

## The best complete NT I have seen, so far!

Wilbur N, Pickering, ThM PhD

GA 2554 is one of a number of complete NT manuscripts representing Family 35 that are available to the academic community. It is dated at 1434 AD and is held by the Romanian Academy in Bucharest. I wish to register my sincere thanks to the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster for making available a digital copy of their microfilm of this manuscript. Although from the fifteenth century, the hand is very neat. Of the eighteen complete NT manuscripts representing Family 35 of which I hold a copy (there are others), 2554 is easily the best—I have collated it from cover to cover. I will now list all the places where it deviates from the family archetype, including some doubtful cases, for the whole NT.<sup>1</sup> There are only 49,<sup>2</sup> not all of which are proper variants.

- 1) Mt. 11:8 βασιλειων || βασιλεων (36.4%)<sup>3</sup> 2554<sup>c</sup> [the first hand clearly had the *iota*, that was subsequently erased, so this is not a variant; in any case, within the context the two forms are synonymous]
- 2) Mt. 13:15 ιασωμαι || ιασομαι [50%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [traces of the erased right side of the omega remain, so the first hand was correct, so this is not a variant; in any case, within the context the change in tense does not affect the meaning]
- 3) Mt. 25:32 συναχθησονται || συναχθησεται [75%] [I include this case only because, of the 31 family representatives I have collated for Matthew so far, a majority have the singular rather than the plural; because of the quality of the minority, including 2554, I have chosen it as the archetype; in any case, whether the mass noun is viewed as singular or plural, the meaning remains the same]
- 4) Mt. 26:29 γενηματος || γεννηματος [70%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [the extra *nu* was added above the line, but the first hand was correct, so this is not a variant; in any case, within the context the two forms are synonymous]

Comment: I consider that the first hand gives us a perfect copy of the archetype for Matthew.

- 5) Mk. 2:23 ποιειν 2554<sup>c</sup> || πειν 2554 [it looks like 2554's exemplar had πειν, and the copyist duly copied it, but then realized that it was a nonsensical mistake and corrected it; if the correction was made by the first hand, then we do not have a proper variant, but working from a microfilm it is difficult to tell if the ink is the same]
- 6) Mk. 5:41 κουμι || κουμ (17.4%) 2554 [this is a transliteration from another language, so a spelling difference does not affect the meaning, the more so since it is followed immediately with the translation; I do not consider this to be a proper variant]

---

<sup>1</sup> For the Family 35 profile please see Appendix B in my *Identity IV*, freely available from my site, [www.prunch.org](http://www.prunch.org). The complete archetype is printed in my *The Greek New Testament according to Family 35*.

<sup>2</sup> To have no more than 49 for the whole NT is simply astonishing.

<sup>3</sup> Percentages within parentheses are taken from *Text und Textwert*, while those within brackets are my own extrapolation.

7) Mk. 14:25 γενηματος || γεννηματος [25%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [the extra *nu* was added above the line, but the first hand was correct, so this is not a variant; in any case, within the context the two forms are synonymous]

8) Mk. 15:46 επι την θυραν || 1τη θυρα [1%] 2554 [a significant minority of family representatives join 2554 here; the preposition works with three cases—genitive, dative, accusative—within this context the change in case does not affect the meaning]

Comment: I consider that the first hand has only one proper variant in Mark, the last one, and it does not affect the meaning.

9) Lk. 1:36 συγγενης || συγγενις [10%] 2554 [instead of the adjective functioning as a generic noun, 2554 uses the feminine noun; within the context the two forms are synonymous]

10) Lk. 1:55 εως αιωνος || εις τον αιωνα [64%] 2554 [the variant is by far the more common, and therefore expected, but within the context the two forms are virtually synonymous; any difference in nuance does not alter the basic meaning]

11) Lk. 3:1 αβιληνης || αβιλινης 2554 [perhaps an itacism that resulted in an alternate spelling for the place name; the two forms would receive the same pronunciation; I do not consider this to be a proper variant]

12) Lk. 3:18 τω λαω || τον λαον [85%] 2554 [since the direct object, ‘good news’, is implicit in the verb, ‘the people’ functions as the indirect object, and the dative case is correct; however, the accusative case does occur, and within the context there is no difference in meaning]

