



COMMENTS ON THE TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CALLED: "THE MESSAGE"

By Bill Subritzky

A comparison between one man's translation of the New Testament and with the *New King James Version* produced by one hundred and thirty top Biblical scholars from a broad cross-section of evangelical Christendom.

General

1. We must understand that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and great care must be taken that all translations are accurate and reflect exactly what the Holy Spirit is saying.
2. At the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the work of the Cross. As we know, Christ became our sin-bearer and delivered all those who believed from the power of sin and gave them the gift of eternal life. Before He went on to the Cross Jesus Christ promised that the Helper, the Holy Spirit would come and that He would convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. This is His most important work.
3. In the world today there are many that are calling evil good and the good evil. This is the work of the enemy.
4. One of the ways in which the enemy seeks to defeat the work of the Holy Spirit is to say that sin does not exist, or to cause confusion as to what is sin. For example, the way God calls homosexuality an abomination (Leviticus 18:22). Many churches are embracing homosexuality as normal and are ordaining homosexuals. Again "living together" without marriage is becoming the norm in many societies. God calls this fornication for which the penalty is spiritual death.

Thus the plan of the enemy is to create ignorance as to what sin really is. On the other hand, the Scriptures are very clear and define sin exactly.

5. It is therefore extremely sad to see that a work such as "**The**

Message" omits much of what the Scripture calls sin and there is gross error on such matters as holiness. So far as our Christian walk is concerned these are basic issues. If sin is going to be dispensed with, or at the very least minimized, then the work of the Cross is nullified.

It is for these reasons that I now make the following comments concerning "**The Message**".

6. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 :

(NKJV): "**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 homosexuals, nor sodomites, [10] nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.**"

(a) **(The Message) "Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom."**

(b) **Comment:**

In "The Message" the work of the Holy Spirit is limited by omitting the words: "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkenness, revilers, extortioners". Thus ten categories of sinners who will not inherit the Kingdom of God is reduced to a group who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it!"

This infers that as long as sex is not used or abused then it is okay. The fact that the person may be having sex outside of marriage, or be an adulterer or a homosexual or a sodomite, does not matter so long as they are not using or abusing sex or using or abusing each other. Thus the Word of God is completely changed to make it say exactly the opposite to its original meaning.

We note the use of the words "use and abuse the earth and everything in it". This is shades of New Age and Environmentalism and is a complete departure from the Word of God. The point is made that we must be concerned for the earth but all reference to sinners such as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, etc. is completely omitted. Surely every danger signal is now triggered. Concern for the earth is placed ahead of concern for people who belong to those categories which are omitted. They are left out while concern for the earth is included!

(c) According to John's Gospel, chapter 16, verses 8 through 11 we

read:

"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, of sin because they do not believe in Me; [10] of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; [11] of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

- (d) How can the Holy Spirit convict of sin when it is taken out of the Word of God? This particularly relates to sexual immorality which is the only sin to affect a person's own body.

7. 1 Corinthians 6:18-19

(NKJV): **"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"**

- (a) **(The Message) "Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy leaving us more lonely than ever - the kind of sex that can never "become one"."**

- (b) **Comment:**

Sexual immorality is reduced to "the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy". Obviously sex that has commitment and intimacy is in order, whether or not it is within marriage or outside of marriage or whether it is heterosexual or homosexual.

8. 1 Corinthians 3:17

(NKJV): **"If anyone defiles the temple of God I will destroy him. The temple of God is holy, which temple you are."**

(The Message) "You realise, don't you that you are the temple of God and God Himself is present in you. No one will get by with vandalising God's temple, you can be sure of that. God's temple is sacred and you remember, are the temple."

- (a) The Scriptural warning that if anyone defiles the Temple of God, God will destroy him, is reduced to the words: "no one will get by with vandalizing God's Temple, you can be sure of that."

