

# Introduction to Textual Criticism

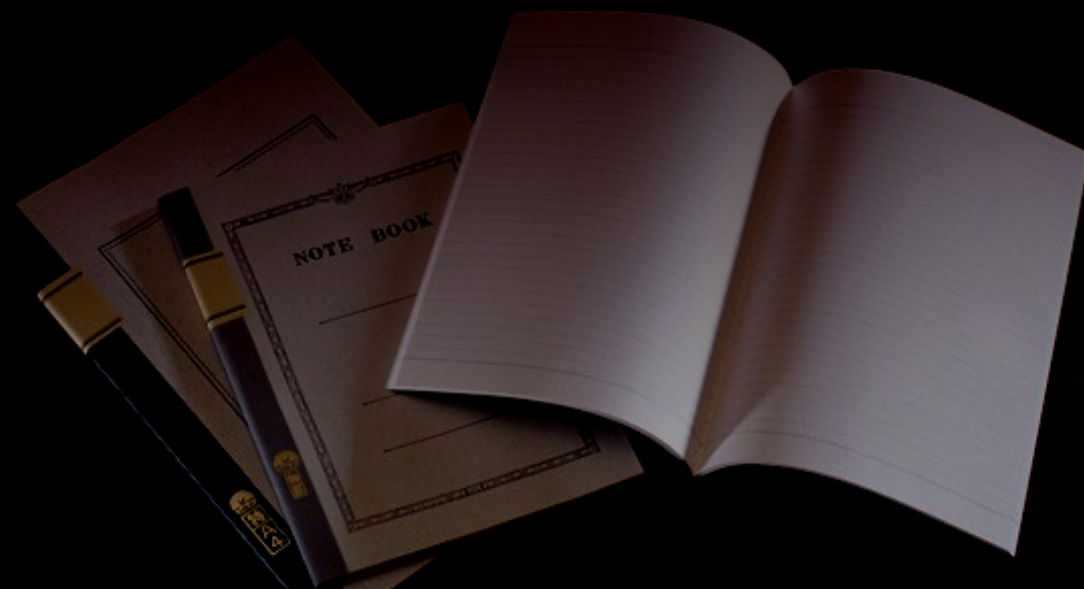
Dr. Christopher Cone

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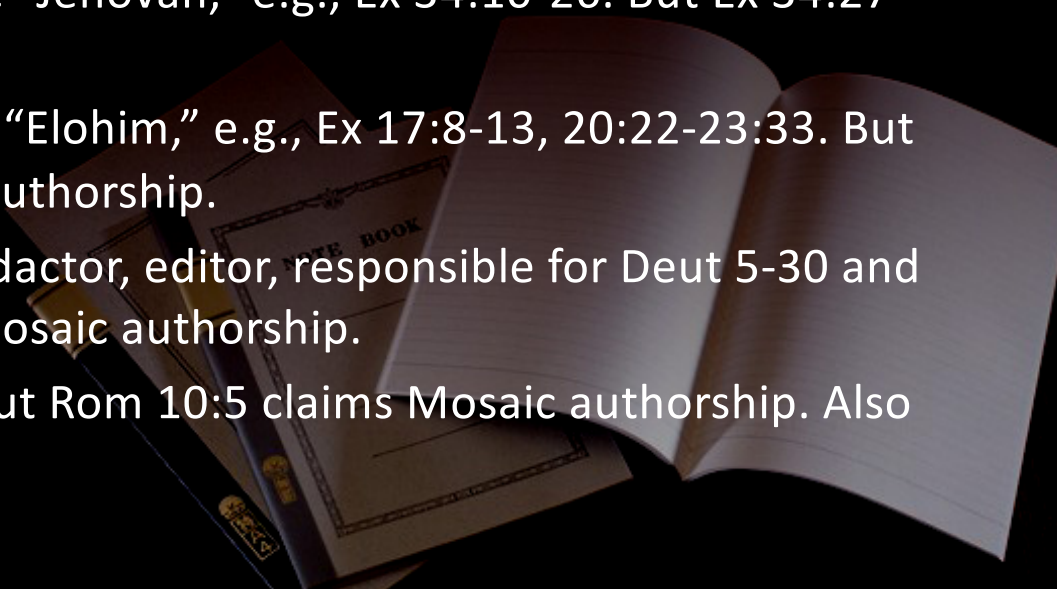
# Textual Criticism

- Higher Criticism
  - Dealing with author identity
  - Issues like authorship, timing, cultural background
- Lower Criticism
  - Dealing with the reliability of the text itself
  - Especially focused on manuscript variants



