus' marriage and thus painted Jesus and Mary Magdalene together (along with a host of visual clues evident to "symbologists" such as Professor Robert Langdon, the novel's hero) in his Last Supper. But, as Teabing tells Sophie, the source of this information is not Leonardo, rather "the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record."[44] The evidence he then rehearses is: 1) Jesus was Jewish, and "according to Jewish custom, celibacy was condemned, and the obligation for a Jewish father was to find a suitable wife for his son. If Jesus were not married, at least one of the Bible's gospels would have mentioned it and offered some explanation for his unnatural state of bachelorhood"; and 2) The *Gospel of Philip* and the *Gospel of Mary* indicate Mary Magdalene as Jesus' spouse.[45] Granted, there are many works of both fiction and non-fiction (the latter including both scholarship and pseudo-scholarship) that speculate on the sexuality and marital status of Jesus that have not been surveyed here.[46] Tracking down all the links and making determinations of literary or other dependency is a Herculean task—and one for another scholar, one whose field of expertise is in the twentieth century. That said, what digging I have done indicates that while Brown does not take over all the lines of argumentation found in LDS authors (e.g., Brown makes no reference to the wedding at Cana as Jesus' own), the two basic pieces of "historical" evidence cited seem to be drawn (perhaps via *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*) from William Phipps—but specifically the work he produced after entering into conversation with the work of Orson Hyde and Ogden Kraut.

We come full circle when we consider contemporary Mormon responses to *The Da Vinci Code*. The connection of the ideas presented in the novel and the film to LDS history, if not official doctrine, was not lost on the LDS leadership. Thus, ahead of the film's release at Cannes in 2006, LDS spokesman Dale Bills released the following statement: "The belief that Christ was married has never been official Church doctrine. It is neither sanctioned nor taught by the Church. While it is true that a few Church leaders in the mid-1800s expressed their opinions on the matter, it was not then, and is not now, Church doctrine."[47] On quite the other end of the spectrum of responses, we find amateur historian Vern Swanson, who, in the wake of *The Da Vinci Code*, published *Dynasty of the Holy Grail: Mor-*

44. Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, 265.

45. Ibid., 264–67.

46. In addition to the titles mentioned within *The Da Vinci Code* itself (273–74), we might note Joyce, *Jesus Scroll* (cited by Goodacre) as well as *Da Vinci Legacy* and *Daughter of God*, both by Lewis Perdue, who—like the authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*—unsuccessfully sued Dan Brown's publisher for plagiarism.

47. See "Claims of a Married Jesus."

monism's Sacred Bloodline, which argues that Joseph Smith was the direct descendant of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. According to an article about Swanson in *The Deseret News*, "while the book takes an LDS point of view and includes statements by early church leaders that Christ may have been married, it doesn't stray from a recent church statement that a married Christ is not official LDS doctrine."[48] A particularly interesting response to *The Da Vinci Code* is *What Da Vinci Didn't Know: An LDS Perspective*, a book written for a popular audience by three Brigham Young University professors: Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Andrew C. Skinner, and Thomas A. Wayment.[49] After laying out the numerous historical problems with the novel's claims, the authors conclude:

> On the issue of what the historical record tells us about the subject, we admit that the New Testament record is virtually silent on the marital status of both Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Restoration scripture provides little additional information on this subject. However, we are left with little doubt that several of the leaders of the Church in the early part of this dispensation believed and taught that Jesus was married. We do not need to explain or defend them.[50]

At the end of the day, the LDS perspective is remarkably similar to the various responses published by biblical scholars ranging from Evangelical to agnostic in response to Dan Brown's novel.[51] *What Da Vinci Didn't Know* is notable, if anything, for its more measured and decidedly *not* polemical tone.

Again, while I agree with Goodacre that *The Da Vinci Code* provides the most immediate context for the GJW, and that the news media in particular proved utterly incapable of setting the novel and film aside when reporting on the GJW, the notion of a married Jesus has a much wider history in American religiosity, specifically in both Mormon thought and anti-Mormon propaganda. This history is, as we have seen, the immediate source of the ideas found in *The Da Vinci Code*, but also the broader source of the fury and controversy: various types of American Christians have been

48. Hardy, "Book Takes On 'Da Vinci.'" Notably, this article quotes Swanson as saying, "I've never known a Mormon, with the exception of a couple, who didn't believe Christ wasn't married."