9. Galatians 5:19

(NKJV): **"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,"**

(a) **(The Message) "It is obvious what kind of life develops of trying to get your own way all the time. Repetitive, loveless, cheap sex, a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage, frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness."**

(b) **Comment:**

A foundational truth dealing with immorality which includes a married person having sex outside of marriage, or any person having sex outside of marriage is reduced to "repetitive, loveless, cheap sex". A young person reading the Scripture could therefore say that so long as their sex was not repetitive, not loveless and not cheap it was in order, no matter with whom it was conducted. This therefore gives everyone a licence to have sex so long as it does not fall into this category. There is no inference concerning marriage and the need for it, and in fact it promotes the attitude so prevalent to the world that it is no longer necessary to be married to have sex.

(c) The word "uncleanness" in the New King James Version describes all kinds of sexual defilement. The word "lasciviousness" means : "lewd, lustful, exciting sensual emotions". In "The Message" these words have become "a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage."

10. Following is a comparison between The New King James Version and "**The Message**" of the words used in Galatians 5:19-21:

New King James

Idolatry

Sorcery

Hatred

Contentions or strife

Jealousies

Outbursts of wrath

Selfish ambitions

Dissensions

Heresies

Envy

Drunkenness

Revelries

The Message

Trinket gods

Magic show religion

Paranoid loneliness

Cut-throat competition

All-consuming yet never satisfied wants

Brutal temper

An impotence to love or be loved

Divided homes and divided lives

Small-minded and lopsided pursuits

The vicious habit of depersonalising everybody into a rival

Uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions

Ugly parodies of community

(b) **Comment:**

To say that idolatry is "trinket gods" totally limits its definition. It is obvious that many of the words used in "The Message" are a poor, or even misleading translation. For example to call sorcery "magic show religion" in no way defines it. Similarly, to refer to hatred as "paranoid loneliness" or jealousies "all-consuming yet never satisfied

wants" or "selfish ambitions" as "an impotence to love or be loved" in no way directly defines these words. Similarly, to say heresies are: "small minded and lopsided pursuits" and that envy is "the vicious habit of depersonalising everybody into a rival" in no way does justice to these words. Or saying that revelries or wild parties are "ugly parodies of community" again, no way defines this sin.

11. Ephesians 5:5

(NKJV): "***For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.***"

(a) **(The Message) "You can be sure that using people or religion or things just for what you can get out of them - the usual variations on idolatry - will get you nowhere and certainly nowhere near the Kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom of God."**

(b) **Comment:**

This translation again completely leaves out any reference to fornication and uncleanness.

12. Romans 1:27

(NKJV): "***Likewise the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men, committing what is shameful and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due***"

(a) **(The Message) "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. Sexually confused, they abused and defiled one another, women with women, men with men - all lust, no love."**

(b) **Comment:**

The words, "committing what is shameful" have been replaced by the words, "all lust, no love". It is not a question of them being shameful, it is simply a question of not doing sexual acts which have lust and no love. What a word to give to young Christians!

The other major issue is that "receiving in themselves the penalty of the error which was due" has been omitted. The Aids plague first broke out in the homosexual community in the late 1980s and became very widespread in the early 1990s. Many Christians believe that this is part of the penalty referred to in Scripture. Why were these words omitted? Was it political correctness?

13. 1 Timothy 2:12-14

(NKJV): "***And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. [13] For Adam was formed first, then Eve. [14] And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.***"

- (a) **(The Message)** I don't let women take over and tell men what to do. They should study to be quiet and obedient, along with everyone else. Adam was first, then Eve. Woman was deceived first - our pioneer in sin - with Adam right on her heels.

Comment:

- (b) This infers that Adam was deceived whereas the Scripture clearly says he was not deceived.

14. Titus 2:5

(NKJV): "***to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.***"

- (a) **(The Message)** "By looking at them the younger women will know how to love their husbands and children, be virtuous and pure and keep a house, be good wives."

