

Copyist Care Quotient-2

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For some time I have been of the opinion that the question of the mentality that a copyist brought to his task deserves far more attention than it has so far received. If we can agree that the job of a copyist is to reproduce the exemplar that he is copying, then it should be possible to evaluate his failures in so doing. Of course such evaluation depends on the known existence of his exemplar, or of the archetype of the family to which the copy belongs (as determined by its mosaic or profile). Where there is a line of transmission descending from an archetype, a given variant could have been in the exemplar, of course, but I see no way of controlling for that possibility, at the moment. A 'variant' is defined by its departure from the archetypal form, as empirically determined by the consensus of the family representatives.¹ The variant can be evaluated, whenever it was introduced.

However, thought needs to be given to the exact definition of a 'variant'. I am of the opinion that ultimately the term 'variant' should be reserved for readings that make a difference in the meaning, and even so, only if they were made deliberately. Of course, since an unintentional change can also alter meaning, we must proceed slowly, which is why I used the term 'ultimately'. In the meantime, in the chart below I have omitted alternate spellings of the same word, but they are duly recorded in my full **f³⁵** apparatus for Romans.

I invite attention to the following evidence from Paul's letter to the Romans. I will use Reuben Swanson's collation of the three great 'Alexandrian' MSS—Codex Aleph (01), Codex A (02) and Codex B (03)²—and my own collation of thirty-seven Family 35 MSS, throughout the entire book in both cases.³

I simply followed Swanson religiously; I did not check any of his MSS for myself. I did a rough count; I generally counted a phrase as one variant, and so for a long omission. I did not count *nomina sacra*, movable *nu*, accents, and $\kappa\alpha\theta\omega\varsigma/\kappa\alpha\theta\omega$. Swanson collated against both UBS⁴ and the Oxford 1873 TR. The difference between the 3rd and 4th UBS editions is in the apparatus; the text is the same, the text that Kurt Aland was pleased to call the 'standard' text. It is basically an 'Alexandrian' text, and I will use it to represent the hypothetical 'Alexandrian'

¹ I have determined the archetypal form of **f³⁵** for Romans on the basis of complete collations of the 37 family representatives plotted on the chart below. The results are recorded in my full **f³⁵** apparatus for Romans. There are nine splits in Romans: two hover around 25%, four around 33%, and three around 40%. Of the nine, six involve mere alternate spellings of the same word, and therefore are not true variants. All nine revolve around two subgroups: four revolve around group 1, made up of 11 MSS; the other five revolve around group 2, made up of 8 MSS. It follows that none of the nine offers a serious challenge to the archetypal form. Of the three sets that are not alternate spellings, one omits the article before "God", but the case being genitive the meaning is not touched; one changes \omicron to ω , which changes the mood from Indicative to Subjunctive, which weakens the force of the verb; the third, being the last word in the letter (except for "Amen"), changes "of us" to "of you", that in the context makes little difference. (This is a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking.)

² *New Testament Greek Manuscripts—Romans* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2001). In the Gospels, Codex A is marginally Byzantine, but in the Epistles it is considered to be good quality Alexandrian. (I think I recall seeing the opinion expressed that it is better than Aleph, and even B.)

³ To someone who has never collated a Greek manuscript, I may say that it is slave labor, plain drudgery. To collate one copy of a book the size of Romans can take two full days. So why do I do it? The underlying consideration is the belief that the NT books are divinely inspired, a written revelation from the Sovereign Creator. Such a revelation has objective authority, and it becomes important to have the precise original wording. If Romans were just a bit of ordinary ancient literature, the precise original wording would be of little interest. So what? What difference would it make?

archetype (I take that to be the judgment of the editors). Based on the rough count described above, Codex B differed from UBS⁴ 271 times, Aleph 308 times, and Codex A 333 times; this for the entire book of Romans. Even if my rough count were off by 10, 20, or even 50, it would make little difference to the point of this exercise: **these three great codices are pitifully poor representatives of their Alexandrian text-type.** However, I then did a second count, also eliminating alternate spellings of the same word (most of them involved ei/i/e). Based on this second count, Codex B differed from UBS⁴ 170 times, Aleph 133 times, and Codex A 204 times. There were a great many itacisms, especially in Aleph. The picture has improved considerably, but these three great codices are still rather poor representatives of their Alexandrian text-type.

