

SHORT STUDY

‘... thereafter he shut the door’
Matthew 25.10c in the ‘Schøyen Codex’
– A Short Note

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Keywords: Matthew 25.10; Coptic; Schøyen Codex

In an earlier issue of this periodical attention was paid to the problem of retranslating a ‘versional’ text into a supposed Greek ‘original’.¹ The reason for that article was the ‘reconstruction’ of a quite extraordinary Greek text as the hypothetical source of an early Middle-Egyptian Coptic text of the Gospel of Matthew. This reconstruction was presented in the splendid edition of the Gospel of Matthew in Middle-Egyptian Coptic that was published by the late Professor Hans-Martin Schenke.² The deviations of this ‘retranslation’ led Schenke to his daring thesis that the Coptic text was based on a Greek text that was completely different from our present Greek Matthew, being an independent translation of the Hebrew or Aramaic Gospel of Matthew mentioned by Papias. In this short note the reader will find another example of the problematic character of such retranslations.

1. Introduction

Professor Schenke has greatly contributed to our knowledge of the text of Matthew’s Gospel in Middle-Egyptian Coptic. In 1981 he had already published a complete text of Matthew in this dialect (the *Scheide* Codex).³ This edition was

1 T. Baarda, ‘The Reading “Who wished to enter” in Coptic Tradition, Matt 23.13, Luke 11.52, and “Thomas” 39’, *NTS* 52 (2006) 583–91.

2 H.-M. Schenke, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium im mittelägyptischen Dialekt des Koptischen (Codex Schøyen)* (Oslo: Hermes Publishing, 2001).

3 H.-M. Schenke, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium im Mittelägyptischen Dialekt des Koptischen (Codex Scheide)* (TU 127; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981).

published without a translation, which meant that it was almost neglected by textual critics of the NT.⁴ But the more recent publication, ‘the Schøyen Codex’, could not be neglected because of the far-fetching conclusions that Schenke had drawn from the Coptic text.⁵

Both these Middle-Egyptian Coptic texts bring us back respectively to the early and late fourth century. These early dates would be of great importance for textual criticism of the NT Greek text of that period, if Schenke had not claimed that, differently from the *Scheide* text, the *Schøyen* text was *not* a translation of a Greek text of Matthew such as we have it in our NT today, but one of the other early attempts to translate the Aramaic or Hebrew pre-Greek text into Greek (compare Papias!). Although this new and sometimes enigmatic Coptic text is in many ways a real challenge for both Coptisants and NT textual critics, my overall impression was and is that this hypothesis was wrong and that the Schøyen text belonged to the early textual transmission of the so-called ‘canonical’ Gospel of Matthew. In a review and in an accompanying article I have stressed the fact that a *final* judgment about Schenke’s hypothesis is only possible after a full-scale examination of the whole manuscript. This short note on a minor variant reading is just another attempt to show that there may be a reasonable doubt about the probability of Schenke’s hypothesis.⁶

2. Two Different Texts?

In Matt 25.10c, the text of the canonical Matthew reads καὶ ἐκλείσθη ἡ θύρα, ‘and the door was shut’. The Schøyen codex, however, reads here ΜΕΝΗΝΩΩΣ ρΑΨΥΤΕΛ ΕΠΡΑ, ‘thereafter he shut the door’.⁷ This is a reading quite different from the ordinary text, *first* in that it replaces the passive voice by an active voice, and *second* in that it substitutes the conjunction ‘and’ by another construction. Schenke’s reconstruction of text of the Greek Vorlage (μετὰ τοῦτο ἔκλεισεν τὴν θύραν) makes this very clear. Could this assumed difference be an indication that the Schøyen text was indeed a witness to an independent Greek version of the hypothetical Aramaic or Hebrew Matthew? Before this question can be answered

4 However, in the 27th edition of Nestle–Aland this text was already adduced as ‘mae’ (in GNT⁴: cop^{meg}).

5 Cf. Baarda, ‘Review of H.-M. Schenke, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium im mittelägyptischen Dialekt des Koptischen (Codex Schøyen)* (Oslo, Hermes Publishing, 2001)’, *NT* 46 (2004) 302–6. The accompanying article (‘Mt. 17.1–9 in “Codex Schøyen”’), *ibidem*, 265–87.

6 This short note was part of a broader discussion of ‘The Parable of the Ten Virgins in the Schøyen Codex’ (August 3, 2005) that I gave in the Seminar of Textual Criticism in the meeting of the SNTS in Halle (Saale).

7 Schenke’s translation: ‘Danach verschloss er die Tür’.

there is a preliminary question, namely whether Schenke's reconstruction is correct.

