

## Matthew 16:18 in the Philoxenian Version

**Peter A.L. Hill**

**Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia<sup>1</sup>**

1. Little now remains of the Syriac Philoxenian version (PHIL) of the New Testament. Commissioned by Philoxenus of Mabbug and completed in 508/509 by Polycarp, his chorepiscopus, PHIL was based upon the Peshitta (P) and in turn became the *Grundtext* for the Harklean New Testament (H) completed in 615/616.<sup>2</sup> Apart from an edition of the Minor Catholic Epistles thought to be PHIL,<sup>3</sup> remnants of the version remain in the scripture quotations found in the later writings of Philoxenus. In this article I will explore one of these quotations, namely Mt 16:18. Historically, considerable controversy has surrounded the interpretation of this verse; thus any additional data are of interest. First, however, a little background regarding the identification of PHIL quotations in Philoxenus' works.

### Identifying PHIL Quotations in the Works of Philoxenus

2. It was Günther Zuntz (1945) who first examined the works of Philoxenus with a view to discovering PHIL readings. However, notwithstanding some excellent observations, Zuntz's methodology was flawed, in part by his failure to distinguish between the array of Graecized citations scattered across a number of Philoxenus' writings and the genuine PHIL quotations which occur only in the later writings.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, Arthur Vööbus (1954) continued the investigation, with the appreciation that in order to identify PHIL readings it is necessary "to hold to a strict chronological sequence of Philoxenus' works."<sup>5</sup> Vööbus happily lighted upon a textual source that had "not undergone the possible changes and modifications which could be

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<sup>1</sup> The substance of this article was presented to a seminar convened by Dr Hidemi Takahashi at the University of Tokyo, 28 September 2006. I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the participants.

<sup>2</sup> The best general introduction to H is Juckel 2004. See also Hill 2003, and my "Why the Harklean Version Was Made," to appear in the forthcoming *Festschrift* for R.Y. Ebied.

<sup>3</sup> I.e., the "Pococke Epistles," after the *editio princeps* of Edward Pococke (Leiden 1630). The standard critical edition is Gwynn 1909: Part I, xvii–lxxii & 1–161. Gwynn vigorously championed their identification with PHIL, as also that of the "Crawford Apocalypse"; see Gwynn 1897.

<sup>4</sup> Zuntz 1945: 42–58, concentrated on the quotations in Philoxenus' *Tractatus tres de Trinitate et Incarnation* (Vaschalde ed. 1907), which probably does not cite PHIL, on which see n. 22 below; and de Halleux 1963: 245. Zuntz 1945: 62–76 also attempted to identify PHIL quotations in a number of sixth-century Graeco-Syriac translations of patristic works.

<sup>5</sup> Fox 1979: 255.

expected if a manuscript has passed through the hands of many copyists,”<sup>6</sup> namely the sole copy (B.M. Add. 14,535) of Philoxenus’ *Commentary on the Prologue of John (CPJ)*, a codex assigned to the first quarter of the sixth century and therefore contemporary with, if not in fact, the autograph. From this source he published a number of PHIL quotations. Though his treatment of the data was partial, his analysis sufficed to establish that when compared either with P or the Graecized scripture quotations in Philoxenus’ earlier works, those in *CPJ* tended to exhibit “a quite different text of distinct character.”<sup>7</sup> Eventually it fell to Sebastian Brock (1981) to establish conclusively that the NT quotations in *CPJ* were regularly sourced from PHIL. With the benefit of the *editio princeps* of *CPJ* (de Halleux 1977a), and with reference to a Syriac recension of the Euthalian prefaces,<sup>8</sup> Brock analysed a broad sample of NT quotations. Two crucial findings emerged.

**3.** First, while Polycarp’s rôle and the date of PHIL have long been known,<sup>9</sup> *CPJ* clarifies the motivation behind the version. In *CPJ* Philoxenus expressed dissatisfaction with what he perceived to be the inaccuracy of P, complaining that “When those of old undertook to translate these scriptures they made mistakes in many things.”<sup>10</sup> He gives a number of examples of ‘inaccurate’ translations from the Greek, which seem to him to reflect adversely on his Christological perspective and to lend unwelcome support to the Nestorians and other theological opponents.<sup>11</sup> Beyond the lexical concessions which he thought P had made to his ideological rivals, he was concerned also that a Bible translation should scrupulously reflect the inspired original so as to verbally preserve and transmit the ‘inscripturated’ revelation:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Vööbus 1954: 111.