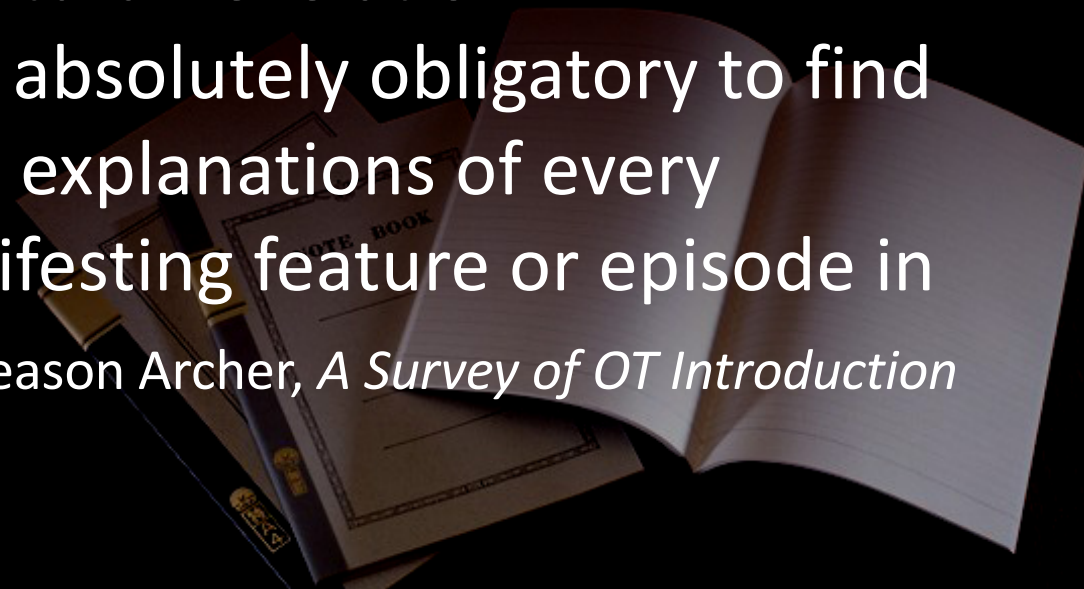
# Higher Criticism: The Torah

- Hobbes, (1651) questioned Mosaic authorship in *The Leviathan*.
- Benedict Spinoza (1670) rejected Mosaic authorship based on retrospective passages and anachronism.
- Richard Simon (1678), Jean Astruc (1684-1766), Johann Eichhorn (1752-1827), and Julius Wellhausen – (1844-1918) – the documentary theory (JEDP theory)
  - Jahwist (850 BC) – uses the name “Jehovah,” e.g., Ex 34:10-26. But Ex 34:27 claims Mosaic authorship.
  - Elohist (750 BC)– uses the name “Elohim,” e.g., Ex 17:8-13, 20:22-23:33. But Ex 17:14 and 24:4 claim Mosaic authorship.
  - Deuteronomist (650 BC) – the redactor, editor, responsible for Deut 5-30 and 32:1-42, but 31:9 and 32 claim Mosaic authorship.
  - Priestly author – e.g., Lev 18:5, but Rom 10:5 claims Mosaic authorship. Also Num 33:2 and 33:3-49



# Higher Criticism: The Torah

- The Documentary Theory has been characterized by a subtle species of circular reasoning; it tends to posit its conclusion (the Bible is no supernatural revelation) as its underlying premise (there can be no such thing as supernatural revelation)...Unfortunately...it rendered impossible any fair consideration of the evidences presented by the Scripture of supernatural revelation. Furthermore, it made it absolutely obligatory to find rationalistic, humanistic explanations of every miraculous or God-manifesting feature or episode in the text of Scripture. (Gleason Archer, *A Survey of OT Introduction* (Chicago, Moody, 1995), 113.)



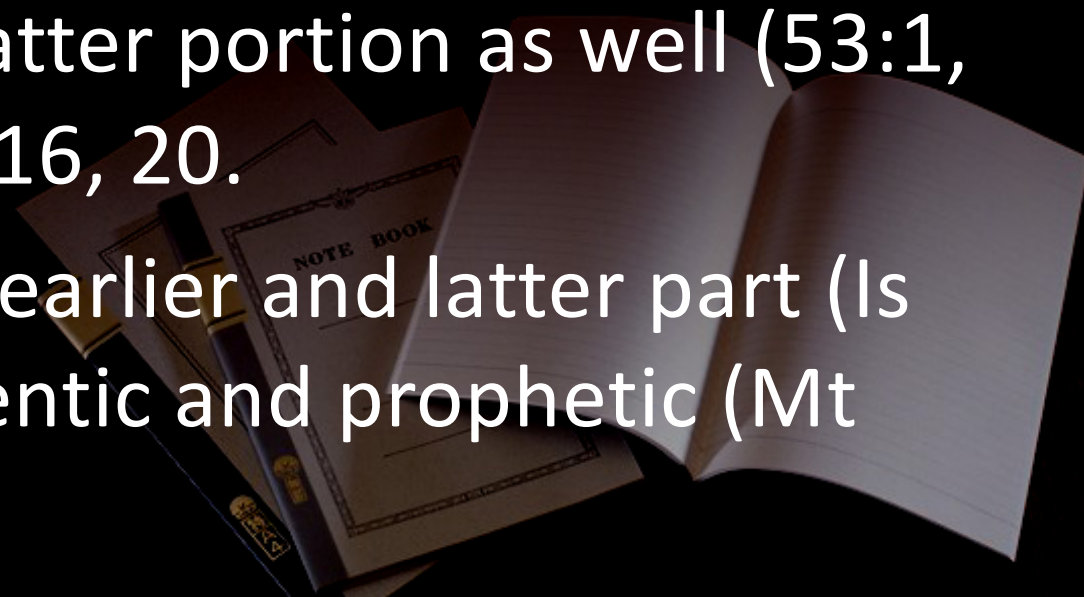
# Higher Criticism: Isaiah

- Isaiah – three supposed different authors, due to three different styles, and different content (1-36, 37-39, 40-66 or 1-39, 40-54, 55-66):
  - Isaiah – wrote 1-39
  - A later redactor, Deutero Isaiah wrote later sections and edited earlier parts to include prophetic mentions of the “predicted” fall of Jerusalem (40-54).
  - Trito Isaiah – a third author, contrasted with the earlier message of judgment, writes of restoration (55-66).



