

INVENTING JESUS' WIFE

Recently a story broke that Harvard professor Karen King possessed a piece of papyrus that stated that Jesus once remarked, "My wife."

From the very beginning there was an odor of inauthenticity to this claim. The evidence that Jesus had a wife could be ascertained by using a magnifying glass to read a 3.8 x 7.6 centimeter inscription made on a scrap of papyrus. There was no information about when the scrap was discovered. There was no information about where it was discovered. There was no information about how it was discovered. There was no information about the context in which the words were written. And there was no information about the owner.

What we did know is that two of the three scholars who first examined the scrap questioned its authenticity; they were unsure whether it was real or a fraud. The third scholar went right to the heart of the matter questioning its grammar, translation and interpretation. There wasn't much left after that.

The reigning dogma in the academy is that words can have multiple meanings. For King, however, the words, "My wife," are so clear that they "can mean nothing else." Yet according to some biblical scholars, "sister-wives," as they are called, were not uncommon in the early centuries: these were women who performed domestic duties but did not have sexual relations. And since we know nothing of the context in which the words were allegedly said, King's confidence was unwarranted.

This reminded us of the "Jesus Tomb" hoax from a few years back. That is why we left it to the experts—including those at the Vatican—to pick apart King's claim, and pick it apart they did.

King has been known for her fertile imagination. For example,

she previously claimed that Mary Magdalene was one of the apostles. Even better, in the book in which she made this extraordinary claim, she “rejects his [Jesus’] suffering and death as the path to eternal life.”

In the 1990s, King sent her mentor a book she wrote on feminine images in the gospels. She later learned that he “had utterly no interest” in it and quickly pawned it off on his wife, unread.

So after first inventing an apostle for Jesus—who the *divinity* professor says is not the Savior—King invented a wife for him. Her generosity, if not her scholarship, is beyond dispute.