By way of comparison, or contrast, I invite attention to the following evidence from Family 35, also covering all of Romans. (A key follows the chart.)

f³⁵ in Romans—raw data

MS	STATS	TOTAL	EXEMPLAR	DATE	LOCATION ¹	CONTENT
18	2y, 1s, 1h, 1i	5	2	1364	Constantinople	eapr
35	3c	3	---	XI	Aegean	eapr
141	1x, 1c, 4s, 2h, 1i	9	1	XIII	Vatican	eapr
201	2x, 2/, 1c, 3s, 1i	9	4	1357	Constantinople	eapr
204	1/, 1h, 1i	3	1	XIII	Bologna	eap
386	2y, 2s, 1h	5	2	XIV	Vatican	eapr
394	2y, 3/, 4s, 1i	10	5	1330	Rome	eap
757	1y, 1/, 1c, 3s, 1h	7	2	XIII	Athens	eapr
824	1x, 1y, 1/, 1s	4	2	XIV	Grottaferrata	eapr
928	2/	2	2	1304	Dionysiu	eap
986	2y, 1/, 4s, 1i	8	3	XIV	Esphigmenu	eapr
1040	2x, 1y, 1/	4	4	XIV	Karakallu	eap
1072	1x, 1y, 1/, 4s	7	3	XIII	M Lavras	eapr
1075	1x, 1y, 1/, 1s, 1h	5	3	XIV	M Lavras	eapr
1100	1y, 1s	2	1	1376	Dionysiu	ap
1249	1c, 3s, 1i	4	---	1324	Sinai	ap
1482	---	---	---	1304	M Lavras	eap
1503	1y, 1/, 1i	3	2	1317	M Lavras	eapr

¹ I give the location where a MS was acquired, when this differs from where it is presently held, on the basis of available information.

MS	STATS	TOTAL	EXEMPLAR	DATE	LOCATION	CONTENT
1548	1x, 2/, 6s, 3i	12	3	1359	Vatopediu	eap
1637	1y, 1/, 1s, 1i	4	2	1328	M Lavras	eapr
1652	1y, 1/, 1s	3	2	XIV	M Lavras	eapr
1704	1y, 5s, 2h, 5i	13	1	1541	Kutlumusiu	eapr
1725	1/, 3s, 4i	8	1	1367	Vatopediu	ap
1732	1x, 1y, 1s, 2h	5	2	1384	M Lavras	apr
1761	2x, 2y, 1c, 3s, 1h	9	4	XIV	Athens	ap
1855	1s	1	---	XIII	Iviron	ap
1856	6x, 1y, 2/, 6s, 1h	16	9	XIV	Iviron	ap
1858	1y, 1/, 1s, 1i	4	2	XIII	Konstamonitu	ap
1864	1y, 1/	2	2	XIII	Stavronikita	apr
1865	1s	1	---	XIII	Philotheu	apr
1876	2x, 2/, 12s, 2h, 5i	23	4	XV	Sinai	apr
1892	3y, 2/, 1c, 12s, 1h, 2i	21	5	XIV	Jerusalem	ap
1897	1/, 4s, 2h, 1i ¹	8	1	XII	Jerusalem	ap
2466	2c, 11s, 2i	15	---	1329	Patmos	eap
2554	---	---	---	1434	Bucharest	eapr
2587	1/, 2s	3	1	XI	Vatican	ap
2723	---	---	---	XI	Trikala	apr

Key: s = singular reading (until all MSS have been collated, this is just an assumption; also, easy transcriptional errors could be made by more than one copyist, independently);
c = corrected variant (variation of any kind corrected to the presumed archetype);
x = uncorrected variant ('variant' here means that it is attested by MSS outside the family, but by no other family members; this could indicate mixture);
y = family is divided, but the variant is also attested by MSS outside the family (this could be mixture on the part of whoever introduced the variant);
/ = family is divided, and the variant has no outside attestation (a splinter group);
h = an obvious case of homoioteleuton (or -arcton) [I do not consider this to be a proper 'variant', but it is included below];
i = sheer inattention (often repeating a syllable from one line to the next);
--- = no departures from the presumed profile.