<sup>7</sup> Vööbus 1954: 111.

<sup>8</sup> Brock 1981: 341–343; and compare Brock 1979b, which establishes that the earlier of two recensions of the Syriac version of the Euthalian introduction to the Pauline Epistles can be associated with Polycarp’s revision (cf. Zuntz 1945: 109–113), thereby supplying a small number of PHIL readings.

<sup>9</sup> The date (*Anno Graecorum* 819) and place (Mabbug) from the subscriptions in H to the Gospels, to Acts and the Catholic Epistles, and to the Pauline Epistles, as well as some later Syriac sources. The subscription to the Gospels is conveniently located in Kiraz 2004: IV, 369; and for translations—though not without inaccuracies—see Hatch 1937: 149–155; and Zuntz 1951: 176–77. Polycarp’s role in the project is known through Moses of Aggel, who within forty years of the publication of PHIL, in the prefatory letter to his Syriac translation of the *Glaphyra* of Cyril of Alexandria, states “When one encounters the version of the New (Testament)—and of David—which Polycarp the chorepiscopus ... made in Syriac for ... ’Aksenāyā (Philoxenus) of Mabbug...”; transcription in Assemani 1719–1728: II, 83a; and see Gwynn 1887.

<sup>10</sup> *CPJ*, 53.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. see *CPJ*, 42 & 53–54. Cf. Brock 1981: 329.

<sup>12</sup> *CPJ*, 52.

He who would translate faithfully must choose carefully, selecting only those phrases and terms which were spoken by God or by his Spirit through the prophets and the apostles; because those things which are expressed in the Holy Scriptures are not the product of human thoughts that they should welcome any correction or reconstruction by the human mind...

Anyone who corrupts or translates otherwise the verbs and nouns which were spoken by the Holy Spirit, not only is worthy of blame and reproach, but also is wicked and blasphemous and a partner of the Marcionites and Macedonians.

His solution was to commission the revision of P known to us as PHIL. “For this reason,” he states with reference to the perceived inaccuracies of P, “we have now taken the trouble to have the Holy Scriptures translated anew from Greek into Syriac.”<sup>13</sup> However, ‘translated anew’ (ܠܚܕܘܢܐ ܕܡܫܘܚܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܘܚܐ) does not mean that the commissioned version was translated *de novo* without reference to P. Rather the novelty consisted in revising the text of P throughout so as to conform it to the Greek *Vorlage* employed by Polycarp while, at the same time, making the translation theologically more acceptable.<sup>14</sup>

4. Second, Philoxenus’ emphasis upon philological accuracy, and his view that the translator is the *interpres*, not the *expositor* to whom it belonged to probe the “*sensus* of the impenetrable mysteries of scripture,”<sup>15</sup> reflects the ideology of the Graeco-Syriac translation movement which emerged in the fifth century. In the wake of increased Christian Hellenization and the pressing Christological issues of the time, the Greek language acquired a new position of prestige, and techniques changed as translators attempted to conform the Syriac more precisely to the wording of the Greek original.<sup>16</sup> When Polycarp prepared PHIL the Graeco-Syriac translation technique was still developing and refinements continued to be made throughout the sixth century. Progressively, Syriac translations became virtual calques of the Greek originals, leading to the ‘mirror translation’ technique of the seventh century which is on display in H and its OT

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<sup>13</sup> *CPJ*, 53. Unfortunately the statement does not clarify the contentious issues of whether PHIL was co-extensive with the shorter Syriac or the longer Greek NT canons, and whether the project included the OT.

<sup>14</sup> This is corroborated by the circumstance that although the H subscriptions describe Thomas’ Syriac base (i.e. PHIL) as a version that had been “translated (ܠܚܕܘܢܐ ܕܡܫܘܚܐ) from the Greek language into Syriac,” nevertheless the physiognomy of H (to the extent that it reflects the *Grundtext*) betrays the derivation of PHIL from P. Moreover the quotations in *CPJ* manifestly evidence that PHIL was based on P.

<sup>15</sup> Brock 1979a: 79.

<sup>16</sup> Brock 1979a: 75. The translation techniques came to be applied to most classes of Greek literature; see Brock 1983.



