

## Textual criticism and the spiritual factor

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People who deny the existence of the Creator, and therefore of an inspired text, have no reason to participate in the debate (except in an attempt to defend their disbelief). The NT gains its importance by being divinely inspired; if it is not inspired, there is no point in wasting time criticizing its text (it would be irrelevant for today). Even so, most textual critics of the NT do not believe in its divine inspiration. So what motivates them? Leaving aside those who want to defend their disbelief by attacking the belief of others, that the Sovereign Creator exists and has delivered a written Revelation to our race are given presuppositions.

There are several biblical texts that affirm God's purpose to preserve His Revelation, something logical and necessary, but they do not say how He would do it. The Bible clearly teaches that Satan exists and that he is the leader of the opposition to God on this earth. This opposition includes the Holy Scriptures – it began in the Garden. Since both God and Satan have a keen interest in the destiny, or the fortunes, of the NT, any model of textual criticism that excludes the supernatural is doomed to go wrong. It follows that people who use such models are condemned to never get to the truth. Worse still, they are serving Satan, whether they believe it or not, as I will now explain.

The Sovereign Creator, while walking on this earth in the person of Jesus, was very clear: "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me, scatters" (Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23). Note that the Sovereign does not permit neutrality; either you are with Him or you are against Him.<sup>1</sup> Even what we do is not neutral; if we are not gathering with Him, we are scattering. There is no third option. Whoever is not with Jesus is with Satan, automatically. There are only two spiritual kingdoms in this world, and everything that happens serves one or the other. 1 John 5:19 says that "the whole world lies in the malignant one". The verb 'to lie' here is used of lying on a bed—your entire weight is on the bed. A bed has no will, but Satan certainly does; the picture is one of control. The only way to escape this control is to surrender to Sovereign Jesus. Until you belong to Jesus, you remain in the world controlled by Satan.

In John 8:44 the Sovereign declared that Satan is "the father of lying", and that "there is no truth in him". It follows that whenever someone lies, he will be obeying Satan. And whenever someone embraces a lie (such as evolutionism, Marxism, humanism, relativism, etc.), he will be giving Satan a bridgehead in his mind, which he will try to develop into a stronghold.<sup>2</sup> Yes, because God "cannot lie" (Titus 1:3),

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<sup>1</sup> Agnosticism is a passive rejection.

<sup>2</sup> A stronghold of Satan on a given subject does not allow one to think freely about that subject. The person is forced to stay with the lie. The only way out is for someone with the power of God to come and nullify the stronghold.

since it is contrary to His essence. Several times Jesus called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of the Truth". So, all truth belongs to the Holy Spirit, and all falsehood belongs to Satan. It follows that as long as someone is teaching falsehood, he is serving Satan. Attention: what someone thinks does not change reality. Saul of Tarsus thought he was serving God by persecuting Christians; only in fact he was serving Satan. Since eclectic textual criticism is based on falsehoods, it belongs to Satan.

Ephesians 2:2 states that Satan is "the spirit who is now at work in the sons of the disobedience". This spirit is presently at work (present tense) in 'the sons of the disobedience'. 'Sons' of something are characterized by that something, and the something in this case is 'the' disobedience (the Text has the definite article)—a continuation of the original rebellion against the Sovereign of the universe. Anyone in rebellion against the Creator is under satanic influence, direct or indirect (in most cases a demon acts as Satan's agent, when something more than the influence of the surrounding culture is required). Anyone in rebellion against the Creator will also have strongholds of Satan in his mind. Of a certainty. If I am not mistaken, all editions of the Greek NT published by the United Bible Societies were produced by 'sons of the disobedience', and Satan did not miss the opportunity.

Yes, but how can we know who is a son of the disobedience? Sovereign Jesus explained one way in Matthew 7:15-20:

"Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.<sup>1</sup> 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do people gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Just so, every good tree produces good fruits, but the rotten tree produces evil fruits.<sup>2</sup> 18 A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruits. 19 So every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.<sup>3</sup> 20 Therefore, you will know them by their fruits."

Exactly; just pay attention to the results of his work. Since the editors of the UBS editions foisted errors of fact and obvious contradictions on their texts, the result has been a constant weakening of confidence in the NT's integrity and reliability. Equally pernicious are the footnotes in many modern versions whose real purpose is to undermine confidence in the biblical text. Whoever undermines confidence in the biblical text is serving Satan. Just look at the fruits.

In addition to not permitting neutrality, Sovereign Jesus was strict about the requirements for identifying with Him. "Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of the Man will also be ashamed of

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<sup>1</sup> Probably demonized; demonic prophecies are always destructive.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord uses 'rotten' and 'evil' (or 'malignant') because He is really talking about people, not trees.

<sup>3</sup> The Lord is very clear about the eternal destiny of people who do not produce good fruit. Remember Ephesians 2:8-10—we are not saved by good works, but we are indeed saved for good works; if we do not produce, we are not saved.

