

James M. Leonard, *Codex Schøyen: A Middle Egyptian Coptic Witness to the Early Greek Text of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Translation Theory, Indigenous Coptic, and New Testament Textual Criticism*. NTTDS 46. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014. Pp. xi + 301. ISBN 900-4-257382. Hardcover, €103.

- [1] This book is the slightly revised PhD thesis of James M. Leonard (supervised by Peter J. Williams, Cambridge). It deals with a fascinating manuscript housed in the Schøyen Collection, near Oslo, Norway: MS 2650, siglum mae², which was first published by no other than Hans-Martin Schenke in 2001. In honor of Hans Martin Schøyen, he called it “Codex Schøyen,” the name by which it has been known since then. Schenke’s edition raised a stir among scholars because according to him mae², dated to the fourth century, (1) might represent a rather early and significant witness to a (rather) independent text of the Gospel of Matthew in a minor Coptic dialect, (2) is to be regarded as one of the oldest Middle-Egyptian translations of all, and (3) has a complicated textual history going back to a Hebrew or Aramaic Gospel of Matthew (3–6). Leonard himself argues—on the basis of Coptic grammar and linguistic analyses—for a Greek Matthew as the origin of Codex Schøyen being close to (almost) contemporary Codices Sinaiticus (01) and Vaticanus (03).
- [2] To cut a long story short, Leonard succeeds in convincingly reevaluating certain reconstructed passages by Schenke and in substantial reasoning for his thesis. His conclusions are drawn from a considerable number of variants and grammatical reflections, so that mae² can be associated with the customary main text(s) of the canonical New Testament and be placed within the main witnesses we take as guarantees for the critical Greek text we work with today. Accordingly, Leonard contradicts the view that mae² might be an *apocryphon* or anything similar. On the contrary, he advocates its integration into the apparatus of critical editions of the New Testament as an important versional witness.
- [3] After a general introduction to Codex Schøyen and a review of secondary literature (“The Significance of Codex Schøyen and Explanations of Its Text,” 1–28), Leonard dedicates his interest to “Features of Mae² Unaffected or Minimally Affected by Translation” (29–42) in chapter two, in which he highlights the correspondences of the codex with NA²⁷. He concludes that (42) “the high rate of agreement between mae² and NA²⁷ suggests that the use of NA²⁷ as a base text for assessing syntactical correspondence between mae² and the Greek tradition is reasonable.”
- [4] In chapter three he focuses on “Syntax and Representation of Matt 5:38–6:18” (43–132), does the same with Matt 12:3–27 in chapter four (133–163) and Matt 28:1–20 in chapter five (164–200). With the help of these three example cases, Leonard successfully demonstrates the specific features of mae² (in comparison with other Coptic versions) and can single out its unique elements. Consequently, he successfully refutes Schenke’s claim that mae² manifests a “bewildering textual heterogeneity” (43) by showing that the codex does not have any more unique elements than the other Coptic versions and that there are many correspondences between the versions. He provides a meticulous verse by verse analysis for his example cases.
- [5] In chapter six Leonard analyses sixty text passages in order to identify Greek manuscripts as allies of mae². He does so by referring to the relevant Greek variants in NA²⁷. All in all, he concludes that its (264) “presumed early date, its quality of text, and its close affiliation with 01 and 03 suggest that New

Testament editors and text critics should utilize it in their attempts to establish the earliest attainable text.” Chapter seven reiterates the previously drawn conclusions.

- [6] James M. Leonard offers a splendid example of how to reassess an individual manuscript, and he successfully establishes the quality of Codex Schøyen and its pivotal value for textual criticism. However, his claims of an early date for mae² being contemporary with Sinaiticus and Vaticanus and of a Coptic text that corresponds strongly with these two outstanding codices might be challenged and consequently refuted or accepted in the near future. Yet, no matter what the result may be, Leonard is to be thanked for scrutinizing this manuscript and to shed new light upon it. Textual criticism needs more studies like this.

Thomas J. Kraus
University of Zurich

© Copyright TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism, 2015