It will be observed that I attribute a smaller number of variants to the presumed exemplar than to the copy—I discount 'c', 's', 'h' and 'i', ascribing them to the copyist; 'c' could have

¹ Only has 1:1 – 11:22.

been done by someone else, but the result is correct. Of course, any of them might have been in the exemplar, and the exemplar might have had an error that the copyist corrected, so the numbers under ‘exemplar’ are only an approximation (but probably not far off). It is also true that a variant classed under ‘x’, ‘y’ or ‘/’ could be an independent mistake by the copyist, not in the exemplar. For all that, I consider that the general contour of the evidence given above is valid and relevant.

Looking at the chart, eighteen MSS have an average of only one variant per four chapters or more—exceptional! (MSS 1482, 2554 and 2723 are perfect as they stand.) Another nine MSS have only one variant per two chapters—excellent. Over 70% are excellent or better. Another eight have only one variant per chapter—good. Another two have two variants per chapter—fair. Note that the very worst of the thirty-seven f³⁵ representatives (1876, apr, XV, Sinai) is almost six times ‘better’ than the very best Alexandrian representative, Codex Aleph. Stop for a moment and think about the implications. **How can any sane person defend the proposition that the Alexandrian text-type represents the best line of transmission?**¹

A representative case

In the opening paragraph I stated that variants can be evaluated. I will now take one of the just two merely ‘fair’ f³⁵ representatives—MS 1892, ap, XIV, Jerusalem—list its variants and evaluate them.

1:6 ημων 1892^c || --- 1892 [an accidental omission that was corrected]

2:5 του || --- (group 1) 1892 [the case being genitive, the meaning is not touched]

4:21 πληροφορηθεις || πληροφορηθεις 1892 [an itacism resulting in a misspelling; they would be pronounced the same way]

5:11 νυν || --- 1892 [a careless omission that does not change the basic meaning]

5:13 ελλογεται || ελλογειτο 1892 [was the copyist trying to change present to imperfect? The meaning is not changed]

9:15 μωση || μωση 1892 [merely an alternate spelling of the proper name]

9:27 ως η || ωσει 1892 [an itacism resulting in a misspelling; they would be pronounced the same way]

12:8 1892 supplies ο μεταδιδους εν απλοτητι in the margin (a clear case of homoioarcton, and/or -teleuton)

13:11 γαρ || --- 1892 [a careless omission that does not change the basic meaning]

¹ If I may borrow a statement from Colwell: “These results show convincingly that any attempt to reconstruct an archetype of the Beta Text-type [Alexandrian] on a quantitative basis is doomed to failure.” “These results show convincingly” something else: those copyists were not encumbered with any special respect or consideration for what they were copying. Obviously, they did not believe that they were copying a sacred text, which makes one wonder why they would expend time and material in so doing. I see one explanation that makes sense: they were deliberately perverting the text, presumably under Satanic or demonic influence. By way of contrast, the care with which most f³⁵ copyists did their work implies a high degree of respect for the text being copied. If God were concerned to preserve His Text, what sort of copyist would He use? What sort of copyist would the Holy Spirit protect and bless? [Since both God and Satan exist, someone who excludes the supernatural from his model is being naïve in the extreme.]