Him whenever He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy Angels.”<sup>1</sup> (Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26). You may not be ashamed of the words that Jesus spoke; it is mandatory to agree with what He taught. 2 John 9 goes in the same direction: "Anyone who turns aside and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God".<sup>2</sup> To continue in His teaching is to agree with Him. Is not having "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16) to think like He does? And what then? Then the following: Jesus was adamant about the inspiration and preservation of the OT; and once glorified He was more than emphatic about the NT (Revelation 22: 18-19). Anyone who does not think like Jesus with regard to the inspiration and preservation of the Holy Scriptures is on the other side.

It remains to comment on 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12:

That one's coming is according to the working of Satan with all power<sup>3</sup> and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception among those who are wasting themselves, because they did not receive the love of the truth<sup>4</sup> so that they might be saved.<sup>5</sup> 11 Yes, because of this God will send them an active delusion so that they will believe the lie<sup>6</sup> 12 and so that all may be condemned who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in wickedness.<sup>7</sup>

Notice the sequence: first they reject the love of the truth; it is as a consequence of that choice that God sends the delusion. The implication is that there is a point of no return; God sends the delusion so that they may be condemned. The only intelligent choice is to embrace the truth!

Consider with me the consequences of the facts enunciated in verses 10-12 for a whole nation, like Brazil, where I now live. We have many thousands of local churches that call themselves Christian. But I know of almost none that could be characterized as 'loving the truth'. No one wants a Bible with objective authority. Humanistic, relativistic, materialistic values have taken over the churches. Biblical

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<sup>1</sup> The world in which we live is no longer 'post-modern', it is becoming increasingly anti-Christian. In North America and Europe people have already been put in prison for preaching what the Bible says. To spend eternity in the Lake of Fire is the price you will pay for being 'politically correct' in today's world.

<sup>2</sup> If you turn aside, you are out. "Does not continue" can only refer to someone who has been 'in'.

<sup>3</sup> When Satan fell he did not lose his power.

<sup>4</sup> The use of the verb 'receive' clearly implies an act of volition on their part; that love was offered or made available to them but they did not want it; they wanted to be able to lie and to entertain lies told by others. But the consequences of such a choice are terrible; they turned their back on salvation.

<sup>5</sup> Since there are only two spiritual kingdoms in this world, that of Sovereign Jesus and that of Satan, "those who are wasting themselves", in this text, are still in Satan's kingdom and therefore wide open to his "wicked deception". The Text states plainly that they are wasting themselves "because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved". They are not saved.

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps "the lie" is best illustrated in our day by the theory of evolution: 'There is no Creator'—so there will not be any accounting; so you can do what you feel like. How terrible will be the awakening!

<sup>7</sup> "Taking pleasure in wickedness" involves rejecting the Truth of a moral Creator who will demand an accounting, or even overt rebellion against that Creator (like Lucifer/Satan).

values are no longer acceptable. In consequence, Satan has control of the government, of education, of health services, of commerce, of the entertainment industry, in short, of the whole culture. The churches that have rejected biblical values are part of the problem—since they have rejected “the love of the truth”, they have been taken over by “active delusion”.

Note that God Himself sends that delusion with the declared objective of condemning all those who believed the lie. If God Himself visits “active delusion” upon a whole country, what possible escape is there? The only possible ‘medicine’ is “the love of the truth”. Those of us who consider ourselves to be true subjects of Sovereign Jesus need to appeal to Him to show us how to promote the love of the truth to the churches and to the society at large. Here in Brazil it may be too late, but if God’s grace still offers us a window of opportunity, we must devote ourselves to promoting the love of the truth by all possible means.

But to return to the stated subject of this video: what I have said about Brazil applies to textual critics as well. Since eclectic textual criticism is based on falsehoods, it belongs to Satan. Since most theological seminaries and Bible schools teach eclectic textual criticism, even the most conservative ones, and since that is the only option that they teach, most students graduate thinking that is all there is. The graduate may believe the NT to be inspired and inerrant in the autographs, but he uses and teaches from an eclectic Greek text and modern versions based on an eclectic text. He embraced a lie because he trusted the teachers who assured him it was the truth. But that lie has become a stronghold of Satan in his mind, which is why so many evangelicals seem to be unable to reconsider what they were taught. Far worse, if God Himself sends active delusion into their minds, because they embraced a lie,<sup>1</sup> how can they escape?

Since textual criticism exists only for a text considered to be lost, the mere idea of criticizing the NT text is already against Jesus. A critic is above the text he is criticizing. I am a NT scholar, not critic; the Text is above me. I have a theory of the preservation of the Text, because the text has never been lost. We have historical evidence to support the following statements: 1) the apostles knew they were writing Scripture; 2) the apostles knew that colleagues were writing Scripture; 3) contemporary Christians immediately recognized that those writings were Scripture; 4) therefore, they were concerned with their protection and preservation; 5) the proliferation of well-made copies started right away; 6) there was a normal transmission of those writings from the beginning and down through the centuries; 7) thus, the original wording was never lost.

## **God has preserved His Text!**

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<sup>1</sup> God is just, and will take all relevant factors into account. Someone who is determined to teach and defend the lie is probably in a bad way.