ܩܦܩܐ ܩܘܨܐ P = C ('this rock') || ܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ ('and the bars') ] ܩܩܩܩܩܐ C P H ('and the gates').<sup>21</sup> The quotation is somewhat nearer to the reading of H than P: the differences being the use of ܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ; and the retention of the affixed first person possessive: ܩܩܩܩܩܐ = C P ('my church') ] ܩܩܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ H. Other than the use of ܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ (which ostensibly renders μόχλοι), the quotation agrees with the Syriac versions generally in rendering the reading of nearly all the Greek witnesses (καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ πύλαι ἄδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς).

9. All indications are that the quotation in *CPJ* was sourced from PHIL. That is the presumption which attaches to its being embedded in *CPJ*, and which is strengthened by its treatment as a direct quotation—(ܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ)ܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ—without any sign of truncation or paraphrase. Additional corroboration comes from its reappearance in the *Letter to the Monks of Senun* (*Senun*).<sup>22</sup> *Senun* appears to be the only other work by Philoxenus that credibly contains PHIL quotations.<sup>23</sup> However the state of the quotations in *Senun* varies. Where comparisons can be made, quotations are verbatim occasionally with their counterparts in *CPJ*, but frequently they differ either by reverting to the lexicon of P or else by relatively minor alterations that take the reading nearer to the style of H.<sup>24</sup> In the present instance, *Senun* reads with the *CPJ* quotation except for two minor differences: first, it restores the conjunctive *waw* (ܩܩܩܐ) omitted contextually in *CPJ*; and second, with H, it reads ܩܩܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ.<sup>25</sup> For all practical purposes the

<sup>21</sup> *Syrus Sinaiticus* (S) is defective in Mt 16:15<sup>a</sup>–17:11<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> De Halleux 1977b: 77.

<sup>23</sup> Zuntz 1945: 42–58, relied on *Tractatus* (see n. 3 above), which may have been completed around 509, near to the publication of PHIL, but was written in parts over a number of years. Moreover it exhibits a complex array of scripture quotations: many instances are verbatim with P, some may be *ad hoc* renderings, and others may have been sourced from Græco-Syriac translations of the Fathers; also Old Syriac readings may be in evidence; see Vööbus 1954: 110. Fox 1979: 221–229 argues for PHIL quotations in Philoxenus' *Matthew-Luke Commentary*. The colophon to the earliest copy dates it to 510/511, but the editor of the major edition places the work prior to the completion of PHIL, at around 505 (Watt 1978: I, 9\*–10\* & 13\*–14\*; cf. de Halleux 1963: 132–133). Whatever the case, the NT quotations are very uneven, much as occurs in *Tractatus*.

<sup>24</sup> For examples see Brock 1981: 338 n. 52; and Fox 1979: 289 n. 429.

<sup>25</sup> A notable feature of H is the extensive use of the independent possessive, by means of ܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ with a pronoun suffix. The device serves in part to add emphasis (Hill 2003), but that is by no means its only function. It was probably used with greater frequency in PHIL than in P, but nowhere to the extent that is evidenced in H (*contra* Fox 1979: 246). In P ܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ + pronoun suffix appears some eighty times in the Gospels (see Falla 1991: 125b–127a), whereas in H, on my estimate, it occurs about 180 times in just the first eleven chapters of St Luke. In *Senun*, ܩܩܩܩܩܐܘܩܩܐ may be a secondary gloss intended to add emphasis ('my church'); cf. μου τὴν

quotations of Mt 16:18<sup>c-d</sup> embedded in *CPJ* and *Senun* are in agreement; not least in the distinctive readings, 𐌸𐌹𐌺 𐌹𐌿 and 𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌿. This stability across two of Philoxenus' later works suggests that he had recourse to an objective literary source—and the only plausible candidate is PHIL.

**10.** Neither *CPJ* nor *Senun* cite Mt 16:18<sup>a-b</sup>, but I will extend the discussion by proposing that in light of what is known about the relationship of H to PHIL, and by the judicious use of Philoxenus' remarks, it is possible to have some confidence regarding the PHIL reading of the first half of the verse. On this basis the reconstructed verse is set out below with the comparative testimony of C, P, and H.

