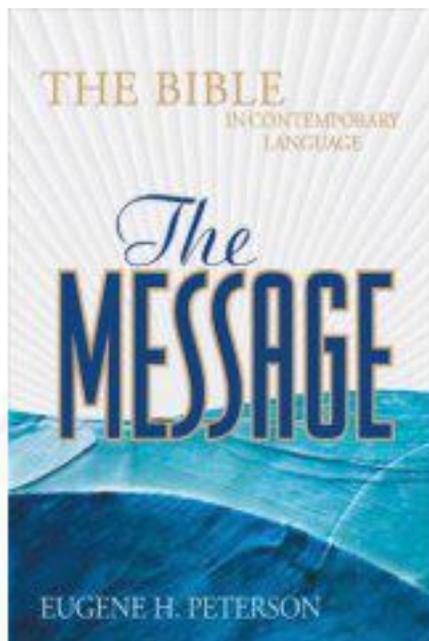


Why is The Message (Bible) not safe ?

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A Brief (and by no means exhaustive) Summary of Passages Contained Within “The Message” by Eugene Peterson Which Directly Compromise Fundamental Tenets of Orthodox Christianity.

What follows is a comparison/contrast and analysis of several well – known passages as found in major translations such as the KJV, NASB, and NIV as well as these same passages as found in The Message authored by Eugene Peterson. Any intellectually honest assessment of the following notes leads to the inescapable conclusion that The Message compromises some of the fundamental doctrines of orthodox Christianity.



I began this study when I was made aware that the high school seniors of a nearby church were given copies of The Message as graduation gifts. I did not at the time own a copy of The Message nor had I read it. My exposure to it at that point was seeing it cited in other works. I purchased a copy and began to read and study this paraphrase more in depth. What I discovered stunned me. The Message is not only a poor paraphrase, but it is, in fact, heretical.

Matthew 6:9

**New American
Standard Bible : 1995
Update**

9 “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

The King James Version

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

**The New International
Version**

9 “This, then, is how you should pray: ““Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

The Message

9 With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this: Our Father in heaven, **Reveal who you are.**

This is a passage from what is commonly referred to as “the Lord’s Prayer.” There are two problems with Peterson’s rendering of this familiar passage. The first is that Peterson includes an imperative from Jesus to the Father that is not in the text. The second, and much more serious, problem is the nature of His imperative – Reveal who you are. Why would Jesus Christ who is the revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-3) ask God to reveal Himself? The Revelation of God is the One Who is praying the prayer! This imperative by Jesus certainly strongly implies that God has yet to reveal Himself. I beg to differ.

Also, notice the room which is implicitly provided for a later revelation of the antichrist who will, of course, claim to be the revelation of God.

John 10:30

New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update

30 “I and the Father are one.”

The King James Version

30 I and my Father
are one.

The New International Version

30 I and the Father are
one.”

The Message

30 I and the Father are one
heart and mind.”

This is another familiar passage. The NASB, NIV, and KJV are all practically identical, save for the insertion of a personal pronoun found in the latter. Not so The Message’s rendering. The Message denigrates the uniqueness and deity of Jesus. Let us remember that David was a “man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22) but he was not God.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update

1 But the Spirit explicitly
says that in later times
some will fall away from

the faith, paying attention
to deceitful spirits and
doctrines of demons,

The King James Version

1 Now the Spirit speaketh
expressly, that in the latter
times some shall depart
from the faith, giving heed
to seducing spirits, and
doctrines of devils;

The New International Version

1 The Spirit clearly says
that in later times some will
abandon the faith and
follow deceiving spirits and
things taught by demons

The Message

1 The Spirit makes it clear
that as time goes on, some
are going to give up on the
faith and chase after
demonic illusions put forth
by professional liars.

Of the passages which I have cited in this letter, this is the least worrisome but is worrisome nonetheless. Paul is clearly referring to demonic powers but note the unmistakable human spin which Peterson employs. He diminishes the demonic powers by referring to them as mere “illusions” which are forwarded not by demons but by “professional liars.” Such a reference could encapsulate a carnival barker.