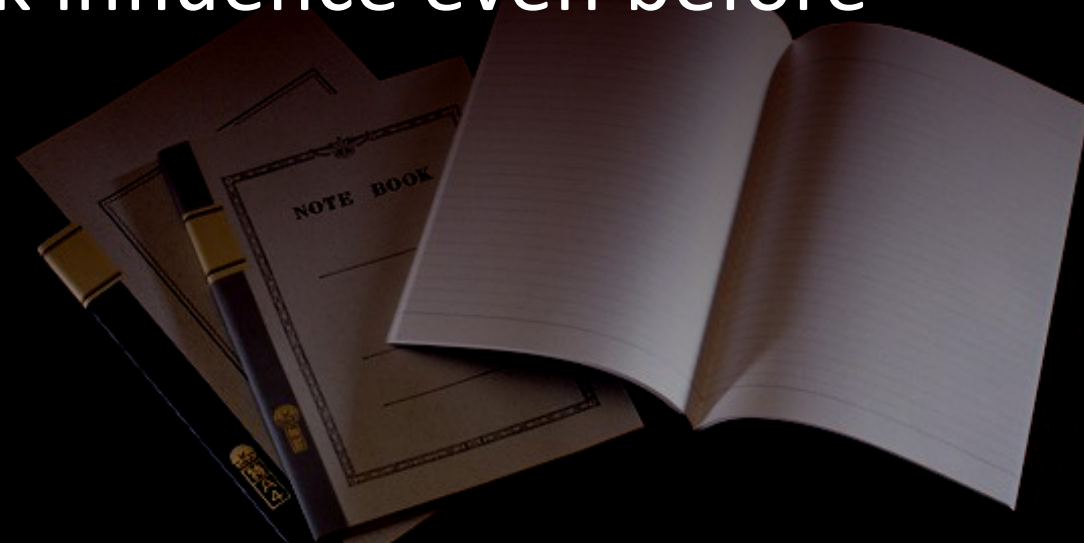
# Higher Criticism: Isaiah

- What does the Bible say about Isaiah's authorship?
- Matthew – Isaiah 40:3 and 42:1 are written by Isaiah (Mt 3:3, 12:17-18)
- Luke – Isaiah 40:3-5 written by Isaiah (Lk 3:4), Isaiah 53:7-8 written by Isaiah (Acts 8:28)
- Paul – Isaiah wrote latter portion as well (53:1, 65:1), in Romans 10:16, 20.
- Jesus – quoted both earlier and latter part (Is 29:13, 61:1) as authentic and prophetic (Mt 15:8-9, 11:5).



# Higher Criticism: Daniel

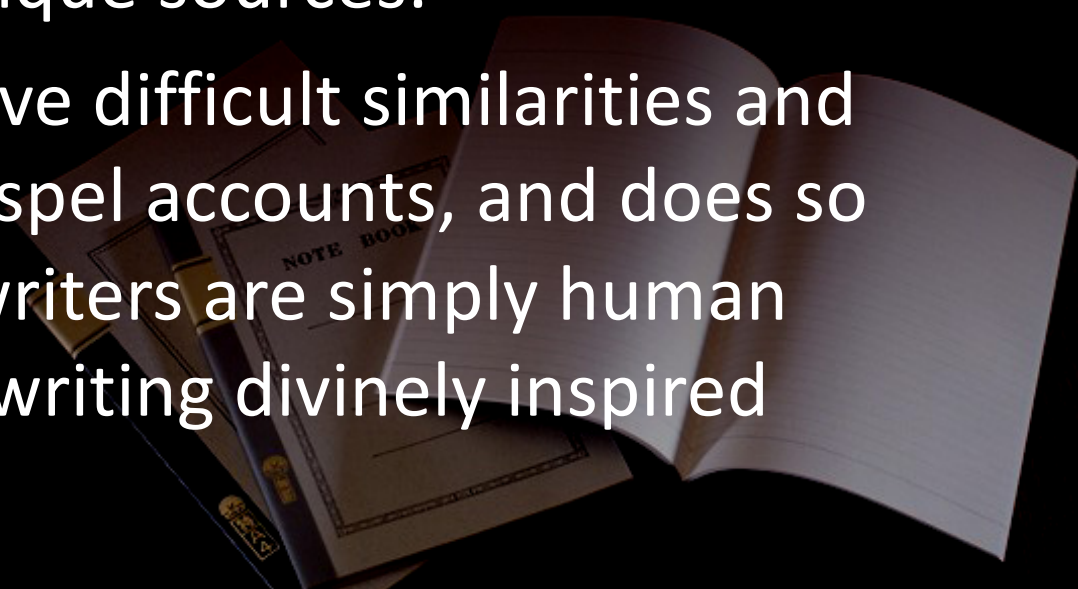
- Rather than writing between 590 and 516 BC, he had to write around 167 BC:
  - Because the prophecies are so precise
  - Because of Greek influenced terms
- Supernatural prophesy would be precise.
- Archeological evidence from the remains of Nineveh shows Greek influence even before the time of Daniel