49. Holzapfel et al., *What Da Vinci Didn't Know*.

50. Ibid., 50.

51. In its treatment of the historical implausibility of theories put forward by characters in *The Da Vinci Code*, Holzapfel et al.'s book is very much in line with the scholarly/popular response cited by Goodacre: Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*; Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction*; Price, *Da Vinci Fraud*; and Witherington, *Gospel Code*.

scandalized by—and, in the case of the anti-Mormon propaganda, have attempted to scandalize others with—the notion of a married Jesus for over 150 years.

Narrowing the Focus: What the Feminist Woman Has Always Wanted—To Get Married!

There is one element of the GJW controversy that I *do* think *The DaVinci Code* can lay exclusive claim to: the idea that a married Jesus is an inherently feminist notion. This idea has clearly circulated in popular media accounts and the blogosphere (in headlines such as "Tiny Papyrus Fragment on 'Jesus' Wife' Leveraged to Push Feminist Agenda"[52]), but also lurks in scholarly discussions of GJW.[53] To be sure, self-identified feminist scholars (including, as noted by Goodacre, Karen King, Ann Graham Brock, Jane Schaberg,[54] April DeConick, and Esther de Boer) have paid significant attention to texts like the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Gospel of Philip* as evidence of the role of women (historical and metaphorical) in various strands of early Christianity. Karen

52. Bauer, "Tiny Papyrus Fragment."

53. For example, consider the following comment by Christian Askeland on his own post—in which he identifies what has widely been recognized as the crucial piece of evidence pointing towards forgery—on the *Evangelical Textual Criticism* blog: "The issue here is that a forger is playing off of hyperfeminist sensibilities, forging a 'Gospel of Jesus's Wife' and forging accompanying paperwork describing the fragment as said gospel. To me, it seems highly likely that this was even given intentionally to King, who has specialized in women in apocryphal literature, and who is at Harvard, epicenter of American biblical gender studies. I did not bring in the gender issue here, the forger did and King swallowed it whole" ("Jesus Had a Sister-in-Law"). On the one hand, Askeland clearly implies that a feminist scholar would *want* GJW to be authentic, so much so that his/her judgment might be clouded. The less obvious point, however, is Askeland's assumption that the inclusion of a wife for Jesus is somehow a logical or obvious choice for a forger attempting to deceive a feminist—as if a married Jesus were exactly what feminists were hoping for. On the broader role of sexism in the discussion of GJW, see Mroczek, "Sexism." See also Baden and Moss, "Curious Case."

54. Schaberg—in a chapter titled "Mary Magdalene as Successor to Jesus"—writes, "The threatening thought appears: that Mary Magdalene can be considered a—or the—founder of Christianity, if one wants to use such a term; that she was 'a creator of the Christian belief in the resurrection,' and has a better claim than Paul to the title 'the first great interpreter of Jesus'" (*Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 303). While Dan Brown's character Leigh Teabing associates the notion of Mary Magdalene as Jesus' wife with her role as successor and leader of the young church, for Schaberg the potential status as "successor" has nothing to do with a sexual or marital relationship with Jesus. Later in the chapter Schaberg writes: "In this book, I let lie the issue of the sexuality of Mary Magdalene, in that I let it remain ambiguous whether or not she and Jesus were lovers" (ibid., 352).

King's published discussions of GJW place the fragment in that context. But nowhere in this scholarship will you find the idea that a married Jesus, or Mary Magdalene specifically as the wife of Jesus, is feminist *per se*. For the popularization of that idea, we have to turn to Dan Brown.

And so let us return to chapter 58 of *The Da Vinci Code*, the scene where Teabing reveals the big mystery to Sophie—that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus and had a child—while Professor Langdon condescendingly smiles, nods, and mansplains.[55] Given the gendered nature of much of the controversy surrounding GJW (as noted by Schroeder and to be discussed below), I do not think it is out of place to point out that the whole chapter reads like a long-form mansplanation, narrated by an omniscient mansplainer.[56] The narrative is moved along with transitional sentences such as the following: "Sophie was certain she had missed something"; "Sophie turned to Langdon for help" [saying] 'I'm lost.' Langdon smiled"; "Uncertain, Sophie made her way closer . . ."; "Sophie was mesmerized"; "Sophie was trying to keep up"; "Sophie was speechless"; "Sophie was starting to feel overwhelmed"; "Sophie found herself again glancing at Langdon, who again nodded"; and "Sophie stood transfixed."[57] Teabing and Langdon are so knowledgeable. Sophie is very impressed.