Matthew 5:5

**New American Standard
Bible : 1995 Update**

5 Blessed are the gentle, for
they shall inherit the earth

**The King James
Version**

5 Blessed are the
meek, for they shall
inherit the earth

**The New International
Version**

5 Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the
earth

The Message

5 You are truly blessed when
you are content with just who
you are – no more, no less.

Not only does this not have anything to do with the passage at hand, it is stunningly un-biblical. What if a homosexual is reading this? Should he be content with “just who he is?” What about an agnostic? A Hindu? What about one who believes himself to be a “Christian” but is living in sin? This is not even true for a Biblebelieving, committed Christian! There should never be a time when we are “content with just who we are.” This is a profoundly unbiblical statement.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

**New American Standard
Bible : 1995 Update**

9 Or do you not know that
the unrighteous will not

inherit the kingdom of
God? Do not be deceived;
neither fornicators, nor
idolaters, nor adulterers,
nor effeminate, nor
homosexuals,

10 nor thieves, nor the
covetous, nor drunkards,
nor revilers, nor swindlers,
will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 Such were some of you;
but you were washed, but
you were sanctified, but
you were justified in the
name of the Lord Jesus
Christ and in the Spirit of
our God.

The King James Version

9 Know ye not that the
unrighteous shall not
inherit the kingdom of
God? Be not deceived:
neither fornicators, nor
idolaters, nor adulterers,
nor effeminate, nor
abusers of themselves
with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor
covetous, nor drunkards,
nor revilers, nor
extortioners, shall inherit
the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of
you: but ye are washed,

but ye are sanctified, but
ye are justified in the
name of the Lord Jesus,
and by the Spirit of our
God.

The New International Version

9 Do you not know that the
wicked will not inherit the
kingdom of God? Do not be
deceived: Neither the
sexually immoral nor
idolaters nor adulterers nor
male prostitutes nor
homosexual offenders

10 nor thieves nor the
greedy nor drunkards nor
slanderers nor swindlers
will inherit the kingdom of
God.

11 And that is what some of
you were. But you were
washed, you were
sanctified, you were
justified in the name of the
Lord Jesus Christ and by
the Spirit of our God.

The Message

9 Don't you realize that this
is not the way to live? Unjust
people who don't care about
God will not be joining in his
kingdom. Those who use
and abuse each other, use

and abuse sex,
(Guess what's missing!)

10 use and abuse *the earth*
and everything in it, don't
qualify as citizens in God's
kingdom.

11 A number of you know
from experience what I'm
talking about, for not so long
ago you were on that list.
Since then, you've been
cleaned up and given a
fresh start by Jesus, our
Master, our Messiah, and by
our God present in us, the
Spirit.

This one is serious. One of the sins to which the Apostle Paul is clearly referring is that of homosexuality. Notice that The Message completely omits the word. In its stead, Peterson inserts the phrase "those who use and abuse the earth." The earth? From where in the world (or the text as the case may be) did he get the earth? There seems to be an environmental agenda at work here. One could not read this passage in a real Bible and come away believing that homosexuality was permissible under any circumstances. One would never know from reading The Message, however, that it was a problem in any sense.

Romans 1:26-27

New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update

26 For this reason God
gave them over to
degrading passions; for
their women exchanged
the natural function for that
which is unnatural,

27 and in the same way
also the men abandoned
the natural function of the
woman and burned in their
desire toward one another,
men with men committing
indecent acts and receiving
in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

The King James Version

26 For this cause God gave
them up unto vile affections:
for even their women did
change the natural use into
that which is against nature:

27 And likewise also the
men, leaving the natural use
of the woman, burned in
their lust one toward
another; men with men
working that which is
unseemly, and receiving in
themselves that recompence of their error
which was meet.

The New International Version

26 Because of this, God
gave them over to shameful
lusts. Even their women
exchanged natural relations
for unnatural ones.

27 In the same way the men
also abandoned natural
relations with women and
were inflamed with lust for

one another. Men committed
indecent acts with other men,
and received in themselves
the due penalty for their perversion.