# Higher Criticism: The Gospels

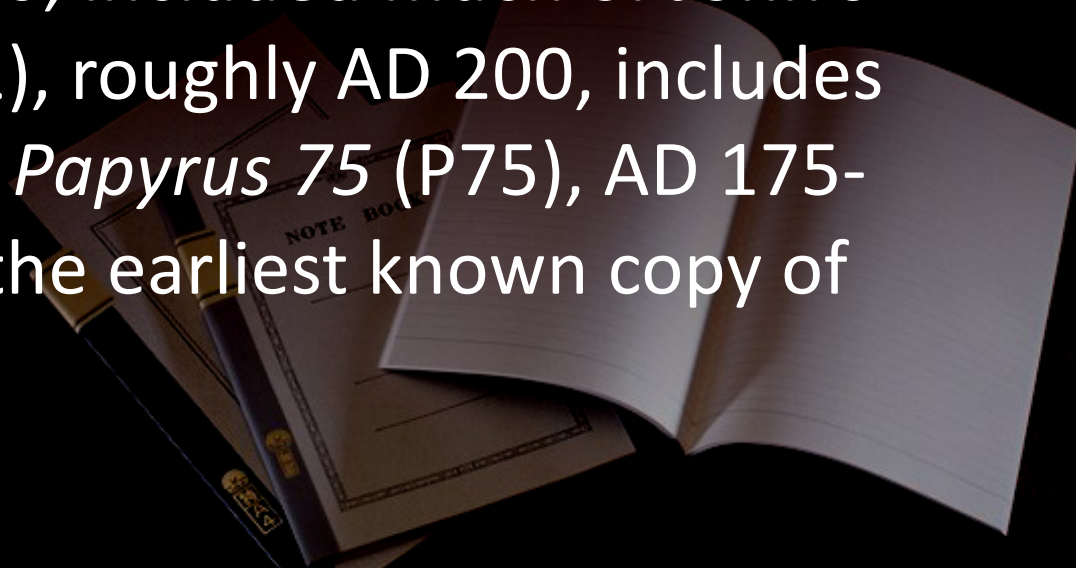
- Mark wrote the first Gospel, based upon the authority of Peter, and in parallel with the hypothetical source document referred to as “Q.” Matthew then wrote, borrowing from unique sources, from Mark, and from Q. Finally, Luke wrote, but did not use Matthew’s unique sources; in fact he didn’t use Matthew at all, but rather used Mark and Q, as well as his own unique sources.
- The theory tries to resolve difficult similarities and differences between Gospel accounts, and does so by suggesting that the writers are simply human compliers, who are not writing divinely inspired words.





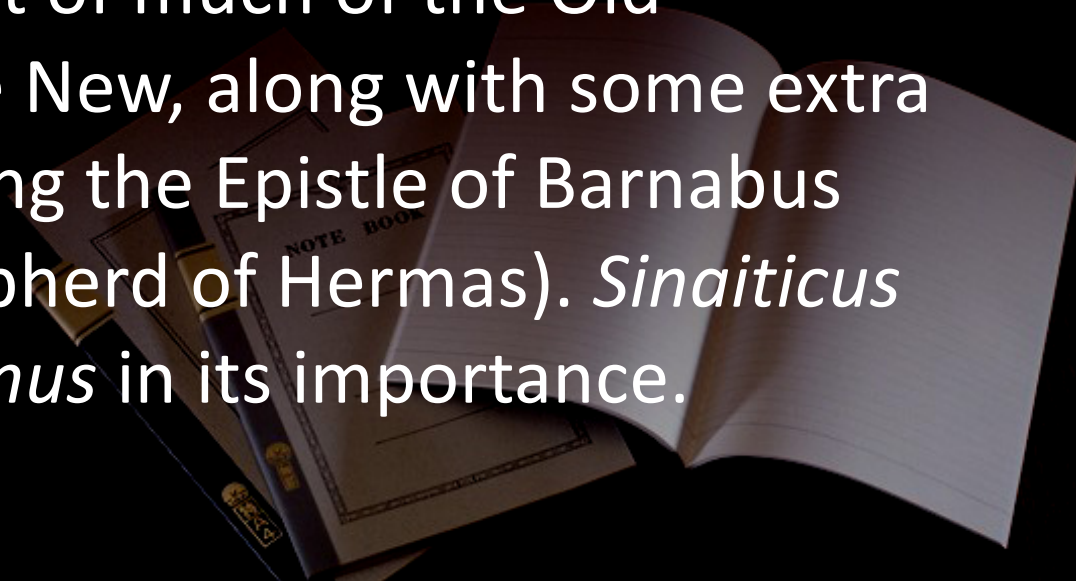
# Lower Criticism: Key Manuscripts

- *Papyrus 46* (P46), AD 200, provided an early testimony to the Epistles of Paul, including much of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. P46 also included the Book of Hebrews (for this reason some recognize it as Pauline, despite internal evidence to the contrary).
- *Papyrus 66* (P66), AD 200, included much of John's Gospel. *Papyrus 72* (P72), roughly AD 200, includes Jude, and 1 and 2 Peter. *Papyrus 75* (P75), AD 175-225, includes John and the earliest known copy of Luke.