13) Lk. 12:18 γενηματα || γεννηματα [7%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [the extra *nu* was added above the line, but the first hand was correct, so this is not a variant; in any case, within the context the two forms are synonymous]

14) Lk. 21:33 παρελευσεται || παρελευσονται [68%] 2554 [whether the compound subject of the verb is viewed as singular or plural, the meaning is the same; in English the translation is the same]

15) Lk. 22:18 γενηματος || γεννηματος [15%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [the extra *nu* was added above the line, but the first hand was correct, so this is not a variant; in any case, within the context the two forms are synonymous]

Comment: I consider that the first hand has four proper variants in Luke, and they do not affect the meaning.

16) Jn. 6:55 αληθως || αληθης (24.5%) 2554<sup>2x</sup> [whether an adverb or an adjective, within the context they have the same meaning; I treat the repetition as a single variant]

17) Jn. 12:6 εμελεν || εμελλεν [60%] [taking account of the corrections, the MSS I have collated are about evenly divided. Is the verb μελω or μελλω? μελει as an impersonal form is most common; however the verb is also used in a personal/active sense. μελλω (‘to be about to’) does not make sense here. μελλω is about ten times as frequent in the NT and some copyists may have put the more customary spelling without thinking. They had just

written *μελλων* two lines above and may have repeated the form by attraction. However, since both forms have the same pronunciation, someone hearing the Text read aloud would understand it correctly, being guided by the context. Precisely for this reason, it may be that the semantic area of the longer form came to be regarded as including that of the shorter form; in which case we would have alternate spellings of the same verb. (It is not my custom to appeal to the early uncials, but all of them have the shorter form here, which would go along with my hypothesis above.) The first hand of 2554 left space for the second *lambda*, so he was aware of the variant, but he correctly did not copy it.]

18) Jn. 12:40 *ιασωμαι* || *ιασομαι* [20%] 2554 [the first hand of 2554 left space to complete the *omega*, so he was aware of the variant; within the context the change in tense does not affect the meaning]

Comment: I consider that the first hand has two proper variants in John, and they do not affect the meaning.  $2 + 4 + 1 = 7$ ; a manuscript with only seven variants for all four Gospels is surely a paragon of virtue. I call that extraordinarily careful transmission, since it would also be true of the preceding generations, of necessity.

19) Acts 1:11 *ουτος* || *1 ο* [70%] 2554 [a demonstrative pronoun defines, even more than a definite article, so the article is redundant here; in any case, the meaning is not affected]

20) Acts 11:26 *συναχθηται* || *1 εν* [15%] 2554 [the family is divided here, a majority of the 35 MSS that I have collated add the preposition, that is a 'natural' but is redundant; in any case, the meaning is not affected]

21) Acts 12:25 *εις αντιοχειαν* || *απο ιεροσαλημ* 2554 [this is the only place in the whole NT where Family 35 splinters, there being a six-way split (usually there are only two main contenders); for a detailed discussion please see my article, "Where to place a comma—Acts 12:25", available from my site, [www.prunch.org](http://www.prunch.org); within the context, the two readings given here have the same effect]

22) Acts 16:9 *την* 2554<sup>c</sup> || --- [80%] 2554 [Family 35 is virtually unanimous for the article, so the first hand may have omitted it on his own, to be corrected by someone else; in any case, the meaning is not affected]

23) Acts 18:17 *εμελλεν* || *εμελεν* [14%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [Family 35 is divided here; 2554 has a single *lambda* in a space that is too large for it, so I assume the first hand had the double but was erased. Is the verb *μελλω* or *μελω*? If the former, the meaning is not common and could easily give rise to the latter. Render: 'None of this was a delay to Gallio'; Gallio is in the dative. Gallio presumably considered himself to be a busy man and did not appreciate the interruption; he was not about to allow himself to be further delayed. In 22:16 the same verb has the sense of 'delay'. Although there is some difference in meaning, the point of the narrative is not altered.]