Leaving aside the absurdly sexist construction of the scene, this is the moment where Teabing reveals to Sophie that Jesus had intended that his wife, not Peter, should inherit leadership of the Christian church after his death. Teabing concludes, "Jesus was the original feminist."[58] Granted, in the novel it is not just that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene that makes him a feminist; it is that he wants her to lead the young church. But that point is, I think, pretty well elided in the popular response to the novel and film, such that in what Goodacre calls the "post-DaVinci Code world" a

55. "Mansplain," a portmanteau of "man" and "explain," entered our lexicon (quite literally as one of Oxford's "words of the year") only recently. Rebecca Solnit is largely credited with the first long-form articulation of the concept in her essay "Men Explain Things to Me," though she never uses the term itself. In short, "mansplaining" is when a man explains something to a woman, utterly confident that he knows what he is talking about, and equally confident that she requires and will benefit from his explanation. See, for example, Rothman, "Cultural History of Mansplaining."

56. By "omniscient mansplainer" I mean to indicate that this section of the narrative proceeds according to what I take to be a mansplainer's point of view—that is, the men (Teabing and Langdon) are wise and knowing experts who benevolently condescend to explain things to the wide-eyed woman (Sophie), who is eager to understand but desperately needs their help.

57. Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, 261–70 and *passim*.

58. Ibid., 268.

married Jesus—bizarrely—now equals feminism, and the "feminist agenda" must include a wife for Jesus.

This is perhaps a good moment to point to one aspect of Phipps's work not discussed above—that is, the "sex-positive" (to use a more contemporary term) nature of his arguments for a married Jesus. For Phipps, the notion of a celibate Jesus has, at a minimum, contributed to negative views of sexuality within traditional Christianity, above all Roman Catholicism. To the extent that such negative views of sexuality have had particularly negative effects for women, Phipps's sex-positive, married Jesus might be seen (and I suspect Phipps did see it) as a feminist notion.[59]

This is certainly the tack taken by John Shelby Spong (the Episcopal Bishop of Newark until his retirement in 2000), who takes up the question of Jesus' marital status in his book *Born of a Woman*. In a chapter titled "Suppose Jesus were Married," Spong writes, "the negativity that surrounds the idea that Jesus might have been married . . . reflects the residue of that deep Christian negativity toward women that still infects the church."[60] And further:

> Why is there still a continuing sense, ranging from disease to revulsion, that arises in us when we hear the suggestion that Jesus might have been married? I suggest that far more than any of us realize we are subconsciously victimized by the historic negativity toward women that has been a major gift of the Christian church to the world. So pervasive is this negativity that unconsciously we still regard holy matrimony to be less than the ideal, and we still operate out of an understanding of women that defines them as the source of sin, the polluter of otherwise moral men. For only in the service of this attitude would we greet with fear and negativity the suggestion that Jesus was married.[61]

Spong does not refer to Mormon sources, nor does Phipps (or Davis, Hyde or Kraut) appear in his bibliography. Instead he takes as his jumping-off point *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Godspell*, and *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which he

59. Phipps's "sex positivity" is also a bit homophobic and sexist in his clear objections to an "effeminate" Jesus; he writes that "although some of the artistic and cultic expressions of Christianity do suggest that Jesus was effeminate, there is no biblical basis for this assumption" (*Was Jesus Married?*, 8) and ultimately describes Jesus as a "red-blooded male" (ibid., 190). In this respect, too, Phipps represents a bit of a throwback to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century debates on Jesus, specifically a rejection of "effeminate" images. For a discussion of the masculinization of Jesus in this era, see Prothero, *American Jesus*, 87–94.