- 14:8 αποθνησκομεν || αποθνησκωμεν 1725,1876,1892 [an itacism that changes Indicative to Subjunctive, that makes little difference in the context; they would be pronounced the same way; the other two MSS do not belong to group 1, so this is an independent change]
- 14:15 χριστος || 1 δωρεαν 1892 [a gratuitous addition that makes little difference]
- 15:7 αλληλους || αλληλοις 1892 [apparently—working from a black and white film it is hard to be sure; changes accusative to dative, but does not alter the meaning]
- 15:9 ψαλω || ψαλλω 1892 [probably a careless change, but it changes future to present, that makes little difference in the meaning; they would be pronounced the same way]
- 15:13 περισσευειν || περησσευειν 1892 [apparently—working from a black and white film it is hard to be sure; an itacism resulting in a misspelling; they would be pronounced the same way]
- 15:29 του χριστου || της ειρηνης 1892 [perhaps the exemplar was damaged; in the context the change makes little difference]
- 15:30 συναγωνισασθαι || συναγωνισασθε 141,1892 [changes Indicative to Subjunctive, but they have the same effect; they are two ways to say the same thing;; the other MS does not belong to group 1, so this is an independent change]
- 16:2 και γαρ || 121 1892 [a careless repetition of the coordinating conjunction that does not change the meaning]
- 16:3 πρισκαν || πρισκιλλαν [30%] 394,1249^c,1761,1892 [alternate names for the same person]
- 16:6 υμας || ημας (75.5%) 394,1732,1761,1892 [a change that dominated the general transmission; it makes little difference in the context]
- 16:20 συντριψει || συντριψοι 1652^{alt},1892 [a change from future Indicative to Optative that weakens the force of the verb]
- 16:24 ημων || υμων [82%] (group 1)+ 1892 [a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking; it makes little difference in the context]

With five exceptions, only a single letter or syllable is involved, and nowhere is the meaning seriously affected.¹ **Someone reading MS 1892 would not be misled as to the intended meaning at any point in the book.** I say this is noteworthy, and it is typical of all **f³⁵** MSS. Down through the centuries of transmission, anyone with access to a **f³⁵** representative could know the intended meaning of the Autograph.² Not only that, most lines of transmission within the Byzantine bulk would be reasonably close, good enough for most practical purposes. This is also true of the much maligned *Textus Receptus*; it is certainly good enough

¹ Looking at the list above, it is evident that the care quotient of the copyist fluctuated; about half of the changes occurred in the last two chapters; between 5:13 and 9:15 there are no changes, so he did perfect work for four chapters. In chapter 16 he appears to have suffered some outside influence. For all that, 1892 is an adequate representative of the original wording of Romans.

² Since **f³⁵** MSS are scattered all over, or all around, the Mediterranean world, such access would have been feasible for most people.

for most practical purposes. Down through the centuries of Church history, most people could have had reasonable access to God’s written revelation.¹

Incredibly careful transmission

I will now evaluate the variants in the eighteen ‘exceptional’ representatives. (Eighteen out of thirty-seven is virtually half.)

MSS 1482, 2554 and 2723 are perfect as they stand.

MSS 1855 and 1865 have one, to be discussed in that order. MS 1855: 13:1—υπο || 1 του 1855,1856. Both MSS are held by the same monastery, so they may have had a common exemplar. They add the article before “God”, but the case being genitive the meaning is not touched.

MS 1865: 16:18—ευλογιας || ευλογολογιας 1865 (apparently—working from a black and white film it is hard to be sure). It is obvious that something went wrong here, and the result is nonsense; a reader would presumably make the necessary correction.

MSS 928, 1100 and 1864 have two, to be discussed in that order. MS 928: 11:1—αβρααμ || 1 εκ 394,928,1856. The three MSS belong to group 2, and may point to a subgroup. The preposition is implicit, and making it overt does not alter the meaning; the translation remains the same. 16:19—ειναι 1249^c || --- 201,394,928,1249,1856. All but 201 belong to group 2. The verb must be understood in any case, so the meaning is not affected.

MS 1100: 15:6—δοξαζητε || δοξαζηται 1100. This change is quite common, evidently being regarded as two ways of saying the same thing. 16:24—ημων || υμων [82%] (group 1)+ 1100. MS 1100 is not part of either group 1 or 2. This is a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking; it makes little difference in the context.

MS 1864: 2:5—του || --- (group 1) 1864. The group omits the article before “God”, but the case being genitive the meaning is not touched. 16:24—ημων || υμων [82%] (group 1)+ 1864. MS 1864 is part of group 1. This is a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking; it makes little difference in the context.