3. Where Do We Start?

Schenke introduces his reconstruction of the Greek Vorlage by remarking that his attempt to reconstruct the supposed Greek text was based on a specific premise: the peculiar '*Andersartigkeit*' of the Coptic text of Matthew in Codex Schøyen was caused by the fact this Greek text was different from the 'canonical' Greek Matthew and that the Coptic text was not a free translation or an arbitrary version of our Greek Matthew.⁸ Despite the rather peculiar text-form of the Schøyen codex I would prefer to start from another premise, namely that this Gospel – which bears the name 'Gospel according to Matthew' (ΠΕΤΑΡΤΕΛΙΟΝ ΜΑΤΘΑΙΑ) – must be taken for a translation of the 'canonical' Greek Matthew, *until* the proof of the contrary is provided. This means that before taking refuge in Schenke's hypothesis one should first seek a rational explanation of assumed variant readings within the natural process of translation and transmission of the text.

4. How to Render ἐκλείσθη ἡ θύρα?

Since the passive voice does not exist in Coptic, translators had to replace it by other constructions of which the 3rd plural active is the most common one. If the translator had followed this pattern we might have expected here ραϣϣτεϣ εϣρα, 'they shut the door'.¹⁰ The question is, then: Why did the translator of the Schøyen text not follow this general pattern here if he had before him the 'canonical' Greek text? Or was his model text different from our Greek text and did it actually have the active voice? I dare to doubt that latter possibility.

First of all one has to consider the possibility that the translator was influenced by the close parallel of Matt 25.10–12 which is found in Luke 13.25–28,¹¹ where the owner of the house shut the door (ἀκοκλείσθη τὴν θύραν). In view of the several occasions in which a possible influence of parallel passages¹² is found one cannot wholly exclude that also this parallel was in the mind of the translator.

8 Schenke, *Codex Schøyen*, 279.

9 Schenke, *Codex Schøyen*, 392 (= p. 92v., lines 23–25).

10 This is the reading of the Scheide text (Schenke, *Scheide Codex*, 114); cf. Sahidic ραϣϣταϣ ἄππο and Bohairic ραϣϣθαϣ ἄππο.

11 The parallel is close in that it has also the cry, 'Lord, open to us', and the reaction, 'I do not know . . .' (v. 25).

12 Cf. Baarda, 'Mt 17.1–9 in "Codex Schøyen"', 271, 273, 274.

However, if this idea would seem too far-fetched, another – and hopefully more probable – explanation may be considered. Being at the point of rendering ἐκλείσθη with ραϣϣτεμ, ‘they shut’, the translator may have asked himself who actually shut the door. Was it not the bridegroom himself, for the foolish virgins asked him to open up for them. Now, if the bridegroom himself could open the door, he may also have shut it himself. And thus he rendered the passive here with the 3rd person singular of the active voice.

5. The Coptic Translation of Luke 11.7

If one wonders whether a translator would reason in such a way, reference may be made here to a similar case. It is found in the similitude of ‘the importunate friend at midnight’ in Luke 11.7, where the main figure says ἤδη ἡ θύρα κέκλεισται, ‘the door is already shut’. The normal circumlocution would have been ραϣϣταμ, ‘they have shut’ in Sahidic, but the Sahidic version reads here διοϣω εϣϣταμ ἄπαρο, ‘I have already shut my door’.¹³ The same is true for the Bohairic: διοϣω γαρ διμαϣϣθαμ ἄπαρο, ‘For I have already shut my door’.¹⁴ The translators would normally have rendered κέκλεισται with ‘they shut’, but it is obvious that the translators asked themselves, ‘the door is shut, but who shut it?’. It is apparently a translator’s freedom that we encounter in these Coptic translations. There is no reason to assume that they consulted a Greek manuscript which read ‘I have shut’, for the whole Greek tradition has the passive form,¹⁵ and in this case one cannot take one’s refuge in the hypothesis of an independent Greek translation of a Semitic text of Luke as Schøjen does in the case of the Schøjen codex of Matthew’s text. In view of this observation there seems no reason to assume that the translator of the Schøjen text had before him a text that differed from the ‘canonical’ Greek Matthew.

13 G. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect otherwise called Sahidic and Thebaic*. Vol. 2. *The Gospel of S. Luke* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911) 214 (tr. 215). Horner mentions that two witnesses add γάρ, an addition also found in the text published by H. Quecke, *Das Lukasevangelium Saïdisch*, Text der Handschrift PPalau Rib. Inv.- Nr. 181 mit den varianten der Handschrift M 569 (Barcelona: Papyrologica Castroctaviana, 1977) 181.