The Message

26 Worse followed.
Refusing to know God,
they soon didn't know
how to be human
either—women didn't
know how to be women,
men didn't know how to
be men.

27 Sexually confused,
they abused and defiled
one another, women with
women, men with men—
all lust, no love. And
then they paid for it, oh,
how they paid for it—
emptied of God and love, godless and loveless
wretches.

This passage dealing with homosexuality is quite a bit more problematic for Peterson. In 1 Cor. 6:9-11, he had only to omit one word. Here, he has two entire verses with which to wrestle. What to do here? Well, Peterson provides a loophole: all lust, no love. The not-so-subtle insinuation is that 'Well, if these people had just done this out of love, then it would have been ok.' There is clearly in The Message room for a 'committed, loving' homosexual relationship. In Peterson's rendering of the Bible, it is not the nature of homosexuality in and of itself that is the grievous sin, it is simply the absence of love.

1 Timothy 1:10

**New American Standard
Bible : 1995 Update**

10 and immoral men and
homosexuals and kidnappers
and liars and perjurers...

The King James Version

10 For
whoremongers, for
them that defile
themselves with
mankind, for
menstealers, for
liars...

The New International Version

10 for adulterers and
perverts, for slave
traders and liars and
perjurers...

The Message

10 but for the irresponsible, who
defy all authority, riding
roughshod over God, life, sex,
truth, whatever!

The Message again simply leaves out the reference to homosexuality and replaces it instead with the generic "sex." Inexplicably, the NIV appears to do the same. There are 3 passages in the N.T. that deal with homosexuality and The Message utterly fails on all three.

Note: The Message does, in fairness, appear to be relatively on track in regards to Leviticus 18:22. This, though, does not excuse its abject failure in the N.T. Let's be honest, how many people (teenagers especially) are realistically going to do devotional reading from Leviticus? They are far more likely to spend their time in the New Testament

Romans 8:35

New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

The King James Version

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

The New International Version

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

The Message

35 Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not

hatred, not hunger, not
homelessness, not bullying threats,
***not backstabbing, not even the
worst sins listed in Scripture:***

This one really is troublesome. Notice that all of the elements which Paul rightly asserts will never separate us from Christ are very earthly and temporal (tribulation, persecution, famine, etc.). Paul is basically talking about hard times. Eugene Peterson brazenly inserts into the passage: not even the worst sins listed in Scripture. Wow. This should trouble any clear thinking believer. Sin IS what separates us from God! That is why we need a Savior! For the one who is lost, sin separates from God positionally. For the believer, sin separates from God relationally. Sin is not even remotely in view in this passage. **This is heresy.**

Conclusion:

Pick up a copy of The Message and you will see on its front cover “The Bible in Contemporary Language.” **The Message is NOT the Bible.** It is one man’s commentary on the Bible, and an extraordinarily poor one at that. Some object to criticism of Peterson’s work by saying The Message is not a literal translation but rather a paraphrase. True. But even paraphrases should be an accurate thought for thought rendering of the original biblical text. We are not talking here about a paraphrase of “Green Eggs and Ham.” We are talking about the Word of God. God holds His name and His word above all things (Psalm 138:2). His Word must be rendered and handled accurately. **What we believe about God is derived from what we read in His Word. If one reads an erroneous Bible, then it logically follows that what one believes about God will also be in error.**

The Message is, in large part, marketed toward teenagers, young adults, and young believers – the most impressionable among us. Youth ministers are reading this to their students and teaching from it. Many preachers are, sadly, quoting it in their sermons. Hopefully, much of this is being done in ignorance. The question must be asked, ‘Would Jesus Christ approve of this rendering of His word?’ Certainly any honest intellectual assessment would have to lead one to the answer of “no.” If Christ would not approve then certainly we must not either. In a concluding thought, it is not Mr. Peterson’s intentions or sincerity which is important. In fact, they are irrelevant entirely. Peterson may well be sincere. Sincerity, though, is not the issue –

Truth is the issue. **Misplaced sincerity is a profoundly dangerous commodity.**

In Him and for His Truth

Most respectfully submitted,

Justin Peters

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