MSS 35, 204, 1503, 1652 and 2587 have three, to be discussed in that order. MS 35: 1:27—εξεκαυθησαν 35^c || 1 εν [70%] 35. The preposition is implicit, but in any case the variant was corrected. 2:4—αυτου και της 35^c || --- 35. This may be an instance of homoioteleuton, but in any case the variant was corrected. 15:31—γεινηται τοις αγιοις 35^c || ~ 231 [5%] 35,2466. The change in word order does not affect the meaning, but the variant was corrected in any case. As corrected, this manuscript is perfect.

MS 204: 2:25—σου || 11 204. The word is repeated from one side of the sheet to the other. It is obviously an unintentional mistake that would be automatically corrected by a reader.

¹ However, it is well to remember what is written in 2 Corinthians 4:7: we have the ‘treasure’ in ‘earthen vessels’. Even with a perfect Text in hand, because of our inherent limitations we are incapable of taking full advantage of that Text. Who among us can guarantee a perfect interpretation of that perfect Text? Humility is called for.

6:8—πιστευομεν || πιστευωμεν (group 2)+ 204. This may be an itacism, but it changes the mood from Indicative to Subjunctive, that weakens the force of the verb a little. Since MS 204 is not part of group 2, it may have been an independent slip. 10:15—ειρηνην των ευαγγελιζομενων || --- 204. This appears to be a clear case of homoioteleuton, that I do not consider to be a proper variant; but since the result makes good sense, the copyist evidently didn't notice it (it is part of a quote from the OT).

MS 1503: 2:5—του || --- (group 1) 1503. The group omits the article before "God", but the case being genitive the meaning is not touched. 11:4—1503 repeats \acute{o} from one line to the next. It is obviously an unintentional mistake that would be automatically corrected by a reader. 16:24—ημων || υμων [82%] (group 1)+ 1503. MS 1503 is part of group 1. This is a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking; it makes little difference in the context.

MS 1652: 1:15—και || 1 εν 1652. This appears to be a careless mistake that a reader would probably ignore. 2:5—του || --- (group 1) 1652. The group omits the article before "God", but the case being genitive the meaning is not touched. 16:24—ημων || υμων [82%] (group 1)+ 1652. MS 1652 is part of group 1. This is a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking; it makes little difference in the context.

MS 2587: 3:20—δικαιωθησεται || δικαιουται 2587. This changes the person from plural to singular, and the tense from future to present. In the context the meaning is not changed. 6:8—πιστευομεν || πιστευωμεν (group 2)+ 2587. This may be an itacism, but it changes the mood from Indicative to Subjunctive, that weakens the force of the verb a little. 12:2—μεταμορφουσθε || μεταμορφουσθαι 2587. This changes Subjunctive to Indicative, but they have the same effect; they are two ways to say the same thing.

MSS 824, 1040, 1249, 1637 and 1858 have four, to be discussed in that order. MS 824: 2:5—του || --- (group 1) 824. The group omits the article before "God", but the case being genitive the meaning is not touched. 11:17—αγριελαιος || αγριελεος 824. This appears to be an itacism resulting in an alternate spelling. 15:14—αλλους || αλληλους [7%] 824. 'Admonish one another' perhaps seemed more natural than 'admonish others', but the difference in meaning is slight. 16:24—ημων || υμων [82%] (group 1)+ 824. MS 824 is part of group 1. This is a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking; it makes little difference in the context.

MS 1040: 11:17—πιοτητος || ποιοτητος 1040,1072^c,1548. This appears to be a careless spelling mistake, since the result is not a word. In the context a reader would make the necessary correction. 15:2—ημων || υμων [22%] 1040. That this was a 'natural' alteration is seen by the 22%, but in the context it makes little difference. 15:7—ημας || υμας [38%] 757^c,1040. That this also was a 'natural' alteration is seen by the 38%, but in the context it makes little difference. 16:24—ημων || υμων [82%] (group 1)+ 1040. MS 1040 is part of group 1. This is a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking; it makes little difference in the context.