*Mt 16:18 PHIL—comparative alignment with C P H:*

. 𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿	𐌸𐌹𐌺	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	x	x	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	C
. 𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿	𐌸𐌹𐌺	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	x	x	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	P
[. 𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	𐌸𐌹𐌺	𐌹𐌿	: 𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	x	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿]	PHIL
. 𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	𐌸𐌹𐌺	x	: 𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	H

𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	x	. , 𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	C
𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	x	. , 𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	P
𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹𐌹	x	. , 𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	PHIL
𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	. , 𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿𐌹	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	𐌹𐌿	H

. 𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	𐌹	C
. 𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	𐌹	P
. 𐌹𐌿𐌹𐌹	𐌹	PHIL

ἐκκλησίαν (𐌹𐌿). However, just possibly, it is an attempt to closely 'mirror' the word order of a Greek *Vorlage* that read with Codex Bezae: τὴν ἐκκλησίαν μου. Philoxenus could either have contracted (, 𐌹𐌿𐌹) or expanded (, 𐌹𐌿 𐌹𐌿𐌹) the expression without any loss to the essential meaning; hence it is impossible to be certain whether it is the form in *CPJ* or that in *Senun* that is verbatim with PHIL.

.ܡܘܨܥܘܣܝܐ	ܟ	H
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Translation (PHIL): [And (om. P C) also I say to you, that you are Peter ('Kepha' C P)] and on this rock I will build my church, and the bars ('gates' P C H) of Sheol will not overcome (or 'withstand') it.

## Analysis

### A. Mt 16:18<sup>c-d</sup>

**11.** Beginning with the significant features of v. 18<sup>c-d</sup>, the first is that PHIL (with H) renders ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ by ܟܘܘܝܝܐ ܟܘܡ (masc.), in distinction to the reading of C P, ܟܦܟܐ ܟܘܡ (fem.). Leaving aside for the moment the question of how the Syriac translators may have regarded the play on Πέτρος /πέτρα in v.18, the choice of ܟܘܘܝܝܐ was predicated upon the desire for philological accuracy. ܟܘܘܝܝܐ unambiguously means 'rock', whereas ܟܦܟܐ may mean 'stone' or 'rock', and elliptically, 'column', 'stone vessel' and 'idol', as well as doing service as the proper name, 'Kepha'.<sup>26</sup> P renders πέτρα by both ܟܦܟܐ and ܟܘܘܝܝܐ, whereas H regularly renders πέτρα by ܟܘܘܝܝܐ,<sup>27</sup> and for λίθος uses ܟܦܟܐ.<sup>28</sup> In this instance, then, Polycarp made a straightforward choice from the regular lexicon of Graeco-Syriac equivalents.

**12.** There is nothing straightforward, however, about the second feature, ܟܘܘܝܝܝܐ ܟܘܡܘܬܐ. The reading is without support either in the extant Syriac versions or the Greek manuscript tradition, though it does occur in St Ephrem's *Syriac Commentary on the Diatessaron* (XIV.1):<sup>29</sup>

And (as for) you, what (do you say that I am). Now Simon the head uttered the firstfruit: You are the Son, the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And blessed are you, Simon; and the bars of Sheol will not overpower you (ܟܘܘܝܝܝܐ ܟܘܡܘܬܐ ܟܘܘܝܝܝܝܐ ܟܘܡܘܬܐ).

**13.** Ephrem adverts only to the last clause of v. 18d in this passage, which significantly compresses Mt 16:15–18, while, at the same time, introducing some unfamiliar elements.

<sup>26</sup> Smith 1903: 202, s.v. ܟܦܟܐ.

<sup>27</sup> See Brock 1981: 339–340.

<sup>28</sup> As it happens, the two lexical equivalents come together in Mk 15:46 in all the extant Syriac versions (S P H): "... hewn out of rock (ܟܘܘܝܝܐ = πέτρα), and rolled a stone (ܟܦܟܐ = λίθον) against the door ...."

<sup>29</sup> Leloir ed. 1990. The translation is from Brock 1997: 8. The Armenian translation of Ephrem's commentary reads 'and the gates', so Brock 1997: 7.

Accordingly, considerable difficulty attaches to identifying what Ephrem may have quoted verbatim from the Syriac Diatessaron and what has arisen from his glossing *ad sensum* of the text. In point of fact there is no clear indication that ‘the bars of Sheol’ was the reading of the Syriac Diatessaron—any more than elements such as ‘the head’, ‘the firstfruit’, or ‘overpower you’—notwithstanding that the Syriac tradition does attest a number of readings without parallel in any of the other eastern witnesses.<sup>30</sup> It is the case that in a number of works genuinely attributed to Ephrem clear allusions to v. 18 refer to the ‘bars’ rather than the ‘gates’ of Sheol.<sup>31</sup> However it is only by a process of circular reasoning that these instances can be used to establish that ‘the bars of Sheol’ was the reading of the Diatessaron; in reality all they demonstrate is that the terminology was favored by Ephrem.<sup>32</sup>