24) Acts 25:7 *καταβεβηκοτες* || *1 οι* 2554 [this appears to be a careless mistake on the part of the copyist, but which still makes sense; the meaning is not affected]

25) Acts 28:27 *ιασωμαι* || *ιασομαι* [60%] 2554 [the first hand of 2554 left space to complete the *omega*, so he was aware of the variant; within the context the change in tense does not affect the meaning]

Comment: I consider that the first hand has six proper variants in Acts, one of which was corrected, leaving five. Of the five, four do not affect the meaning. In Acts 12:25, within the context, the two variants are virtually two ways of saying the same thing, the point of the narrative is not affected.]

26) Rom. 7:13 *αλλα* || *αλλ* [30%] 2554 [these are alternate spellings of the same word, so this is not a proper variant]

27) Rom. 16:24 *ημων* || *υμων* [82%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [if verse 24 was not dictated by Paul, the first person is especially appropriate, coming from Tertius; within the context, the meaning is scarcely affected]

Comment: I consider that the first hand gives us a perfect copy of the archetype for Romans, there being no proper variants. 1 Corinthians also gives us a perfect copy of the archetype.

28) 2 Cor. 8:9 *ημας* || *υμας* [60%] [Family 35 is divided here, but the better representatives, including 2554, are with the first person, that is more inclusive; within the context there is no real difference in meaning]

29) 2 Cor. 9:10 *γεινηματα* || *γεννηματα* [6%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [the extra *nu* was added above the line, but the first hand was correct, so this is not a variant; in any case, within the context the two forms are synonymous]

30) 2 Cor. 11:7 *εαυτον* || *εμαυτον* [78%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [the *mu* was added above the line by a later hand, so this is not a variant; in any case, within the context the two forms are synonymous]

Comment: I consider that the first hand gives us a perfect copy of the archetype for 2 Corinthians. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians also give us a perfect copy of the archetype.

31) 1 Thes. 2:8 *μειρομενοι* || *ομειρομενοι* [30%] 2554<sup>c</sup> [it appears that an *omega* was written around an *iota*, but it is difficult to tell from a microfilm; in any case, since these appear to be alternate spellings of the same word, this is not a proper variant]

Comment: I consider that the first hand gives us a perfect copy of the archetype for 1 Thessalonians. 2 Thessalonians also gives us a perfect copy of the archetype.

32) 1 Tim. 1:9a *πατραλοιαις* || *πατρολωαις* [34%] [Family 35 is divided here, but a majority, including 2554, have the first reading. Liddell & Scott give it and the feminine counterpart as the basic forms, their meaning being 'striker', rather than 'killer', which makes better sense]

33) 1 Tim. 1:9b *μητραλοιαις* || *μητρολωαις* [40%] [same as above]

34) 1 Tim. 5:21 προσκλισιν || προσκλησιν [75%] [Family 35 is divided here, but a majority, including 2554, have the first reading; the two forms were pronounced the same way; within the context the meaning is not affected.]

Comment: I consider that the first hand gives us a perfect copy of the archetype for 1 Timothy.

35) 2 Tim. 3:14 επιστωθης || επιστευθης [10%] 2554 [the two forms represent different verbs, but within the context they act as synonyms; the meaning is not affected]

36) Titus 2:7 αδιαφθοριαν || αδιαφοριαν (8%) 2554 [this is just an alternate spelling of the same word, and therefore not a proper variant]

Comment: I consider that the first hand has only one proper variant in 2 Timothy, and it does not affect the meaning. Titus and Philemon give us a perfect copy of the archetype.

37) Heb. 3:13 καλειται || καληται 2554<sup>c</sup> [an itacism produced by a later hand, resulting in nonsense]

38) Heb. 9:1 πρωτη || 1 σκηνη [30%] [Family 35 is divided here, but with corrections a majority, including 2554, have the first reading; in any case, within the context the meaning is not affected]

Comment: I consider that the first hand gives us a perfect copy of the archetype for Hebrews. James and 1 and 2 Peter also give us a perfect copy of the archetype. A manuscript with only one proper variant for the whole Pauline corpus is surely a paragon of virtue. I call that extraordinarily careful transmission, since it would also be true of the preceding generations, of necessity.

39) 1 Jn. 1:6 περιπατουμεν || περιπατωμεν [71%] [Family 35 is divided here; I follow a minority, made up of the better MSS, including 2554. The verb ‘say’ is properly Subjunctive, being controlled by εαν, but the verbs ‘have’ and ‘walk’ are part of a statement and are properly Indicative—only if we are in fact walking in darkness do we become liars for claiming to be in fellowship. So περιπατουμεν is correct. In any case, within the context the meaning is not affected.]