60. Spong, *Born of a Woman*, 188.

61. Ibid., 197.

describes as the most recent instances of a longstanding "undercurrent that linked Jesus with Mary Magdalene in a romantic way."[62] Nevertheless, the arguments he presents (including, for example, his interpretation of Cana as Jesus' own wedding) closely parallel arguments first presented by Hyde and Phipps.

Whether or not one thinks of "sex positivity" as a part of contemporary feminism, I hasten to point out that the early Christian texts in which women play the most prominent roles (i.e., the *Acts of John*, *Acts of Andrew*, *Acts of Paul*, and *Acts of Thomas*) are decidedly not sex-positive. And, over the past few millennia, marriage has not exactly been the clear path to self-actualization for most women.[63] Here, I would give Karen King the last word: "Why do we feel the need to re-sexualize Mary? We've gotten rid of the myth of the prostitute. Now there's this move to see her as wife and mother. Why isn't it adequate to see her as disciple and perhaps apostle?"[64]

RESPONSE TO JAMES MCGRATH

Turning now to James McGrath's paper, I begin by stating how helpful I found his timeline of online events to be, especially as someone who "checked in" on the blogs during that week in 2012, but was not exactly glued to the screen. I think that McGrath is dead-on in his assessment of the great benefits and potential of online scholarship and the fact that other fields in the humanities are already doing a much better job of taking advantage of those benefits; I also agree entirely on his suggestions for what would make online scholarship much, much better: more participation, more caution, and more transparency and accessibility. Exactly.

I would, however, push back on several other points. First is his characterization of several online comments regarding gender and sexuality as a reflection of the "casual tone of most blogs" (p. 335 above). I think he is right, to the extent that expressions of misogyny and homophobia are indeed usually quite casual. I would point out, further, that the very casualness with which misogyny and homophobia are expressed in our field is pretty indicative of the scale of our problem. While he did not comment explicitly, I am sure that McGrath is well aware that in his list of early bloggers on GJW, one of those bloggers is not like the others: April DeConick

62. Ibid., 187.

63. This statement hardly requires a footnote, but I will take the opportunity to cite my own mother, Joan Leland Spittler, who has explained her decision to enter a convent in 1958 with: "I didn't want to get married. I wanted to go to graduate school."

64. Karen King as quoted by Darman, "Inconvenient Woman."

is the only female on the list of 27. That makes the ratio of male to female contributors to the *Evangelical Textual Criticism* blog, noted by Schroeder as 17 to 1, look pretty good. It is pretty clear to me that when we call for "more participation" in online scholarship, the one group that we probably *do not need more of* is (white)[65] men. And so if we truly are interested in greater participation, the question really has to be: why are Bible bloggers mostly just men?

"Trolls. Trepidation. Time."

This leads me to the only point where I really disagree with McGrath—or agree, but not in the sense that McGrath intends his comments. He writes:

> The fact that hobbies and humor may appear alongside reflections on ongoing research and commentary on breaking news about archaeological finds has, for some of us, created a genuine sense of getting to know one another as people via the internet. Given the penchant for rancor and insult in online venues, the potential benefit of something that leads us to recognize one another—and thus hopefully treat one another—as real human beings offsets, in my mind, the potential disadvantages of the mixing of frivolity and scholarship on blogs and other social media. (pp. 338–39 above)

To the extent that I learn from blogs that my colleagues are really into sci-fi or are fans of Swedish pop music, I agree. But just as frequently what I learn from blogs is that some of my colleagues are bigots. On several of the more popular Bible blogs, the "humor" that is mixed in is sometimes straight-up misogyny, homophobia, and racism. And because of the "community" aspect in the Bible blogging world (the way in which Bible bloggers of various stripes link to each others' blogs and are otherwise connected by social media) the whole pool—speaking only for myself here—feels tainted by what a minority of Bible bloggers are putting out there. In other words, the very thing that makes the Bible blogosphere an attractive and comfortable space for McGrath makes it less hospitable for women.

65. While I am primarily addressing the issue of gender inclusiveness here, I want to underscore our field's desperate lack of racial and ethnic diversity. According to the latest Society of Biblical Literature statistics, only 3.4 percent of the members of our primary professional organization are African Americans, 2.3 percent are Asian Americans, and 1.7 percent are Latina/o. Moreover, as Schroeder has noted, issues of online harassment (discussed below) are substantially amplified for women of color.