**14.** Indeed, Ephrem’s use needs to be considered in light of the circumstance that glossing ܠܘܠܐ ܗܘܢܩܠܐ in v.18 was fairly common among the Syriac writers, the witness of the Syriac versions notwithstanding.<sup>33</sup> This circumstance has been canvassed by Murray (2004: 228–236, 324–347) and Brock (1997: 11–23), who demonstrate that ܗܘܢܩܠܐ most probably was glossed in quotations of v. 18 due to an interpretive assimilation to the ‘bars’ in Ps 106 (107):16 and Isa 45:2, which from the late second century onwards became closely associated with Christ’s descent into Hades and his release of its captives. Thus while it is possible that Ephrem’s *Commentary* reflects the literary source of the tradition, equally Ephrem may have brought this persistent tradition to his reading of the Diatessaron. Either way, by the start of the sixth century, when Polycarp pondered the translation of v. 18 he could not have been immune to a pre-understanding of the text influenced by that tradition.

**15.** The question, then, is did Polycarp gloss ܗܘܢܩܠܐ on the basis of what he thought the text ought to read? If so, it appears that his decision was based on something other than neglect of the Greek *Vorlage*. Polycarp was well aware of Philoxenus’ strictures against those who corrupted or translated “otherwise the verbs and nouns which were spoken by the Holy Spirit” and his estimate that such actions were “wicked and blasphemous.” But in addition there is the consideration that the reading bears Philoxenus’ *imprimatur* by being quoted in *CPJ* without adverse comment. Accordingly the solution must go beyond the supposition that Philoxenus and Polycarp were so conditioned by the Syriac tradition of reading ‘the bars’ in v. 18 that they were convinced it was ‘correct’ regardless of the Greek testimony before them.

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<sup>30</sup> See Brock 1997: 8–10. Compare Murray 2004: 228.

<sup>31</sup> See Murray 2004: 232–236; Brock 1997: 17–18; also Burkitt 1901: 30; 1904: II, 119, 156. Moreover, while admittedly ‘the bars of Sheol’ remain a constant, the cited instances are diverse in other respects, so as to beg the question of which in particular is the nearest to the putative reading of the Diatessaron.

<sup>32</sup> An added complication is that some doubt has been expressed as to whether the *Commentary on the Diatessaron* was authored directly by Ephrem, e.g., Lange 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Compare Burkitt 1904: II, 170. Of course the reading of the earlier strand of the Old Syriac (S) remains unknown. Did it gloss ܠܘܠܐ ܗܘܢܩܠܐ?



**16.** Admittedly there are instances in evidence where despite reading πύλαι in the target texts the Syriac translators glossed ܩܠܩܠܐ. In other words, the Syriac local tradition crossed over from native works into a number of translations from the Greek. Brock (1997: 15 n. 37) cites the glossing of ܩܠܩܠܐ when quoting v. 18 in the translations (dated November 411) of Titus of Bostra, *Against the Manichaeans*, and Eusebius, *Theophania*, despite the fact that the original Greek read πύλαι. Likewise, the late sixth-century *Chronicle* of Ps.-Zacharias Rhetor, translating a letter of Timothy Ailouros, when quoting v. 18 glosses ܩܠܩܠܐ. But this degree of lexical freedom was not the norm in the Graeco-Syriac translations. Thus, when the same letter by Timothy is quoted in a sixth-century dogmatic florilegium, ܩܠܩܠܐ is used in place of ܩܠܩܠܐ, thereby reflecting the reading of the Greek original (πύλαι), and which as Brock (1997: 15) remarks, “conforms with normal sixth-century translation practice.”

**17.** PHIL was intended to faithfully reflect the Greek original, yet it must be considered very unlikely that the textline of any Greek copy read μόχλοι. At the same time, however much the Syriac exegetical tradition weighed upon Philoxenus the *expositor*, in the case of his commissioned version tradition was to be subordinated—as evidenced by his dismissal of the ‘inaccuracies’ in P—to the requirement for verbal accuracy, just as it was in the philologically precise ideology of the Graeco-Syriac translation movement. Hence the problem appears to arrive at an impasse. On the one hand the traditional interpretation of v. 18 cannot of itself account for Polycarp glossing ܩܠܩܠܐ contrary to the reading of his Greek *Vorlage*, while on the other, he will have read πύλαι not μόχλοι in the textline of his Greek witnesses.

