



The Great Uncial Codices

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Introduction

- ▶ The **great uncial codices** or **four great uncials** are the only remaining uncial codices that contain (or originally contained) the entire text of the Greek Bible (Old and New Testament).
- ▶ Only four great codices have survived to the present day: Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Alexandrinus, and Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus.^[1] Although discovered at different times and places, they share many similarities. They are written in a certain uncial style of calligraphy using only majuscule letters, written in scriptio continua (meaning without regular gaps between words).^{[1][2]} Though not entirely absent, there are very few divisions between words in these manuscripts. Words do not necessarily end on the same line on which they start. All these manuscripts were made at great expense of material and labour, written on vellum by professional scribes.^[3] They seem to have been based on the most accurate texts in their time.^[citation needed]

The Four Uncials

- ▶ All of the great uncials were written on fine vellum, with the leaves arranged in quarto form.[4] The size of the leaves is much bigger than in papyri codices:[5][6]
 - ▶ Vaticanus – 27 × 27 cm (10.6 × 10.6 in); c. 325–350
 - ▶ Sinaiticus – 38.1 × 34.5 cm (15.0 × 13.6 in); written c. 330–360
 - ▶ Alexandrinus – 32 × 26 cm (12.6 × 10.4 in); c. 400–440
 - ▶ Ephraemi – 33 × 27 cm (13.0 × 10.6 in); c. 450
 - ▶ Read the article on [Wikipedia](#).



Codex Vaticanus

- ▶ The **Codex Vaticanus** (The Vatican, **Bibl. Vat.**, Vat. gr. 1209; no. **B** or **03 Gregory-Aland**, δ 1 von Soden) is one of the oldest extant manuscripts of the Greek Bible (Old and New Testament), one of the four great uncial codices.^[1] The Codex is named after its place of conservation in the Vatican Library, where it has been kept since at least the 15th century.^[2] It is written on 759 leaves of vellum in uncial letters and has been dated palaeographically to the 4th century.^{[3][4]}
- ▶ The manuscript became known to Western scholars as a result of correspondence between Erasmus and the prefects of the Vatican Library. Portions of the codex were collated by several scholars, but numerous errors were made during this process. The Codex's relationship to the Latin Vulgate was unclear and scholars were initially unaware of the Codex's value.^[5] This changed in the 19th century when transcriptions of the full codex were completed.^[1] It was at that point that scholars realised the text differed significantly from the Textus Receptus.^[6]



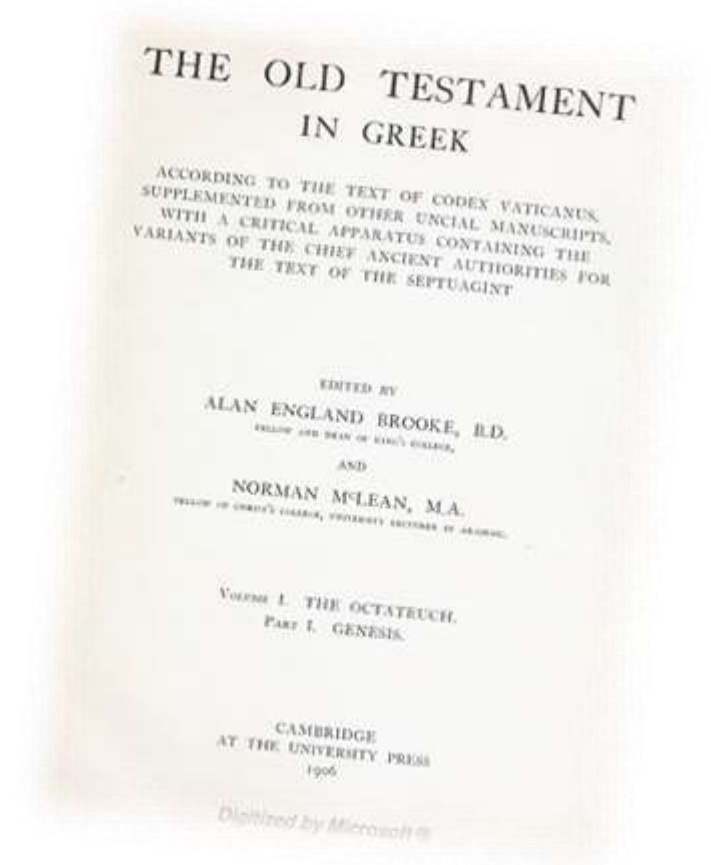
Vaticanus one of the best Greek texts.



- ▶ Most current scholars consider the Codex Vaticanus to be one of the best Greek texts of the New Testament,^[3] with the Codex Sinaiticus as its only competitor. Until the discovery by Tischendorf of the Sinaiticus text, the Codex was unrivaled.^[7] It was extensively used by Westcott and Hort in their edition of The New Testament in the Original Greek in 1881.^[3] The most widely sold editions of the Greek New Testament are largely based on the text of the Codex Vaticanus.^[8] Codex Vaticanus is regarded as "the oldest extant copy of the Bible."^[9]
 - ▶ Read the article on Wikipedia.

