

Karl Keating's Part 2: Catholics and Scripture

Part 1: Basic Background for any Catholic Biblical Discussion:

In order, the Bible types were:

1. The Septuagint or 70. This was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, made by Jewish scholars in Alexandria at the request of Ptolemy II, "for the benefit of Greek Jews who had forgotten their Hebrew."
2. Then came the New Testament. Jesus spoke in Aramaic and the first written down versions of the New Testament were believed to be either in Aramaic or Hebrew, and then quickly translated into Greek. There is considerable debate over which books came in which order. Most think there was an Aramaic source that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John used. Most scholars believe that the order was Mark, Matthew, Luke, and then John, with Mark occurring around 50 AD and John around 80 to 100 AD. Most scholars maintain that the books of John (the Gospel of John, John 1, 2, and 3, and Revelations) were the last written. More modern scholarship (1970's) has dated the books much earlier with some versions written before 40 AD.
3. Next, we have the Vulgate of St. Jerome, which brought both Testaments from Greek or Hebrew into Latin, the common language of the Romans.
4. From the time the Latin Vulgate was written, it remained the sole Bible of the Western world until the 1500's and the Reformation.
5. The First Catholic English Bible was the Douay Rheims Bible, translated from the [Latin Vulgate](#). The [New Testament](#) was published in one volume with extensive commentary and notes in 1582. The [Old Testament](#) followed nearly thirty years later in two volumes; the first volume ([Genesis](#) to [Job](#)) in 1609, the second, which went from [Psalms](#) to [2 Machabees](#) plus the [apocrypha](#) in 1610. The Douay Rheims bible was published to uphold [Catholic](#) tradition in the face of the [Protestant Reformation](#) which was heavily influencing [England](#), Germany, and Switzerland. In 1589, [William Fulke](#) sought to refute the Rheims New Testament by putting the Rheims text and notes in parallel columns with those of the English [Bishop's Bible](#), produced by the [Church of England](#) in 1568. It was substantially

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revised in 1572, and this revised edition was to be prescribed as the base text for the [Authorized King James Version](#) of 1611.

6. Following the King James version and the other native language versions, such as Luther's translation into German, Bibles continued to be translated, even to the present time. A listing of more recent bibles includes the Standard and Revised Standard versions from the Church of England, and the modern Catholic Jerusalem (JB) and New American (NAB) bibles, both published in various parts during the last century. Reviewers of the JB and NAB point out that the JB is more literal and poetic than the NAB, which was designed to be read from the pulpit in Mass and other Catholic liturgies.

Also at the end of the 20th century was the Living Bible and New Living Bible, which are paraphrases, and not literal translations, and the New International Version or NIV. The NIV is quite evangelistic in its efforts, meaning that their work stresses evangelization.

Today there are many different Bibles, in all sizes, shapes, colors of print (often the words of Jesus are in red). There are also a number of parallel bibles, which show two to four different translations across the pages. These are quite useful when you do not understand a passage and slightly different words would really clarify things. Then there is also one of my favorites, the Amplified Bible, which has very long verses because it puts the different translations in the same verse. Often a NAB or King James verse will be two or three lines long and the Amplified verse is 10 to 15 lines long.

7. Whenever a new translation comes out, there is always praise and criticism. Some people have grown up with a verse and have committed it to memory and then a new translation comes out and changes this. Even if the newer translation may be more accurate, people tend to like the way they first learned the verse. A good example of this is Hebrews 11:1, one of the most often quoted verses in the entire Bible. The NAB says "faith is the confident assurance concerning what we hope for and conviction about the things we do not see." I learned this verse as "faith is the evidence of things hoped for and the substance

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of things unseen." I like the "evidence and substance" version best, regardless of what any other translation says.

Part 2: Karl Keating's questions

9. Before modern times, lay people were not allowed to read the Bible.

This is utter rubbish. The Council of Trent's decree in 1546 and Pope Pius XII's Encyclical are clear on this point. Scripture is the inspired word of God. Period. Everyone has always been encouraged to read Scripture. Where Catholics differ from Protestants is in the belief that both Scripture and Sacred Traditions teach us about who God is. Winston Churchill said, "the only thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history." Those living in the present will make mistake after mistake. Not to allow Sacred Tradition to also help us understand God dooms us to understanding a God who is what we want Him to be today.

10. Because of Ecumenism, Catholics may now read any translation.

For sure, reading any Bible is better than reading no Bible at all. But some Bibles are slanted to a given point of view. Luther was notorious for this. Even the modern New Living Bible has some serious slants here. In my previous discussion of John 8, I pointed out a discrepancy in the NLB, when it paraphrased the scene at the woman accused of adultery as having Jesus say, "All right, go ahead and stone her." If they had done this, Jesus would have been telling them to break the civil laws of the time. Similarly, each Protestant Bible slants some verses away from established Catholic teaching. So if you are going to read a Bible, why not read a Catholic Bible; you have at least three to read from, the Douay Rheims, the Jerusalem, and the NAB.

11. Only priests or religious can teach Scripture classes.

Again, utter rubbish. In almost every vibrant Catholic church, lay members are teaching scripture. I have taught Scripture classes for over 10 years in Catholic churches. Some of you here has also taught these classes. This objection goes back to the idea that there is one and only one way to understand a scriptural passage, and that priests and religious have all the right answers. All of us who

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have been to Catholic schools know this is not so. My analysis here goes back to grammar school at St. Mary's here in Mobile. We were told not to chew on the Eucharist, as this was a sign of disrespect. In fact, in Jesus' phrase, "unless you eat this body" the root word for eat means to chew, like on a piece of meat that needs to be chewed instead of swallowed.

12. The Gospel contains lots of inconsistencies.

Probably so, but most of them can be explained. If you look back at your own words of 20 or more years ago, when you thought you had the world by the horns, you would now find inconsistencies in what you yourself said then, compared to what you now believe. Taking the Bible literally, word for word, and expecting something written hundreds of years ago not to be a bit confusing and with changes in word usage is expecting a lot.

Catholic tradition has always maintained that the Bible is the inspired word of God and so many hands have worked on it. Modern Catholic teaching goes into much contextual analysis to help explain passages. Sometimes the words say one thing, but once put in context, a clearer meaning becomes available. Consider the parable of the Talents (Matt 25: 14-30) and the man who buried his talent in the ground. Knowing that such an action would safeguard the man from a loss makes the true meaning of the parable clearer.

In modern Bibles, teams of 20 or more scholars often do the translations. Getting 20 or more scholars to agree on the exact words is demanding and probably does not happen all that often. Getting Rush, Bill O'Reilly, and Barbara Boxer to agree is nearly impossible, and yet all of them say they understand the laws of our land and the constitution.

Finally, let me say that I have enjoyed working on these questions. I have generated over 50 pages of information, which I will put up on my website, <http://tjscott.net>, in the next few days.

Questions and Comments