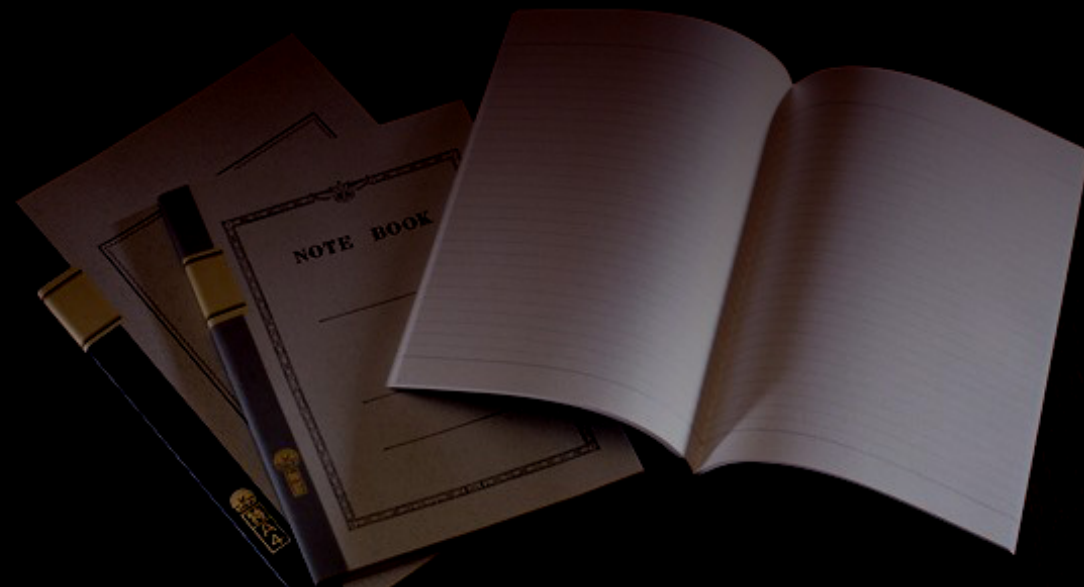
# Lower Criticism: Key Manuscripts

- *Codex Vaticanus* (identified as “B”) is an early 4<sup>th</sup> century uncial, containing much of the LXX and a significant portion of the New Testament. *Vaticanus* provides the greatest manuscript evidence for the authenticity of the NT.
- *Codex Sinaiticus* (commonly identified simply as “א,” the Hebrew letter, aleph) is a 4<sup>th</sup> century uncial which contained the Greek text of much of the Old Testament and all of the New, along with some extra biblical writings (including the Epistle of Barnabus and sections of the Shepherd of Hermas). *Sinaiticus* is second only to *Vaticanus* in its importance.



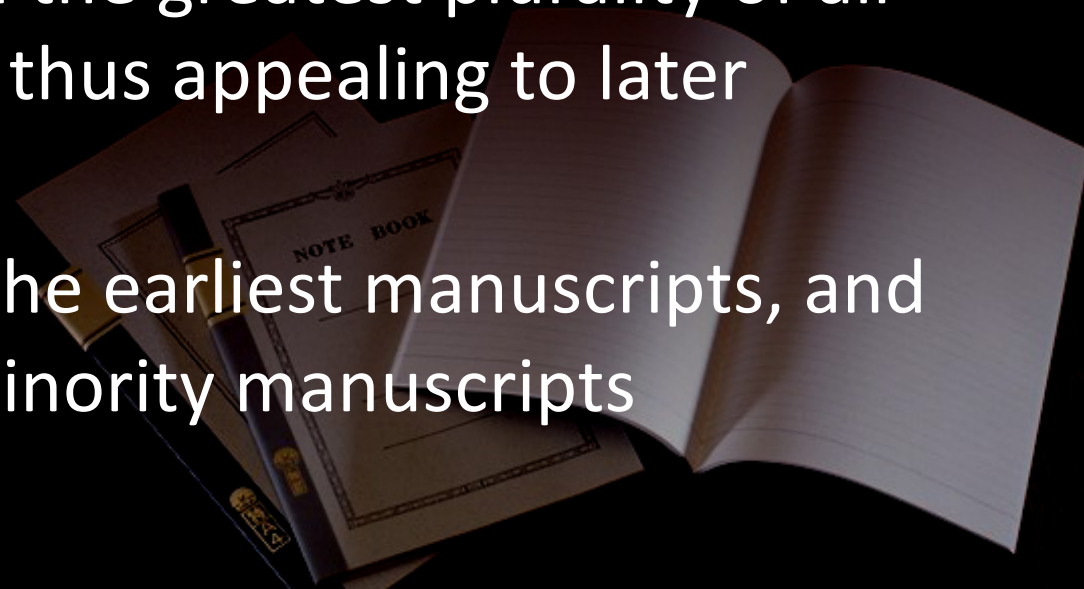
# Lower Criticism: Key Manuscripts

- *Codex Alexandrinus* (identified as “A”) is a mid-5<sup>th</sup> century uncial from Alexandria, and provides along with *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* significant evidence for NT authenticity. *Alexandrinus* contains nearly all of the OT (with only tiny portions missing) and most of the NT.