Comment:

- (b) No mention of obedience to their own husbands!

15. 1 Peter 3:1

(NKJV): "***Likewise you wives be submissive to your own husbands***".

- (a) **(The Message)** "Be good wives to your husbands".

Comment:

- (b) Thus there is no mention of submission.

16. Matthew 18:21-35, in verse 35

(NKJV): "***So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.***"

- (a) **(The Message)** "And that's exactly what My Father in Heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn't forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy."

(b) **Comment:**

What right has the translator to desecrate the Word of God in this way by adding the words: "anyone who asks for mercy?"

(c) As believers, the Scripture clearly calls upon us to unconditionally forgive others just as God has unconditionally forgiven us. To say that we must only forgive those who ask for mercy is a complete departure from Scripture and is a denial of the work of the Cross in our own lives.

17. Galatians 5:22

(NKJV): "***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,***"

(a) **(The Message) "He brings gifts into our lives much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard - like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a worldliness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people.**

(b) **Comment:**

The love referred to in Galatians 5:22 is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is clearly God's agape love, seen in the gift of His Son and is not the result of any goodness in us (Romans 5:8). It does not always run with the natural inclinations and is not an impulse from the feelings. It seeks the welfare of all, works no ill to anybody and seeks an opportunity to do good to all men. It expresses the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect God towards unworthy objects.

"**The Message**" changes this wonderful love of God to 'things like affection for others'. This reduces the fruit of the Holy Spirit to a mere form of natural love which anybody, saved or unsaved, can have towards others. This is heresy.

Similarly the word "goodness", which is a fruit of the Spirit is reduced to: "a conviction that basic holiness permeates things and people". This is a basic contradiction of Scripture containing as it does, the inference in the flesh there can be holiness apart from God. As Scripture says, "***For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.***" Romans 7:18. Similarly Romans 3:23 tells us, "***for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***"

18. Hebrews 12:14

(NKJV): "***Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:***"

(a) **(The Message)**

"Working at getting along with each other and with God. Otherwise you will never so much as get a glimpse of God."

- Comment:**
 (b) In other words holiness is getting along with each other and with God! Surely this is total corruption of the Word.
19. Hebrews 10:31
 (NKJV): "***It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.***"
- (a) **(The Message)** "nobody's getting by with anything, believe me."
 (b) **Comment:**
 Thus dire warning in the Word of God that: "***It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God***" is watered down to: "nobody's getting away with anything, believe me."
20. 1 Peter 4:18
 (NKJV): **Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"**
- (a) **(The Message)** "If good people barely make it, what's in store for the bad?"
 (b) **Comment:**
 This equates being righteous with being good. This is heresy.

Summary:

I have only highlighted some of the discrepancies between "**The Message**" and the true Word of God.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil He responded to the devil on three occasions by saying: "***It is written***". That shows the importance that Jesus Himself placed on the exact Word of God. In the case of "**The Message**" we find that the Word of God has been drastically altered, thus reducing it, or in some cases eliminating its authority or changing its meaning completely.

All Scripture is inspired. 2 Timothy 3:16. "***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,***"

By altering its meaning so drastically in so many cases the author of "**The Message**" has attacked its very inspiration.

At best "**The Message**" is an aberration. At worst it is a corruption of the word of God. The fact that it is entitled: "The New Testament in contemporary English" will lead many young and innocent Christians to believe it is the true Word of God. As can be seen from the above they will

have no true understanding of the meaning of sin and any other issues such as holiness. These are fundamental aspects of the true faith.

Pastors who use this translation are in grave danger of misleading their flocks. In no way can this work be commended for Bible study for use in churches. In fact it can be used as a potent instrument against those who seek to preach true righteousness, conviction of sin and of the day of judgement. In other words it can hinder the work of the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of many, thus causing them to stumble.

Jesus said: Mark 9:42

"And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."

I tremble for those who promote or use "**The Message**".

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