14 G. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect otherwise called Memphitic and Bohairic*. Vol. 2. *The Gospels of S. Luke and S. John* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1898) 156 (tr. 157). In two witnesses, ππρο, ‘the door’, is found.

15 The following variant readings are listed in the major edition of ‘The New Testament in Greek’ III, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, Edited by the American and British Committees of the International Greek New Testament Project (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) 246: (1) ἡ θύρα ἤδη in 118 205 209 1194; (2) add. γάρ F Θ 13 69 124 346 543 788 826 983 1604 (vide notes 12–13); (3) ἡ θύρα μου in Pap⁷⁵ 1012 Lect. 10, 1056, 1642. There is no textual apparatus that mentions the reading ‘I have shut’ of Sah-Boh, apparently because all editors assumed that it was a free rendering of the Greek text.

6. Parallels in Syriac Exegetical Tradition

In the Syriac tradition the Greek text is followed: ܠܥܕܝܐ ܡܠ ܡܫܘܒܝܢܐ (in Sy^s) or ܠܥܕܝܐ ܡܫܘܒܝܢܐ (Sy^{p,h}), i.e. ‘the door is shut’. Either of these texts was apparently the reading in the Syriac Diatessaron from which the Arabic Diatessaron was derived: ܐܘ ܡܫܘܒܝܢܐ ܡܠ ܡܫܘܒܝܢܐ, ‘and was-shut the-door’.¹⁶ Although the reading ‘was shut’ was admittedly the one and only Syriac reading, it is interesting to see that in references to our verse some Syriac authors use the active form. For example, in Isho’dad’s commentary on the verse¹⁷ we read the following words: ‘If he did not know them, how come that *he shut* the door (ܡܫܘܒܝܢܐ ܠܥܕܝܐ) before them’. In a sermon ascribed to Ephraem,¹⁸ we read ‘Woe to me, when there the bridegroom denies me (saying) that he does not know me, *and shuts his door* (ܡܫܘܒܝܢܐ ܡܠ ܡܫܘܒܝܢܐ) before me’. It is obvious that even if a passive verb is used in the versions, the readers could think that the bridegroom shut the door.

7. An Ethiopic Parallel

While analysing all translations of Matt 25.1–13 in early versions I actually found a parallel of the Schøyen reading in a late Ethiopic manuscript which Zuurmond listed in his apparatus (Ms. 39; fifteenth or sixteenth century) as a text with a peculiar form that did not belong to any of the main textual types which can be discerned in Ethiopic transmission.¹⁹ Whereas all other manuscripts read a passive form (ወተገጸው ጥገት in the text-types A-B-D-E, or ወተገጸው ጥገት in text type C),²⁰ Ms. 39 reads the active voice: ወገጸው ጥገት ‘and he shut the door’.²¹ Although there may have been some influence of the Coptic versions in Ethiopic Gospel traditions,²² it seems to me very unlikely that a text like the one preserved in the Schøyen codex would have served as model for this Ethiopic variant reading. A more likely explanation might be that the editor of the text preserved in Ms. 39

16 A.-S. Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1935) 410 (ch. XLIII.18). It is to be noted that vowels and diacritical points are missing in Ms. A (as is clear from the photograph of the manuscript).

17 M. D. Gibson, *The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1911) 166: line 2

18 E. Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones I* (CSCO 305 [Syr. 130]; Louvain: CSCO, 1976) 74 [*Sermo* v.368–371].

19 R. Zuurmond, *Novum Testamentum Aethiopicum*. Part 3. *The Gospel of Matthew* (Aethiopistische Forschungen 55; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001) 252 (A-Text apparatus); for Ms. 39, see pp. 1, 5; cf. R. Zuurmond, *Novum Testamentum Aethiopicum*. Part 1. *The Synoptic Gospel: General Introduction* (Aethiopistische Forschungen 27; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989) 79.

20 Resp. wa-ta‘aşwa ḥoḥət and wa-ta ‘aşwa ḥoḥət.

21 I.e. wa-‘aşwa ḥoḥətä.

22 Cf. the cautious opinion of Zuurmond, *Novum Testamentum Aethiopicum*, Part 1, 112f. (§ 12F).

misinterpreted the expression in an Arabic translation that he used as tool for his revision. When the words καὶ ἐκλείσθη ἡ θύρα are translated into Arabic one would expect add وَأُغْلِقَ الْبَابَ.²³ However, if the words are not or not fully vocalized in a manuscript one might read these words as add وَأُغْلِقَ الْبَابَ, ‘and he shut the door’.²⁴ It seems quite probable that this was the cause of the deviant Ethiopic reading.