And make no mistake: the Internet is an inhospitable place for women. The clearest piece of evidence for this is undoubtedly the online rape threat phenomenon—something with which all women with any online presence are familiar. Readers of this essay may or may not be familiar with "Gamergate,"[66] a term that refers, in part, to a harassment campaign against Anita Sarkeesian, a cultural critic who has analyzed misogynistic tropes in video games—but there are many examples much closer to our home in the academy. In her essay, Caroline Schroeder points us toward the experiences of Mary Beard, who maintains a lively Twitter account and whose blog, A Don's Life, is hosted by the *Times Literary Supplement*.[67] In a 2014 lecture at the British Museum (titled "Oh Do Shut Up Dear!"), she described some of the venom with which her blogging and tweeting is met: "It doesn't much matter what line of argument you take as a woman. If you venture into traditional male territory, the abuse comes anyway. It's not what you say that prompts it—it's the fact that you are saying it . . . 'Shut up you bitch' is a fairly common refrain . . . [along with a] predictable menu of rape, bombing, murder, and so forth."[68] In the same lecture, Beard read the following tweet threat: "I'm going to cut off your head and rape it."

This sort of harassment is not limited to scholars who regularly appear on television, as Mary Beard does. In a blog post titled "Trolls at My Door," Liv Ingeborg Lied, a scholar who blogs on Old Testament pseudepigrapha and its use in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, categorizes the "responses" she receives via social media:

> 1. Responses that in various ways call for my attention, but not as a scholar. Some respondents ask, quite discretely, if they can be in touch with me privately or have my phone number. Others share pictures of themselves dressed in army uniforms. Curiously, I receive these army uniform messages again and again, each time from a different respondent.
> 2. At times I receive messages of a far more aggressive kind. These are the messages I would categorize as trolling, defined elsewhere as "recreational abuse." Out of concern for

66. For those unfamiliar with Gamergate, see Dewey, "Only Guide to Gamergate."

67. http://timesonline.typepad.com/dons_life/.

68. Quoted from Mead, "Troll Slayer." While Beard has famously (and publicly) engaged many of her online trolls, and this "troll taming" has been widely praised (for example, Ellis-Petersen, "Mary Beard"), others have noted that Beard's engagement approach hardly works for everyone. In a *Guardian* opinion piece, Hadley Freeman ("'How to Tame Your Troll'") contrasts the coverage of Beard's "troll taming" with the threats directed at Anita Sarkeesian, which were so violent and credible that she was forced to leave her home.

> the fainthearted I will not summarize them here, but simply share one short quote to illustrate their general contents and style. That first troll knocking at my door back in 2013 claimed, among other things, that I "obviously needed to be ****** by a real man." No need to go into detail—you get the picture.[69]

I cannot help emphasizing it: there is a Venn diagram to be drawn, with one circle representing "people who visit blogs on Old Testament pseudepigrapha and its late antique reception" and another circle representing "people who make online rape threats," and *those circles overlap*.

Of course, it is not just rape threats that discourage women from blogging. Blogger and historian of American religious history Kelly Baker describes her experiences in a blog post titled "The Men Who Email Me," writing:

> The men who email me tell me that I'm wrong. I've made the wrong argument. I've missed the essential issue or the salient details. I've made errors and mistakes. I didn't use data. I used too much data. They assert that gender is not as big of an issue as I make it out to be or that I don't realize how hard it is to be a man. They assert that I can never be anything but wrong. The men who email me claim that I don't know anything about higher education, religious studies, labor, gender, or any other topic I've ever written an essay about. They ignore my credentials in favor of assuming my incompetency . . . The men who email me sometimes start with a compliment about how much they "enjoyed" my essay. They then proceed to send me their own writing on the subject and tell me to "please include it" next time because they are experts on the topic. They are *the* experts. How did I not know that? They are just remedying the situation and improving my knowledge.[70]

And this sort of response, too, has a clear chilling effect. Baker describes her choice *not* to write an essay for online publication—an essay that had already been pitched to editors and accepted—as follows:

> What I couldn't face was a dumpster fire in my inbox. I weighed the impact of the essay's possible reception against my mental well-being. I killed an essay because I knew I wouldn't be able to manage the nasty responses. Some weeks, I can ignore what