**18.** There are two ways to break the impasse. The first is to abandon the idea that PHIL read ܩܠܩܠܐ and to dismiss all the indications that in *CPJ* Philoxenus quoted v. 18 from PHIL. The second and more positive approach is to follow where the evidence leads, in this case by drawing the inference that Polycarp did have a Greek copy which lent some textual legitimacy (beyond the textline) to reading ‘the bars’ in place of ‘the gates’. This possibility is reinforced by the consideration that the motives which led to the making of PHIL are indicative not only of philological concerns but of related textual interests as well. From the fifth century onwards, close attention was given to the Greek manuscript tradition in the Syriac schools.<sup>34</sup> A consensus as to the ‘best’ Greek manuscripts was taking shape to which PHIL itself bears witness by virtue of the preservation of a PHIL colophon in the first section of the subscription to the H Pauline Epistles.<sup>35</sup> The PHIL colophon states that “This book,” namely PHIL, “was collated<sup>36</sup> from a (Greek) copy that was in Cæsarea the city of Palestine, at the library of the holy Pamphilius,

<sup>34</sup> Philoxenus himself was enrolled in the School of the Persians at Edessa, under Hiba; see Simon of Beth-Arsham, *Letter on Nestorianism*, in Assemani 1719–1728: I, 351a–353a. There he was exposed to a curriculum intended to train exegetes and translators, and which included literary and philological studies in both Greek and Syriac; cf. de Halleux 1963: 30–32.

<sup>35</sup> As demonstrated by Zuntz 1945: 19–22; 1951: 186.

<sup>36</sup> I.e., ܩܠܩܠܐ. The term appears throughout the H subscriptions and is the equivalent of the Greek *terminus technicus*, ἀντεβλήθη, see Vööbus 1978: 53.

which was written in his handwriting.”<sup>37</sup> Regardless of whether the codex really had been copied by Pamphilius, the point is that the author of the PHIL subscription believed that to be the case, with the clear implication that this circumstance established the textual integrity of the collated Greek copy.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the subscription to the H Gospels refers to Thomas’ Greek copies as ‘well approved and accurate’ (ܩܘܠܘܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ), with the necessary inference that Thomas’ contemporaries were alert to the probity of the textual character evidenced by his Greek standard.

**19.** The estimate of what constituted an ‘approved’ Greek text was derived directly from the study, collation and copying of Greek copies in the centers of Graeco-Syriac learning.<sup>39</sup> Hence it is quite possible that an annotator, in the course of collating Greek witnesses and in deference to the Syriac interpretive tradition, saw some advantage to glossing μόχλοι at v. 18 in the margin of a Greek copy. If that marginal reading appeared in a copy used by Polycarp, then it is credible that he would have regarded it as affording sufficient textual authority for adopting ܩܘܠܘܢ in the PHIL textline,<sup>40</sup> not least because the traditional Syriac interpretation of v. 18 will have inclined him to favor ܩܘܠܘܢ as reflecting the ‘true’ reading of the original.

#### B. Mt 16:18<sup>a-b</sup>

**20.** While the reconstruction of v. 18<sup>a-b</sup> is conjectural, nevertheless reasonable assumptions can be made from the knowledge that P was the *Grundtext*, from the comparison of H with P, and from the evidence of other PHIL quotations. Thus it is likely that, with H, PHIL read ܩܘܠܘܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ (ܩܘܠܘܢ is lacking in C P), because comparison with other PHIL quotations indicates that Polycarp regularly represented the Greek particle δὲ (= ܩܘܠܘܢ).<sup>41</sup> Similarly, ܩܘܠܘܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ (ܩܘܠܘܢ C P) *par* σὺ εἶ, may have been as regular in PHIL as it is in H. Conversely, in the matter of word order the impression is that Polycarp tended to adhere to P and

<sup>37</sup> MS Cambridge Add. 1700, fol. 216b; transcription in Wright 1901: I, 11–12. Polycarp presumably translated the information about Pamphilius from the colophon of the Greek copy.

<sup>38</sup> Similar estimates of the value of Caesarean copies occur in Jerome, who refers to Pamphilius’ copying of Origen’s works (*De vir. ill.* 75), and in the Syrohexapla (to give but one example) in the colophon to Exodus, where the Greek exemplar is stated to have been “corrected by the hand of Eusebius Pamphili” (MS B.M. Add. 12,134, fol. 132b; transcription in Wright 1870-1872: I, 30b).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Zuntz 1945: 36.

