

Scripture as Literature

Introduction.

- A. The Bible is a work of literature.
- B. There are different types of literature.
 - 1. Narrative (history).
 - 2. Poetry.
 - 3. Law.
 - 4. Wisdom.
 - 5. Apocalypse.
 - 6. Prophecy.
 - 7. Gospel.
 - 8. Letters.
 - 9. Parables.
- C. Figurative language.
 - 1. Metaphors and similes.
 - 2. Anthropomorphism.
 - 3. Hyperbole.
 - 4. Allegory.

I. Ignoring the context.

- A. What it is: not paying attention to the context of the passage.
- B. Examples.
 - 1. Maharashi Mahesh Yogi.
 - 2. Edgar Cayce.
 - 3. Alan Watts.
- C. How to fix it: any reading which ignores the immediate context cannot be considered accurate.

II. Collapsing contexts.

- A. What it is: Pearl-stringing two or more passages that are not related.
- B. Examples.
 - 1. That God was once a man.
 - 2. Mormon doctrine of pre-mortal existence of the soul.
- C. How to fix it.
 - 1. Analyze immediate and larger context.
 - 2. Only use it (comparing Scripture with Scripture) if there is overlap.

III. Overspecification.

- A. What it is: Drawing a more detailed meaning for a text than what is intended.
- B. Examples.
 - 1. Mormonism: pre-existence of the soul.
 - 2. Mary Baker Eddy: unity of God, man, and the universe.
- C. How to fix it: Do not go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6).

IV. Word Play.

- A. What it is: making a pun out of words in a translation.
- B. Examples.
 - 1. Mary Baker Eddy: Adam.
 - 2. Numeric value of letters in a word.
 - 3. "In the beginning..."
- C. How to fix it: Recognize it for what it is and ignore it.

V. Figurative fallacy.

- A. What it is: mistaking figurative for literal and *vice versa*.
- B. Examples.
 - 1. L to F: Mary Baker Eddy: dove, morning, evening, day.
 - 2. F to L: Mormonism: Ariel (Is. 29:1-6).
- C. How to fix it: Take the clues from context as to which is which and interpret accordingly.

VI. Speculative reading of Predictive Prophecy (Yogi Berra).

- A. What it is: Certainty about fulfillment of unfulfilled prophecy.
- B. Examples.
 - 1. Worldwide religion of Revelation.
 - 2. Mormonism: two sticks of Ezekiel 37:15-23.
- C. Admit uncertainty and keep an open mind.

VII. Literary guards.

- A. It's not true "you can prove anything from Scripture."
- B. A text cannot mean anything you want it to mean.
- C. As literature, the Bible is subject to context and genre.