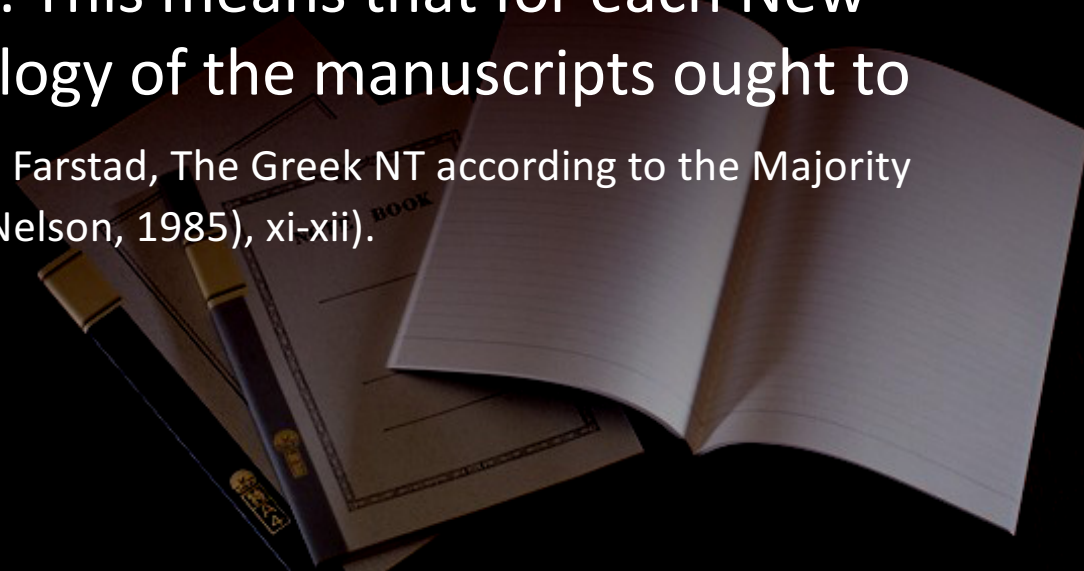
# Lower Criticism: Key Textual Traditions

- *Textus Receptus* – the received text, based on Erasmus' Greek texts in 1516-1519. a 1633 edition refers to the text as “received by all.” Erasmus relied on a small number of later manuscripts. (Tyndale Bible, KJV)
- Majority Text – relies on the greatest plurality of all the Greek Manuscripts, thus appealing to later manuscripts
- Critical Text – relies on the earliest manuscripts, and thus often appeals to minority manuscripts

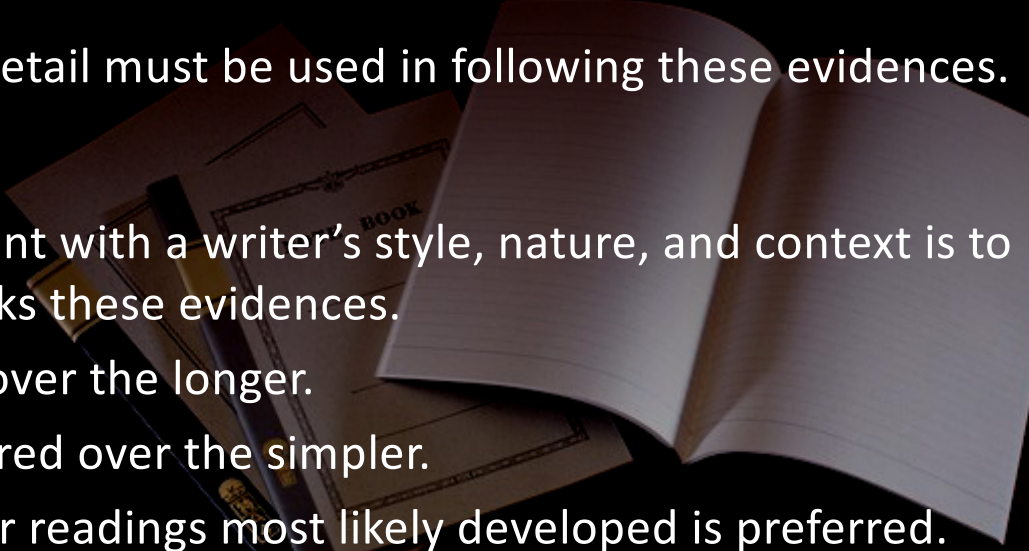


# Lower Criticism: Majority Text Methodology

- Majority Text methodology for choosing between variants:
  - (1) Any reading overwhelmingly attested by the manuscript tradition is more likely to be original than its rival(s)...(2) Final decisions about readings ought to be made on the basis of a reconstruction of their history in the manuscript tradition. This means that for each New Testament book a genealogy of the manuscripts ought to be constructed. (Hodges and Farstad, *The Greek NT according to the Majority Text*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson, 1985), xi-xii).



