

SCRIPTURE TWISTING METHODS OF THE CULTS

PART 2—20 METHODS

MATTHEW 7:15-29; 2 PETER 2:1-3

Introduction

In debating and discussions with non-Christians such as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or even Atheists, you will find many areas of twisting of the Scriptures. In the book *"Scripture Twisting,"* James Sire has a chapter devoted to each of the methods. This material comes from the appendix of that book and summarizes his in depth treatment of each of these points.

1. **INACCURATE QUOTATION:**

A Biblical text is referred to but is either not quoted in the way the text appears in the Bible or is wrongly attributed.

Example: The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (Founder of the Transcendental Meditation movement) says, *"Christ said, 'Be still and know that I am God.'"* Whereas this text is found ONLY in *Psalms*.

2. **TWISTED TRANSLATION:**

The Biblical text is retranslated, not in accordance with sound Greek scholarship, to fit a preconceived teaching of a cult.

Example: the Jehovah's Witnesses translate *John 1:1* as *"In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the word was a god."*

3. **BIBLICAL HOOK:**

A text of Scripture is quoted primarily as a device to grasp the attention of readers or listeners and then followed by a teaching which is so nonbiblical that it would appear far more dubious to most people had it not been preceded by a reference to Scripture.

Example: Mormon missionaries quote *James 1:5* which promises God's wisdom to those who ask him and, then, follow this by explaining that when Joseph Smith did this he was given a revelation from which he concluded that God the Father has a body.

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4. **IGNORING THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT:**

A text of Scripture is quoted but removed from the surrounding verses which form the immediate framework for its meaning.

Example: Alan Watts (*Eastern Philosophy - Buddhism · Hinduism · Pantheism · Religious naturalism · Taoism*) misquotes the first half of *John 5:39* (*"Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life"*), claiming that Jesus was challenging His listeners' over emphasis of the Old Testament, but the remainder of the immediate context reads, *"and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."* (**verses 39-40**), which shows that Jesus was upholding the value of the Old Testament as a testimony to Himself.

5. **COLLAPSING CONTEXTS:**

Two or more verses which have little or nothing to do with each other are put together as if one were a commentary of the other(s).

Example: The Mormons associate *Jeremiah 1:5* with *John 1:2, 14* and thus imply that both verses talk about the premortal existence of all human beings; *Jeremiah 1:5*, however, speaks of God's foreknowledge of Jeremiah (Not his premortal existence) and *John 1:2* refers to the pre-existence of God the Son and not to human beings in general.

6. **OVERSPECIFICATION:**

A more detailed or specific conclusion than is legitimate is drawn from a biblical text.

Example: The Mormon missionary manual quotes the parable of the virgins from *Matthew 25:1-13* to document the concept that *"mortality is a probationary period during which we prepare to meet God."* But the parable of the virgins means something far less specific, for example, that human beings should be prepared at any time to meet the Lord.

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7. WORD PLAY:

A word or phrase from a biblical translation is examined and interpreted as if the revelation had been given in that language.

Example: Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science) says the name Adam consist of two syllables, A DAM, which means an obstruction, in which case, Adam signifies *"the obstacle which the serpent, sin, would impose between man and his Creator."*

8. THE FIGURATIVE FALLACY:

Either (1) mistaking literal language for figurative language or (2)mistaking figurative language for literal language.

Example of (1): Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science) interprets EVENING as *"mistiness of mortal thought; weariness of mortal mind; obscured views; peace and rest."*

Example of (2): The Mormon theologian James Talmage interprets the prophesy in **Isaiah 29:4** that *"thou shalt be brought down and speak out of the ground"* to mean that God's Word would come to people from the Book of Mormon which was taken out of the ground at the hill of Cumorah.

9. SPECULATIVE READINGS OF PREDICTIVE PROPHECY:

A predictive prophesy is too readily explained by the occurrence of specific events, despite the fact that equally committed Biblical scholars consider the interpretation highly dubious.

Example: The stick of Judah and the Stick of Joseph in **Ezekiel 37:15- 23** are interpreted by the Mormons to mean the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

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10. SAYING BUT NOT CITING:

A writer says that the Bible says such and such but does not cite the specific text (which often indicates that there may be no such text at all). **Example:** *"God helps those who help themselves"* is not found in the Bible.