69. Lied, "Trolls at My Door."

70. Baker, "Men Who Email Me."

> the men who email me say. Last week was not one of those. My essay died a quiet death, and my inbox remained uneventful.[71]

I have no doubt that male bloggers, too, experience "dumpster fires" in their e-mail inboxes. But there is good research to back up the mountain of anecdotal evidence suggesting that women face far more serious and far more disturbing online abuse than men do.[72]

My own conversations with other women who *should* be blogging (that is, women who are reading blogs and are otherwise engaged in social media) but are not, indicates that the decision not to blog is based, unsurprisingly, on a combination of factors. One friend summarized her reasoning with: "Trolls. Trepidation. Time."—and I hear variations on this sentiment echoed by almost every female scholar I speak with about blogging. We do not want to deal with trolls; we are hesitant to subject our ideas to the scrutiny of the "men who email us"; and, faced with those disincentives, who wants to spend the time?—especially on a product that will not "count" for tenure and promotion review.

This last factor, time, is yet another area in which gender plays a role. There is now substantial data indicating that women do a disproportionate amount of service work within American universities.[73] While this phenomenon is no doubt driven by what I would characterize as a very positive impulse—that is, the desire to create gender parity in the day-to-day administration and governance of the university—it creates a burden on women faculty that, ironically, has detrimental effects on our careers (most notably slowing our progress to promotion). Women are frequently counseled to "just say no" to service requests, but as Karen Pyke has shown, the overall deficit of women in higher education combined with the desire to increase gender diversity on committees results in women receiving far more and far more persistent requests for service, and these requests generally come earlier in women's careers. Alongside the data, Pyke illustrates the phenomenon with her own experience on the University of California Riverside Academic Senate's Committee on Committees. She writes:

> It was customary practice for COC members to pressure women faculty who initially rejected a service request to reconsider, underscoring the committee's need for a woman. I do not recall a time when the committee issued a repeated request to a man

71. Ibid.

72. See, for example, the 2014 Pew study (cited by Schroeder) which revealed that, while men are more likely to experience online harassment, women were more likely to experience serious, damaging abuse (Duggan, "Online Harassment").

73. See, for example, Pyke, "Faculty Gender Inequity."

> faculty member who said no, because men were not in short supply. Hence, men faculty and administrators are better able to control their service labor by saying no than can women faculty, who must say no more often, and repeatedly, while also ignoring any obligation they feel to represent women on campus.[74]

I suspect many of my women colleagues will recognize their own experiences here; I certainly do. The phenomenon seems to be at play in the Society of Biblical Literature, where 23.9% of members, but 41.3% of Annual Meeting program chairs, are women.[75]

To reiterate, I view efforts towards gender diversity in academic leadership roles as a very positive movement; I am as desperate to avoid the "all male panel" or "all male committee" as the rest of you, and have on many occasions pressured women colleagues to participate. I am part of the problem! So are you. That is the nature of institutional and structural barriers. So, yes, I agree with McGrath that blogging is generally a good thing that would benefit from more and broader participation. I worry, however, that the obstacles to that broader participation are rather more intractable than McGrath acknowledges.

RESPONSE TO CAROLINE SCHROEDER

I very much like the analysis of the GJW controversy as a group of multilayered and intersecting markers of authenticity; this elegant description of the real significance of GJW within our field is, to my mind, dead on. In what follows I will respond to parts one and two of her paper in reverse order.

Schroeder and McGrath seem to be on the same page in regarding digital and traditional scholarship as doing, actually, pretty similar work. McGrath has pointed to speed as a primary difference; in part one of her essay, Schroeder raises the element of professional status. That Bible bloggers and other social-media participants are *not*, by and large, authenticated by their status as established scholars at elite universities but through things like "level of engagement," "shared interests" and "shared viewpoints" seems to me to be an important point. This is clearly a very positive aspect of digital scholarship: I hope we are all aware that positions at elite universities are attained by equal measures (at best!) of luck and merit, and generally alongside a heaping portion of privilege. And, as someone once said, "to those who have, more will be given." The academic job market and the American

74. Ibid., 88.

75. I am very grateful to Charles Haws, Society of Biblical Literature Director of Programs, for assembling this data for me.

university system's increased reliance on contingent faculty have ensured that many top-notch researchers are either doing 4–4 loads at teaching colleges, or have accepted the "independent scholar" designation and are making a living by various other means—which may well leave more time for research than a 4–4 load. Moreover—and this is by no means to disparage Roger Bagnall, AnneMarie Luijendijk, or their respective institutions—the GJW episode has offered us clear evidence that the blogging community, made up largely of scholars from less prestigious institutions, is very much capable of doing *more persuasive work* than scholars from our most elite universities.