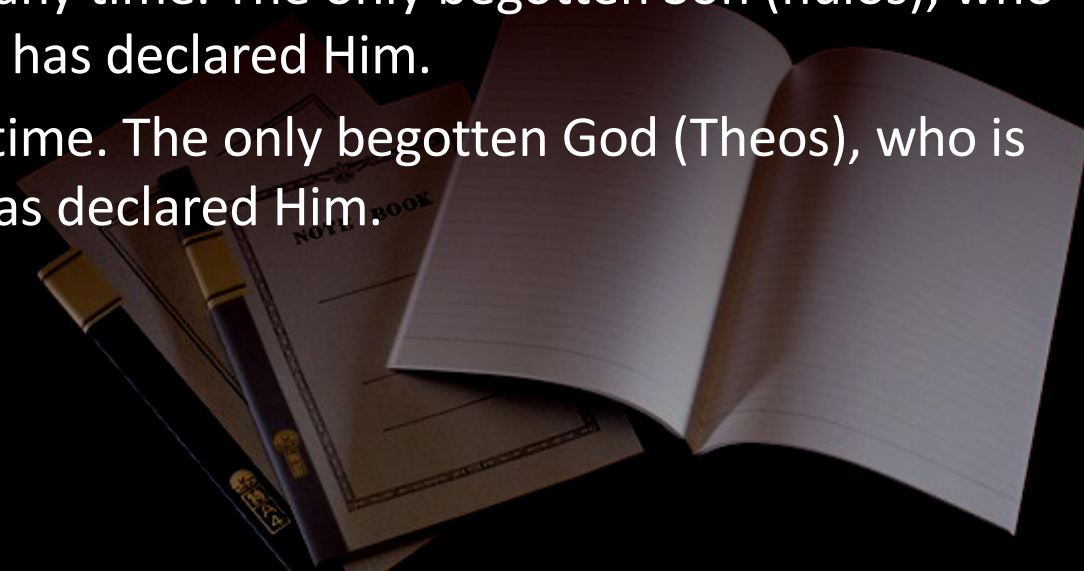
# Lower Criticism: Critical Text Methodology

- Critical Text methodology for choosing between variants:
    - External evidences:
      - (1) That which is supported by earliest external sources is generally authentic.
      - (2) Age, location, and character, rather than number of manuscripts is more determinate of authenticity.
      - (3) When there is broadly evidenced conflict, special attention should be placed on agreement between manuscripts originally separated by the greatest distances.
      - (4) Great care and attention to detail must be used in following these evidences.
    - Internal evidences:
      - (1) The reading which is congruent with a writer's style, nature, and context is to be preferred over that which lacks these evidences.
      - (2) Shorter reading is preferred over the longer.
      - (3) The difficult reading is preferred over the simpler.
      - (4) The reading from which other readings most likely developed is preferred.
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# Lower Criticism: Some Examples of Variants

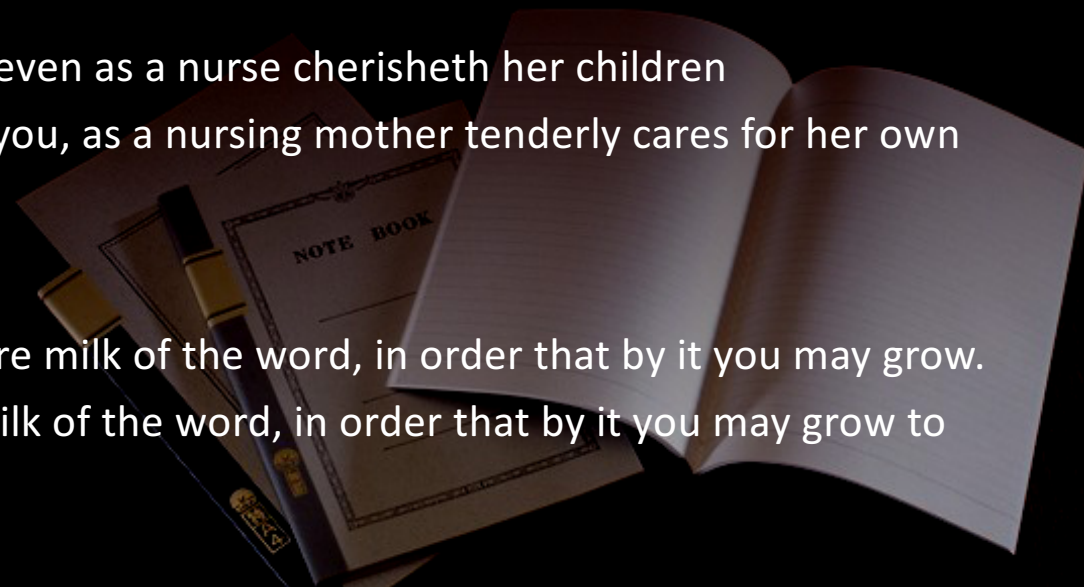
- Matthew 18:11
  - MT/TR: For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.
  - CT: Omitted
- Mark 16:9-20
  - Omitted in CT.
- John 1:18
  - MT/TR: No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son (huios), who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.
  - CT: No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten God (Theos), who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.
- John 7:53-8:11
  - Omitted in CT.