<sup>40</sup> If that is what happened, then Polycarp’s assimilation into the PHIL textline of a Greek marginal variant was somewhat paralleled later by Thomas. Elsewhere (Hill 2004) I have argued that the H Syriac margin exhibits variants from the margins both of PHIL and the collated Greek witnesses, and, moreover, there are indications that, on occasion, Thomas promoted marginal variants from these same sources into the H textline.

<sup>41</sup> Where ܩܘܠܘܢ *par* δὲ is lacking it is usually for contextual reasons, e.g., Jn 5:34 (*CPJ*, 242).

did not approach the slavish adherence to the Greek word order found in H.<sup>42</sup> Hence in v. 18<sup>a</sup>, as with C P, PHIL probably read ܘܠܗܘܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܐܢܐ, whereas H (ܩܘܪܝܢܐܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܢ) adheres to the Greek arrangement, σοὶ λέγω.

**21.** Whatever the precise details, there is no reason to suppose that the meaning of PHIL was anything other than, ‘And also I say to you that you are ...’—but then was it ‘Peter’ (i.e. ܘܢܦܬܐ with H) or ‘Kepha’ (i.e. ܩܦܬܐ with C P)? All the indications are that Polycarp will have transliterated Πέτρος by ܘܢܦܬܐ (or ܘܢܦܬܐܩܦܐ).<sup>43</sup> S C P use ‘Simon’, ‘Simon Kepha’ or simply, ‘Kepha’, often without any direct correlation to their respective Greek *Vorlagen*,<sup>44</sup> whereas H regularly renders Πέτρος by ܘܢܦܬܐ. One possible indication that Polycarp anticipated Thomas in this respect is that 2 Pet 1:1 in the Pococke Epistles reads ܘܢܦܬܐ *par* Πέτρος. The problem, however, is that even if the Pococke Epistles are PHIL, this reading cannot suffice to establish whether that circumstance obtained throughout PHIL. 2 Pet 1:1 may be an isolated instance, and it is possible that the translator made his determination under the influence of the singular use in P of ܘܢܦܬܐ in 1 Pet 1:1.

**22.** Fortunately the matter is clarified by examining Philoxenus’ practice in his later writings, for in those works he evidences a tendency to avoid the use of ‘Kepha’. Thus in the *Matthew-Luke Commentary* a chapter is devoted to Mt 16:16–17,<sup>45</sup> where the apostle is named once as ‘Simon Peter’ (ܘܢܦܬܐ ܩܦܬܐ), and once as ‘Peter’, but sixteen times as ‘Simon’. In introducing Mt 16:17, the one other quotation in *CPJ* that Philoxenus takes from the pericope of Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi, the apostle is called ‘Peter’;<sup>46</sup> this is perhaps all the more telling

<sup>42</sup> For a very informative example of this difference between the translation techniques of Polycarp and Thomas see Brock 1981: 333–334, regarding Rom. 8:29.

<sup>43</sup> Philoxenus frequently uses the ‘prosthetic’ *alaph* (hence ܘܢܦܬܐܩܦܐ) in Greek proper names and transliterated nouns. ܘܢܦܬܐܩܦܐ is the spelling of PHIL, but for convenience I will use ܘܢܦܬܐ.

<sup>44</sup> See Schwen 1911: 296–297; and Burkitt 1904: II, 92–96. P uses ܘܢܦܬܐ only once, in 1Pet.

1:1. In Jn 1: 42, S reads, ܘܢܦܬܐ ܕܩܦܬܐ ܩܦܬܐܩܦܐ, ‘Kepha which is translated in Greek ‘Petros’—’in Greek’, as far as I am aware, is an entirely inner-Syriac addition. P does not render ὁ ἑρμηνεύεται Πέτρος, doubtless because it was considered redundant. As Williams 2004: 23–46 demonstrates, the use of proper names in S C P is so fluid that in many instances it is impossible to reconstruct their frequency in the Greek *Vorlagen*. The one apparent consistency, as Clemons 1968: 29 notes, is to avoid the use of ܘܢܦܬܐ.

<sup>45</sup> Watt ed. 1978: 24–29.