40) 1 Jn. 3:23 πιστευσωμεν || πιστευωμεν (26.5%) 2554<sup>c</sup> [traces of the *sigma* are visible; in any case, within the context the change in tense does not affect the meaning]

Comment: I consider that the first hand gives us a perfect copy of the archetype for 1 John. 2 and 3 John and Jude also give us a perfect copy of the archetype. A manuscript with not a single variant for all seven General Epistles is surely a paragon of virtue. I call that extraordinarily careful transmission, since it would also be true of the preceding generations, of necessity. Up to here there have only been thirteen proper variants, but let us see what happens in Revelation.

- 41) Rev. 1:17  $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\sigma\alpha$  ||  $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\sigma\omicron\nu$  2554 [these appear to be alternate forms of the same word, so this is not a proper variant]<sup>1</sup>
- 42) Rev. 4:8  $\lambda\epsilon\gamma\omicron\nu\tau\alpha$  ||  $\lambda\epsilon\gamma\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$  2554<sup>alt</sup> [Is the subject of the verb just the living creatures, or are the elders included? On the basis of verses 9-11, it would be just the living creatures. In any case, a translation into English will be the same for the two forms.]
- 43) Rev. 7:17a  $\pi\omicron\iota\mu\alpha\iota\nu\epsilon\iota$  2554<sup>alt</sup> ||  $\pi\omicron\iota\mu\alpha\iota\nu\epsilon\iota$  2554 [well over half of the family representatives that have the future tense have the present form as an alternate above the line, as does 2554; this appears to have been standard procedure in Revelation, when there was doubt between two forms, so the archetype is always represented; within the context the meaning is not affected]
- 44) Rev. 7:17b  $\omicron\delta\eta\gamma\epsilon\iota$  2554<sup>alt</sup> ||  $\omicron\delta\eta\gamma\eta\sigma\epsilon\iota$  2554 [same as above]
- 45) Rev. 9:5  $\pi\lambda\eta\zeta\eta$  2554<sup>alt</sup> ||  $\pi\alpha\iota\sigma\eta$  2554 [same as above, except that here it is the verb that is changed; within the context the meaning is not affected]
- 46) Rev. 14:14  $\kappa\alpha\theta\eta\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$   $\omicron\mu\omicron\iota\omicron\varsigma$  2554<sup>alt</sup> ||  $\kappa\alpha\theta\eta\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$   $\omicron\mu\omicron\iota\omicron\nu$  2554 [same as above, except that here it is just the case that is changed; within the context the meaning is not affected]
- 47) Rev. 14:19  $\tau\omicron\nu$   $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\nu$  ||  $\tau\eta\nu$   $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\eta\nu$  2554 [Is the phrase modifying ‘wrath’ or ‘wine-press’? Within the context, they are two ways of saying the same thing.]
- 48) Rev. 16:12  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\nu$  ||  $1$   $\tau\omicron\nu$  2554 [the variant does not affect the meaning]
- 49) Rev. 19:18  $\kappa\alpha\iota$ <sup>7</sup> || --- 2554 [this appears to be a singular reading; it does not affect the meaning]

Comment: I consider that the first hand has seven variations from the archetype, four of which are corrected with the alternate; that leaves three proper variants, none of which affects the meaning. None of the alternates affects the meaning either. For all practical purposes, 2554 is a perfect representative of the archetype in Revelation.

**Conclusion:** Out of the 49 cases listed above, only sixteen may be classed as a ‘proper variant’, and only one of them may be said to affect the meaning: Acts 12:25.<sup>2</sup> Even here, within the context, the two readings listed have the same effect. Manuscript GA 2554 is a virtually perfect representative of its archetype for the whole New Testament, and this in the fifteenth century! This means that all the preceding generations also had to be virtually perfect. Now I call that extraordinarily careful transmission. **God has preserved His Text!**

---

<sup>1</sup> In Revelation I do not give percentages because I state the evidence in terms of families; the interested reader should consult my Greek Text for the evidence.

<sup>2</sup> This holds true for all the 49 cases above. A reader would not be misled as to the intended meaning at any point, for the whole NT!