

EGYPTIAN BIBLE TEXT

A group of [Greek](#) biblical texts originating in Alexandria, the site of the famous CATECHETICAL [SCHOOL](#) where Coptic and [Greek](#) theologians were busy with Christian religious studies, undoubtedly including texts of the Bible. It was here that ORIGEN compiled his famous Hexapla (see [HEXAPLA AND TETRAPLA](#)), and surely this tradition persisted at that [school](#) in the early centuries of Christianity.

It is possible that its scholars collected all available texts of the Old and New Testaments for study and collation of some authorized versions, as is evident from the CHESTER BEATTY PAPYRI, where emendations prove that there was research associated with their labor. The work on the Egyptian text was probably accelerated during the episcopate of HESYCHIUS, an Egyptian bishop and biblical scholar, whose recension of the Gospels is cited by Saint Jerome.

Hesychius was martyred in 311, two years before Constantine I declared Christianity the state religion by the issuance of the [Edict](#) of Milan. Modern scholarship has designated his work the Hesychian recension of the Gospels, which must have been utilized by later scribes. It is known that Constantine ordered the preparation of fifty copies of the Bible for distribution among the Christian churches of the empire. These were made at Alexandria or [Caesarea](#) or both, though Alexandria, with its concentration of theologians at the Catechetical School, appears to have been the natural center for handling this task. Of the Constantine Bibles, four somewhat incomplete texts have survived, all on vellum rather than papyrus.

These are the CODEX VATICANUS, the CODEX SINAITICUS, the CODEX ALEXANDRINUS, and the CODEX EPHRAEMI SYRI. Together with the earlier [Coptic papyri](#) comprising the Chester Beatty Collection and the BODMER PAPYRI, these [codices](#) constitute the most valuable source of the Egyptian text of the Bible.

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