MS 1249: 2:14—πολη || πολει 1249. Although this was probably an itacism, it changes the mood, but the meaning is not affected. 9:12—τω || το 1249. This looks like another itacism, but it mistakenly changes the case. A reader would make the necessary correction, and since the two forms are pronounced the same, a listener would understand correctly. 9:20—το || τω 1249,1876. This looks like a reverse itacism; see the comment above. 16:19—ειλλ || --- 201,394,928,1249,1856. All but 201 belong to group 2. The verb must be understood in any case, so the meaning is not affected, but the variant was corrected.

MS 1637: 2:5—του || --- (group 1) 1637. The group omits the article before “God”, but the case being genitive the meaning is not touched. 15:20—δε || --- 1637. This appears to be a careless omission that does not affect the meaning. 16:2—και || 11 1637. This is a careless mistake; the word is repeated from one line to the next. A reader would automatically correct it. 16:24—ημων || υμων [82%] (group 1)+ 1637. MS 1637 is part of group 1. This is a change that dominated the general transmission and would be made almost automatically if the copyist did not notice that Tertius is speaking; it makes little difference in the context.

MS 1858: 1:25—κτισει || κτιση 1858. This appears to be an itacism that misspells the word; a reader would make the necessary correction. 2:15—κατηγορουτων || κατοιγορουτων 1858. Repeat the comment above. 6:8—πιστευομεν || πιστευωμεν (group 2)+ 1858. This may be an itacism, but it changes the mood from Indicative to Subjunctive, that weakens the force of the verb a little. 8:28—εις || 1 το [27%] 986,1732^c,1858. The article is not called for, but it makes little difference.

Out of a total of forty-three variants, for eighteen MSS, for the whole book of Romans,¹ five were corrected, which leaves thirty-eight. At least ten are not a proper variant, which leaves twenty-eight. Thirteen are repetitions of a variant in common, which leaves fifteen.² Over 30 of the 43 involve a single letter or syllable, as is typical of **f³⁵** variants. None of them changes the meaning. Now I call that **incredibly careful transmission**.

I venture to predict, if all extant MSS are ever collated, that no other line of transmission will come anywhere close to this level of precision, or copyist care quotient.

Observations

- 1) Two-thirds of the collated MSS above have no extra-family variants = no mixture. The monks faithfully reproduced what was in front of them.
- 2) The three XI MSS evidently reflect distinct exemplars (which themselves probably had distinct exemplars), so the archetype certainly existed in the uncial period.

¹ If we divide 43 by 18 we get an average of about 2.4 variants for each of the eighteen MSS, for the whole book. If we take an average MS like 204 (of the 18), with its three variants, and compare it to Codex Aleph, with its 133 variants, it would take 204 no less than 44 books the size of Romans to produce as many deviations from its archetype as Aleph did from its hypothetical archetype, for one book. It would take 204 no less than 56 such books to produce as many such deviations as Codex B, and 68 for Codex A!! Now really, gentle reader, what objective basis can anyone allege for preferring the ‘Alexandrian’ text? To do so on the basis of subjective preference is mere superstition.

² That is to say, between them the eighteen MSS have fifteen variants for the whole book, or an average of .83 variant each, for the whole book—verily, incredibly careful transmission.

- 3) Although the precise profile of the archetype is clear, it is also clear that the extant MSS reflect a number of separate lines of transmission within the family.
- 4) Any attempt at reconstructing a family tree will require the positing of a fair number of intervening nodes, nodes that could well be separated by centuries.
- 5) It follows that any claim that the **f³⁵** archetype was created after the beginning of the minuscule period is either uninformed or perverse.

Postscript

Family 35 readings are attested by early witnesses, but without pattern, and therefore without dependency. But there are many hundreds of such readings. So how did the **f³⁵** archetype come by all those early readings? Did its creator travel around and collect a few readings from Aleph, a few from B, a few from P^{45,66,75}, a few from W and D, etc.? Is not such a suggestion patently ridiculous? The only reasonable conclusion is that the **f³⁵ text** is ancient (also independent).

I claim to have demonstrated the superiority of Family 35 based on size (number of representatives), independence, age, geographical distribution, profile (empirically determined), care (see above) and range (all 27 books). I challenge any and all to do the same for any other line of transmission!