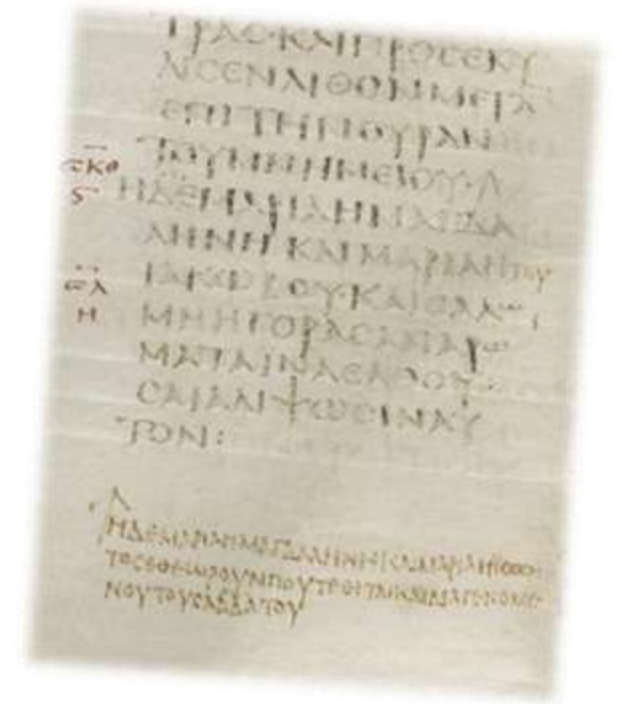
Larger Cambridge Septuagint

- ▶ The older critical edition, known as the "Larger Cambridge Septuagint," is a diplomatic text, reproducing Codex Vaticanus with a critical apparatus with variant readings from other manuscripts. Edited by Alan E. Brooke, Norman McLean, and Henry St John Thackeray, this series is incomplete, with only Genesis through Esther from the Protestant OT as well as 1 Esdras, Judith, and Tobit from the Apocrypha ever published:" Originally published in series from 1906 to 1935 in 8 parts.
 - ▶ Scans of the Old Testament in Greek are found in the Internet Archive.



Codex Sinaiticus

- ▶ **Codex Sinaiticus** (Modern Greek: Σιναϊτικός Κώδικας, Hebrew: ספר סיני; Shelfmarks and references: London, Brit. Libr., Additional Manuscripts 43725; Gregory-Aland n° א [Aleph] or **01**, [Soden δ 2]) or "Sinai Bible" is one of the four great uncial codices, an ancient, handwritten copy of the Greek Bible. The codex is a celebrated historical treasure.[1]
- ▶ The codex is an Alexandrian text-type manuscript written in the 4th century in uncial letters on parchment. Scholarship considers the Codex Sinaiticus to be one of the best Greek texts of the New Testament,[2] along with the Codex Vaticanus. Until the discovery by Constantin von Tischendorf of the Sinaiticus text, the Codex Vaticanus was unrivaled.[3]



Saint Catherine's Monastery



- ▶ The Codex Sinaiticus came to the attention of scholars in the 19th century at Saint Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula, with further material discovered in the 20th and 21st centuries. Although parts of the codex are scattered across four libraries around the world, most of the manuscript is today vested in the British Library in London, where it is on public display.[4][5] Since its discovery, study of the Codex Sinaiticus has proven to be useful to scholars for critical studies of biblical text.
- ▶ While large portions of the Old Testament are missing, it is assumed that the codex originally contained the whole of both Testaments.[6] About half of the Greek Old Testament (or Septuagint) survived, along with a complete New Testament, the entire Deuterocanonical books, the Epistle of Barnabas and portions of The Shepherd of Hermas. [2]
 - ▶ Read the article on Wikipedia.

The Sinaiticus Project

- ▶ The Codex Sinaiticus Project is an international collaboration to reunite the entire manuscript in digital form and make it accessible to a global audience for the first time. Drawing on the expertise of leading scholars, conservators and curators, the Project gives everyone the opportunity to connect directly with this famous manuscript.
 - ▶ [\[Find out more about the Codex Sinaiticus Project.\]](#)



Codex Alexandrinus



- ▶ The **Codex Alexandrinus** (London, British Library, MS Royal 1. D. V-VIII; Gregory-Aland no. **A** or **02**, Soden δ 4) is a fifth-century manuscript of the Greek Bible, [1] containing the majority of the Septuagint and the New Testament. [1] It is one of the four Great uncial codices. Along with the Codex Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus, it is one of the earliest and most complete manuscripts of the Bible. Brian Walton assigned Alexandrinus the capital Latin letter A in the Polyglot Bible of 1657. [2] This designation was maintained when the system was standardized by Wettstein in 1751. [3] Thus, Alexandrinus held the first position in the manuscript list. [4]

From Alexandria, Egypt

- ▶ It derives its name from Alexandria where it resided for a number of years before it was brought by the Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Cyril Lucaris from Alexandria to Constantinople.[5] Then it was given to Charles I of England in the 17th century. Until the later purchase of Codex Sinaiticus, it was the best manuscript of the Greek Bible deposited in Britain.[n 2] Today, it rests along with Codex Sinaiticus in one of the showcases in the Ritblat Gallery of the British Library. [6][7] A full photographic reproduction of the New Testament volume (Royal MS 1 D. viii) is available on the British Library's website.[8] As the text came from several different traditions, different parts of the codex are not of equal textual value.[6][9] The text has been edited several times since the 18th century.[citation needed]
 - ▶ Read the article on Wikipedia.
 - ▶ See the digitized version of Codex Alexandrinus available from the British Library.



Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus



- ▶ **Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus** (Paris, National Library of France, Greek 9; Gregory-Aland no. **C** or **04**, von Soden δ 3) is a fifth-century Greek manuscript of the Bible,^[1] sometimes referred to as one of the four great uncials(see Codex Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and Vaticanus). The manuscript is not intact: in its current condition, Codex C contains material from every New Testament book except Second Thessalonians and Second John; however, only six books of the Greek Old Testament are represented.

Ephrem the Syrian

- ▶ The manuscript is called Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus because (a) it is a codex, i.e., a handmade book; (b) its parchment has been recycled; originally inscribed with Scriptural texts, the pages were washed (removing most of the ink) and reused for another text, and (c) the text that was written on the recycled pages, in the 12th century, consisted of Greek translations of 38 treatises composed by Ephrem the Syrian, a prominent theologian of the mid-4th century. Manuscripts of this sort, consisting of recycled pages, are known as palimpsests.^[1] The later (or, "upper") text was written in the 12th century.



Noteworthy Scholars

- ▶ Many scholars have expounded our understanding of the importance of the Four Great Uncials for the study of the Greek Bible. Here are a few whose works are available on the Internet.



Constantin von Tischendorf

- ▶ **Lobegott Friedrich Constantin (von) Tischendorf** (18 January 1815 – 7 December 1874) was a world leading biblical scholar in his time. In 1844^[citation needed] he discovered the world's oldest and most complete disputed Bible dating from 325^[citation needed], with the complete New Testament not discovered before. This Bible is called Codex Sinaiticus, after the St. Catherine's Monastery at Mt. Sinai, where Tischendorf discovered it. The codex can be seen either in the British Library in London, or as a digitalised version on the Internet.^[1] Textual disputes are resolved when the two oldest books, Codex Sinaiticus (source aleph, 4th AD) and Codex Vaticanus (source beta, 4th AD), agree with each other. Tischendorf was made an Honorary Doctor by Oxford University on 16 March 1865, and an Honorary Doctor by Cambridge University on 9 March 1865 following this find of the century.^[2] While a student gaining his academic degree in the 1840s, he earned international recognition when he deciphered the Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, a 5th-century Greek manuscript of the New Testament.

- ▶ Read the article on Wikipedia.



Henry Barclay Swete



- ▶ Swete's works on Biblical texts are of high importance. In 1887 he published the first volume of his edition of the Greek text of the Old Testament, completing the series in 1894 (3rd ed. 1901-7), while in 1898 appeared the Greek text of the Gospel of St. Mark, with notes and introduction (2nd ed. 1902) and in 1906 that of the Apocalypse of St. John (2nd ed. 1907).
 - ▶ Read the article on Wikipedia.
 - ▶ Swete's Introduction to to the Old Testament in Greek and Selections from the Septuagint are available from the Internet Archive

Erasmus

- ▶ **Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus** (/ˌdɛzɪˈdiəriəs ɪˈræzməs/; 28 October 1466^{[1][2]} – 12 July 1536), known as **Erasmus** or **Erasmus of Rotterdam**,^[note 1] was a Dutch Renaissance humanist, Catholic priest, social critic, teacher, and theologian.
- ▶ Erasmus was a classical scholar and wrote in a pure Latin style. Among humanists he enjoyed the sobriquet "Prince of the Humanists", and has been called "the crowning glory of the Christian humanists".^[3] Using humanist techniques for working on texts, he prepared important new Latin and Greek editions of the New Testament, which raised questions that would be influential in the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation. He also wrote On Free Will,^[4] In Praise of Folly, Handbook of a Christian Knight, On Civility in Children, Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style, Julius Exclusus, and many other works.
 - ▶ Read the article on Wikipedia.



Herman C. Hoskier

- ▶ **Herman Charles Hoskier** (1864–1938), was a biblical scholar, British textual critic, and son of a merchant banker, Herman Hoskier (1832–1904).^[1]
- ▶ Hoskier, as textual critic, generally but not entirely supported the Byzantine text-type against the Alexandrian text-type. He compared, in *Codex B and Its Allies*, the text of Codex Vaticanus with Codex Sinaiticus, and showed how many significant disagreements the best witnesses of the Alexandrian text have. Hoskier attempted to demonstrate that Vaticanus presents a text which has been conformed to the Coptic versions. Hoskier compared text of the Minuscule 700 with the Textus Receptus and exhibits 2724 differences.
- ▶ Hoskier collated every known Greek manuscript of the Apocalypse up to 1918. This took 30 years. The result of this work was published in 1929 (*Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse*). Hoskier shows parallels between Papyrus 46 and the Ethiopian Version in the Pauline epistles.^[2]