<sup>46</sup> *CPJ*, 183.

given that in the pericope, according to C P, he is ‘Simon Kepha’ (v. 16), ‘Simon Bar Jona’ (v. 17), and ‘Kepha’ (v. 18). Similarly, the context in which v. 18 is quoted in *Senun* refers to the apostle twice as ‘Simon’ and twice as ‘Peter’. Philoxenus is selective in these instances, not only by his exclusion of ‘Kepha’ but also by grouping the occurrences of both ‘Simon’ and ‘Peter’. However he does not appear to draw the distinction evident in the early Syriac tradition whereby when “the reference is to Peter merely as one of the disciples, he is called Simon.”<sup>47</sup> But what his use does illustrate is a climate that would not have been conducive to Polycarp employing ‘Kepha’ in v. 18. Overall, these data taken together with the evidence of H, plus the admittedly meager support of 2 Pet 1:1 in the Poccoke Epistles, invariably tend to the conclusion that PHIL read ܐܢܝܢܐ in v. 18.

### The Interpretation of Mt 16:18 PHIL

**23.** It is beyond the scope of this article to explore the exegesis of Mt 16:18 in the Syriac tradition, but by way of concluding the discussion there are a few observations to be made pertaining to the exegetical implications of Polycarp’s translation.

**24.** The crux in v. 18 is who (or what) comprises the rock upon which the church is founded? In the Syriac tradition it is Peter who is the rock upon which the church stands. However this understanding is informed by a rich symbolic theology of Christ the Rock derived from biblical types (e.g. Dan 2:34–44; 1 Cor 10:4). In brief, Peter is the rock, ultimately by virtue of his union with Christ and not in a solitary or personal sense. Accordingly, as we saw above, Ephrem could without any hint of confusion attribute to Peter the promise of indelibility given to the church: “the bars of Sheol will not overpower you.” Nor was Mt 16:17–19 understood in the Syriac tradition as implying the concept of an exclusive Petrine primacy. Rather the idea was extended, and the apostles and the bishops also were collectively designated as the rock.<sup>48</sup>

**25.** Syriac cannot reproduce the play on Πέτρος /πέτρα, nevertheless it might be said that as a result of this limitation P offers a more straightforward reading than the Greek original: “you are *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* (rock) I will build my church.” Philoxenus brings this same understanding to the exegesis of v. 18. In *Senun* he prefaces the quotation of v. 18<sup>c-d</sup> by glossing v. 18<sup>a-b</sup>: ܠܘܢ ܢܘܢ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ “For the Lord said to Simon, ‘you are the rock.’” The gloss does not indicate that in v.18<sup>b</sup> PHIL read ܠܘܢ rather than ܐܢܝܢܐ. For one thing the initial phrase is an *ad sensum* recasting of v. 18a, and for another, no Graeco-Syriac translator would have purposefully rendered Πέτρος by ܠܘܢ. Rather, at its most basic level, the remark serves to clarify that Simon Peter is the rock—the ܠܘܢ of PHIL—for the benefit of an audience familiar with the verbally obvious equation in P of ‘Kepha’ with the rock (ܠܘܢܐ). Thereby it highlights a difficulty that beset the Graeco-Syriac translation technique. A gain in philological precision could result in obscuring the underlying sense of the text in a given context. Significantly, Thomas also felt constrained to clarify the equation of ܐܢܝܢܐ with ܠܘܢ in v. 18 (H). This he managed by means of a marginal gloss indexed to ܐܢܝܢܐ in the textline and which reads: ܠܘܢ ܐܢܝܢܐ

<sup>47</sup> Murray 2004: 214.

<sup>48</sup> See the thorough discussion in Murray 2004: 184–185, 206–218.



history of the Syriac NT. Thankfully the preservation of PHIL quotations in *CPJ* and *Senun* make it possible to appreciate something of the textual diversity and philological acumen which this version exhibited, not least in the case of Mt 16:18.

## **Abbreviations**

C = *Syrus Curetonianus* (see Burkitt 1904)

CPJ = *Commentary on the Prologue of John* (see de Halleux 1977a)

CSCO = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalum*

H = Harklean version (for the Gospels the text edited by A. Juckel in Kiraz ed. 2004)

P = Peshitta (see Pusey & Gwilliam ed. 1901)

PHIL = Philoxenian version

S = *Syrus Sinaiticus* (see Kiraz ed. 2004)

Senun = *Letter to the Monks of Senun* (see de Halleux 1977b)

Note: Unless indicated otherwise references to editions in the CSCO series are to the *textus* volumes.

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