But, as Schroeder has indicated, the gender issue cuts through all of this at an odd angle. That women academics in Biblical Studies face structural discrimination is obvious; the raw numbers are clear evidence of that. In addition to Haws's valuable research on the "leaky pipeline" of women entering the field,[76] I would note that female membership in the Society of Biblical Literature (currently at 23.9%, as noted above) has made virtually no gains over the last decade.[77] I will admit that I have generally associated the continued existence of gender imbalance in our field—such that we lag behind sister fields like Classics—with the fact that conservative Christianities are such prominent feeders to Biblical Studies programs. Much of the data Schroeder cites (e.g., Muehlberger's Review of Biblical Literature Parity project, and data concerning journals like *JECS*) is good evidence that there are more—and more complicated—factors at play. I would point out, though, that one place where women in our field *have* reached some degree of parity is precisely at those elite research universities (e.g., Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Karen King, and Laura Nasrallah at Harvard; Adela Yarbro Collins at Yale; Elizabeth Clark at Duke; Margaret Mitchell at Chicago, etc.). In other words, there is a disturbing disconnect whereby digital scholarship has indeed fostered a degree of democratization and the breakdown of meaningless markers of academic prestige, but has not had similar success in breaking down gendered barriers—and, in fact, may well be pushing us in the opposite direction.

In response to part 1 of Schroeder's essay, I want to amplify her comments on the ethical dimensions of transparency as regards the provenance and all available information about the ancient materials with which we work. And, of course, I feel compelled to confess how easy it is to ignore

76. Charles Haws's study of the "leaky pipeline," cited by Schroeder, is particularly disturbing in its conclusion that the leak has gotten worse, not better, over the past fifteen years—a time period that, to my dismay, lines up precisely with my own participation as graduate student and junior professor in the field.

77. See membership data here: https://www.sbl-site.org/SBLDashboard.aspx/.

such concerns. When I saw the announcement that the University of Virginia (my own employer) had acquired its first papyrus, I eagerly hurried off to special collections, thinking only of transcribing the text (maybe it was actually more interesting than it sounded!) and of its possible use in training graduate students. I would like to say that I "assumed" the acquisitions librarians had done due diligence in establishing the papyrus's provenance, but the truth is that whether or not due diligence had been done never even crossed my mind—not until, that is, I saw Schroeder and Brice Jones raising the question on social media.

I also want to underscore the point that throughout this controversy, as Schroeder puts it, "the 'fuzzy' humanities methods have proven sharper than 'hard science'" (p. 313 above). To the degree that there is a positive message to be derived from the GJW episode, I think that is it: we, scholars of early Christianity—well trained in ancient languages, immersed in the literature and material culture of the time and place we study, working transparently and collaboratively, and submitting our work to peer review, whether traditional or crowd-sourced online—are simply better at this than scientists with carbon dating tests. And I suspect that will continue to be the case, probably for a very long time.

CONCLUSION

When asked to serve as respondent in a session on GJW, I did not expect sexism and other forms of discrimination to be the thread that connected the three essays (or, rather, *my response to* the three essays: only Schroeder's essay deals with these issues explicitly). But as so many, beginning with Karen King, have pointed out: GJW tells us nothing about the historical Jesus. And as has become increasingly clear: GJW tells us nothing about early Christianity. GJW does, however, tell us something about ourselves—about both our moment in religious history and our moment as an academic field. I generally try to avoid the overused phrase "a perfect storm," but given the role that best-selling books and mediocre movies have played in the controversy surrounding our tiny papyrus fragment, it might just be appropriate here: GJW has stirred up a perfect storm in Biblical Studies, pulling in, whipping up, spinning around, and spitting out all that is good, bad, and ugly about us.

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