

Learning to read Helen's Handwriting

While I'm not the world's expert on Helen's handwriting, I have learned a few things in some hundreds of hours spent poring over her work. The first thing I'd say is that where we have a reasonably accurate transcript, and the *Urtext* material is a reasonably accurate transcript of roughly 95% of the *Shorthand Notes*, if you have someone, or even a voice synthesizer on your computer* read aloud from the *Urtext*, it is very easy to follow along in the *Notes* and recognize when the two are different.

The biggest trick is often just aligning the one version with the other, but with the cross-referencing grid provided in the *Scholar's Toolbox* that is now a snap.

In this painless and indeed joyous process of listening to the *Urtext* while following along in the *Notes* by eye, one rather quickly becomes familiar with the particular idiosyncrasies of Schucman's handwriting. As familiarity increases, the untranscribed portions become much easier to make out in

part. As one makes them out in part, it becomes easier to make them out entirely, even where the quality of our copies is much less than we'd like.

Deciphering glyphs is quite easy if you start with the transcribed portions where you can see, in the transcript, just what particular squiggles and dashes mean, and the possible range of variations in their meaning. Before long, you'll have the common ones memorized and in time, you'll be able to track all of them.

I've included a partial list of Schucman's shorthand glyphs to get people started. Certainly a better one is needed, but as with many good things, they can't always be produced in an instant. And as with nearly everything in this compilation, there is great room for improvement and enhancement.

While the small amount of entirely untranscribed handwritten material is probably of greatest interest, it is extremely difficult to tackle until one has become very familiar with Helen's own personal handwriting style, after which, actually, it's generally a snap except where the copies themselves are illegible. Not only is it very slow going at first, the results are usually very inaccurate.

* see the Tutorial segment on making Acrobat Reader "speak" the text if you're unfamiliar with getting the computer to talk to you.

Every bit as important in the long run as transcribing these untranscribed sections, is the proofing of the existing transcripts. The result of that will be “correcting” the *Urtext* until it conforms precisely to the *Notes*. That work is actually quite simple for the most part. The key is to spot differences, and that is not complicated, it just requires concentration. Nearly any literate person can look at two sentences and discern what is the same and what is different. That’s proofreading in a nutshell. Spotted differences may have to be “transcribed” but usually we are only dealing with a few words, rather than dozens of pages.

I would urge anyone keen on tackling this material to start with that, pick a chapter, or even better, the last half of the *Workbook* which is mostly very easy to read, and go through it one piece at a time, developing one’s own facility with Helen’s script.

Ideally, share your work on the *Notesworkers* mailing list with others, so we can compare our results and double-check each other’s work so as to detect and correct errors.

Proofreading is one of those things that can’t be done too often! There is no such thing as “too much proofreading.”

Since the beginning ACIM has suffered grievously from too *little* proofreading, however.

For those who are highly conversant with Schucman’s handwriting already, I’d strongly encourage you to share even rough and preliminary transcription work on those untranscribed portions because that is a crucial starting point and paves the way for others and could save others untold thousands of hours, allowing them to put their efforts into something more useful than re-inventing the wheel or reproducing work you’ve already completed.

You know who you are and I know who some of you are and you know how many people are struggling with this difficult material, people you could help by saving them thousands of hours of needless and pointless frustration.