8. ‘Danach . . .’

There is another variant reading in v. 10c that asks for explanation. Instead of a mere καί the Coptic text reads ΜΕΝΝΩΩ, ‘after it, thereafter’. Schenke (tr. ‘Danach’) reconstructs as the Greek *Vorlage* text: μετὰ τοῦτο. Of course, as so often in re-translations, this is a random choice. One might equally conjecture μετὰ ταυτο,²⁵ ἔπειτα,²⁶ or ὕστερον.²⁷ If one must assume that there was a specific Greek expression behind the Coptic reading ΜΕΝΝΩΩ, one might perhaps consider ὕστερον as a possibility,²⁸ but in my view there is no reason to assume that a Greek equivalent of ΜΕΝΝΩΩ was present in the underlying Greek text.

In the next verse, 11a, ὕστερον is most probably rendered with ϚΙ[ϚΔΗ],²⁹ lit. ‘in the end, finally [Schenke: *zuletzt*]’.³⁰ The translator may have felt that before ϚΙϚΔΗ, ‘finally’, another time indication was necessary *after* the entering of the five wise virgins with the bridegroom (it was only after that entering that the bridegroom shut the door),³¹ and *before*, finally, approached the foolish virgins.

23 This (wa-’uǧliqa al-bābu) is the reading in edited manuscripts, e.g. P. de Lagarde, *Die vier Evangelien Arabisch* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1864) 34; B. Levin, *Die Griechisch-Arabische Evangelien-Übersetzung* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1838) 46 (Arab.). The same reading in B. Walton, *Biblia Polyglotta*, vol. 5 (London: Thomas Roycroft, 1657) 129.

24 I.e. wa-’aǧlaqa al-bāba.

25 On the basis of M. Wilmet’s *Concordance du Nouveau Testament*. Vol. 2. *Les mots autochtones*, 2. o-s (CSCO 183, Subs. 13; Louvain: CSCO, 1957) 751–5, we must assume that this wording and that of Schenke’s reconstruction are very rare.

26 Wilmet notes 13 times for this word.

27 Wilmet notes 13 times for this word.

28 This word is the first word in the next verse. In that case one has to assume that the translator rendered it twice, first with v. 10c, second with v. 11a.

29 As so often Schenke follows here the Scheide text, but in this case he might be right. In all cases in the Scheide and Schøyen codices where ϚΙϚΔΗ is found, the Greek text reads: ὕστερον; cf. Scheide: Matt 4.2; 21.29, 32, 37; 22.27; 25.10; 26.60; Schøyen: 21.30; 22.27; and most likely 21.32 and 35.10.

30 In Greek, the neuter (adverb) ὕστερον has two meanings, ‘later, thereafter’, and ‘finally’.

31 Interesting is that the redactor of the Liège harmony of the Dutch Diatessaron felt the need to add ‘*ende also si in waren*’ (= and when they were inside) ‘*so wart de doere geloken*’ (= then the door was shut); cf. C. C. de Bruin, *Het Luikse Diatessaron (Diatessaron Leodiense)* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) 222:16.

The structure of the text with both $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha$, ‘thereafter’ (first) and $\epsilon\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$, ‘finally’ (second) is also found in Matt 21.30.³² ‘*Thereafter* he came to the second, he spoke to him in the same way; he (i.e. the second) said “No!”, but *finally* he felt-regret (and) he went’. Again here, the Greek text has only an equivalent for the word ‘finally’ ($\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$) but not for the word ‘thereafter’. It was apparently part of the freedom or linguistic skill of the translator that he inserted ‘thereafter’ before ‘finally’. Therefore, there seems no compelling reason to assume that the translator had found in v. 10c the reading $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha$ τοῦτο which Schenke had assumed in his retranslation.

So there is no reason to follow Schenke in *his* reconstruction of the form of text in the so-called ‘independent’ Greek Matthew: $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha$ τοῦτο ἐκλείσεν τὴν θύραν. If there ever was such an ‘independent’ Greek text behind the Schøyen text – which I severely doubt – then still the deviant Coptic text in the Schøyen, which Schenke calls forth as witness, could have been based on a Greek text with the same form as in ‘canonical’ Greek text, namely, $\kappa\alpha\iota$ ἐκλείσεν ἡ θύρα. Further study of the Schøyen text is necessary to find out whether there are more convincing variants that might support the hypothesis of Schenke.

32 The Schøyen text presupposes a text like that of Ms. B pc.