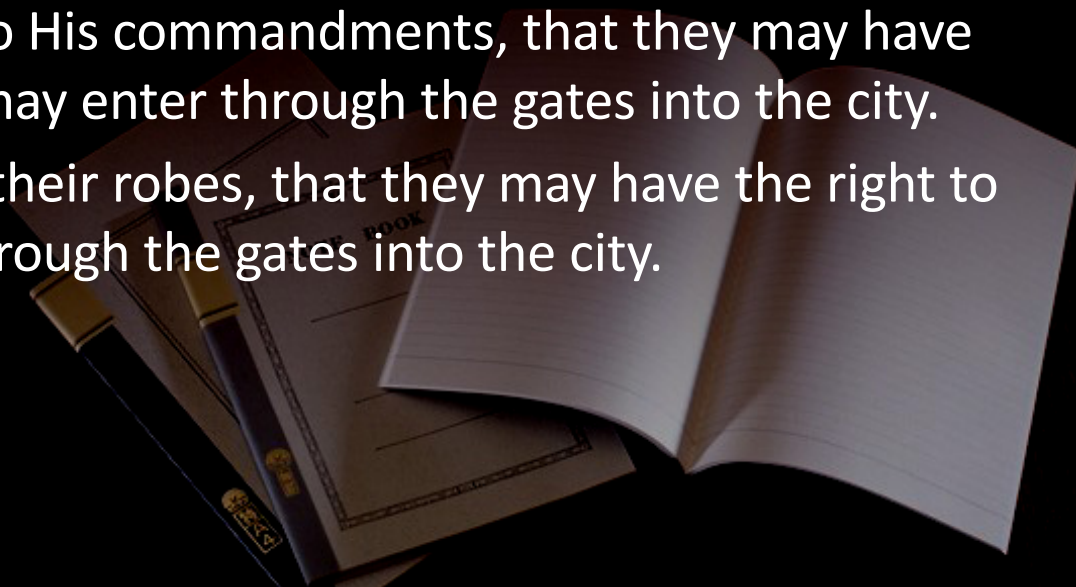
# Lower Criticism: Some Examples of Variants

- Romans 8:1
  - MT/TR: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.
  - CT: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- Romans 16:24
  - MT/TR: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
  - Omitted in CT
- 1 Thessalonians 2:7
  - MT/TR: But we were (epioi) among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children
  - CT: But we proved to be (nepioi) among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.
- 1 Peter 2:2
  - MT/TR: as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, in order that by it you may grow.
  - CT: as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, in order that by it you may grow to salvation.



# Lower Criticism: Some Examples of Variants

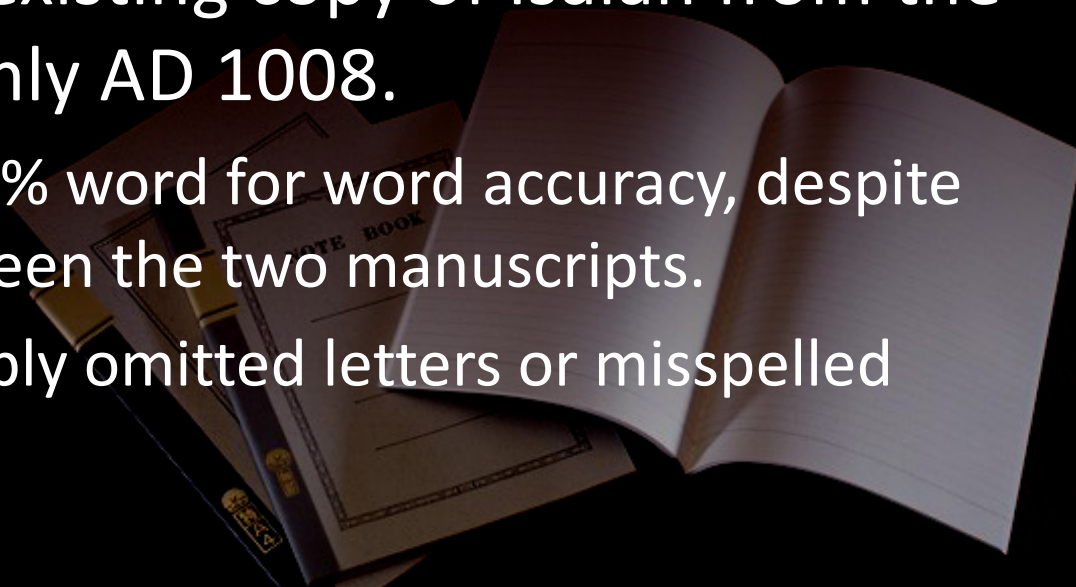
- 1 John 5:13
  - MT/TR: These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and in order that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.
  - CT: These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.
- Revelation 22:14
  - MT/TR: Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.
  - CT: Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.



# Lower Criticism:

## OT Reliability in Spite of Variants

- Dead Sea Scrolls – dating from 250 BC – AD 50, 800 scrolls found at Qumran in 1947 (Dead Sea Scrolls), containing fragments from every book of the Old Testament except Esther.
- An entire manuscript of Isaiah was found (from 75 BC), comparing to the earliest existing copy of Isaiah from the Masoretic Text, from roughly AD 1008.
  - The comparison showed 95% word for word accuracy, despite the 100 year distance between the two manuscripts.
  - The variants (5%) were simply omitted letters or misspelled words.



# Lower Criticism:

## NT Reliability in Spite of Variants

- Nearly 6,000 Greek NT manuscripts, internal consistency is roughly 99.5% pure.
- We have copies of copies, and those copies are largely reliable and represent with incredible precision earlier manuscripts.
- A comparison of the MT and the CT show 98% agreement.  
(Wallace, Daniel, "The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June, 1991, 157-8.)
- D.A. Carson: "The purity of text is of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants." (Carson, D.A., *The King James Version Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 56.)