

REVIEW: THE CASE FOR CATHOLICISM BY TRENT HORN

Catholic apologist and author of *The Case for Catholicism: Answers to Classic and Contemporary Protestant Objections* Trent Horn possibly is one of the best current defenders of the authenticity of Catholicism. "Trent Horn offers clear and convincing answers to some of the most common Protestant objections to the Catholic faith. This is the sort of book that any Catholic could confidently recommend to anyone who has sincere and serious questions about the Church and its beliefs and practices." -- Francis Beckwith, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy and Church-State Studies, Baylor University

TRENT HORN WRITES AGAINST PROTESTANT DOCTRINE THAT ONLY THE BIBLE SHOULD BE OUR TEACHER: "All Scripture Is Inspired. . ." In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul is exhorting Timothy to beware of evil men who will persecute and deceive Christians. He reminds Timothy that "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Samples claims, "This passage contains the essence of sola scriptura," but a thorough examination of "all Scripture is inspired" shows otherwise. First, there is a legitimate translation issue concerning the phrase "all Scripture" (Greek, *pasas graphes*). The non-Catholic scholar J. N. D. Kelly notes that "there is no definite article [here] in the Greek and where *pas* ('all' or 'every') is used with a noun in the singular without the article it usually means 'every' rather than 'whole' or 'all'. . . The balance of argument seems in favor of Every Scripture." Other commenters reach a similar conclusion but see no problem using the translation "all" instead of "every". According to Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin, "If we affirm that each part of Scripture is inspired, we come eventually to assert that its entire context is inspired." If Scripture's inspiration means it is the word of God and so it is useful for teaching, then saying all Scripture is inspired is equivalent to saying every individual Scripture is inspired. Each book of the Bible, as well as the Bible as a whole, equips the man of God with divine revelation that can help him teach and do good works.

COMMENT: Every scripture could be a way of saying all scripture.

Horn has done an excellent job of showing that Paul is saying all parts of the scripture are morally valuable and inspired by God. There is no room for people rejecting passages they don't like. Top of the list these days, these are the passages that reject homosexuality directly. The rejection of texts that rule it out indirectly as a sin and as a matter for punishment from God is coming soon. Jesus did say a marriage is a union between man and woman for life.

Horn's work about context is excellent. It rules out textual cherry-picking. For Catholics, the context will be the Bible along with early Christian tradition. Tradition is unanimous that any sexual activity except between a man and woman in one marriage is a sin. Jesus referred to the sin of Sodom - it is only today we hear this sin was inhospitality. So to put him in the context of his times and what the scholarship of his day said, the sin was homosexuality. That is what Jesus meant. To deny this is to oppose the historical method and historical truth in the name of LGBT ideology. It is hard to see how Sodom could be condemned for inhospitality when nobody would go there anyway and wanderers were safer on the roads around than in it.

TRENT HORN WRITES AGAINST BIBLE ONLY SOLA SCRIPTURA: Among the other apostolic writings there are two passages in Saint Paul's letters that are often cited in defense of sola scriptura. The first passage, 1 Corinthians 4:6, can be dealt with briefly because it is an incredibly obscure verse to rest any doctrine upon, especially one as foundational as sola scriptura. It says, "I have applied all this to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brethren, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another." Rhodes claims this verse means that "scripture sets parameters beyond which we are not free to go." Other Protestant apologists simply quote Paul's exhortation and assume Paul is referring to sola scriptura when he says we should not "go beyond what is written". But New Testament scholarship has revealed not only that this verse does not plainly refer to sola scriptura; it is difficult to discern as to what it refers. In his study of this verse, biblical scholar Ronald Tyler considers the possibility that Paul is making an allusion to how school children are taught to trace over letters when they learn to write. Just as school children should not go beyond the lines drawn for them in the words they learn, new Christians should not go beyond the example Paul set for them. In favor of this interpretation is the fact that later in the chapter Paul speaks of being a "father" (4:15) to his "children" (4:14) and implores his children to "be imitators" of him (4:16). Of course, this is just one interpretation among many, including the possibility that the entire verse was an erroneous scribal interpolation. According to Bradley Bitner in his study of First Corinthians, "In many ways, the history of scholarship on this verse resembles a demolition zone littered with the debris of collapsed and tottering hypotheses." He especially notes that "the phrase [to me huper ha gegraptai, "not beyond what is written"] is surely the stone over which most interpreters have stumbled and the one that has crushed the most hypotheses in the history of scholarship." This shows that 1 Corinthians 4:6 cannot support a doctrine so foundational to the Protestant worldview as sola scriptura. In his commentary on First Corinthians, Anthony Thiselton offers seven possible interpretations of the phrase, none of which correspond to the modern doctrine of sola scriptura. Tim

Savage says this verse “probably refers to the five scriptural quotations which Paul has already cited in 1 Corinthians 1-3”, a view John Calvin also held. In fact, none of the Protestant Reformers used this passage in their defenses of sola scriptura, and modern defenses of sola scriptura tend to ignore it. It’s no surprise then that many Protestants prefer to rest their case on Paul’s description of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

COMMENT: At least it might be saying sola scriptura. It does however proclaim Paul to be a "living" scripture. Paul in a sense was the whole Bible for he preached it all and knew it all and organised the thinking about how the Old Covenant becomes the New Covenant.

TRENT HORN WRITES AGAINST PROTESTANT DOCTRINE THAT CATHOLICS ADDED BOOKS NOT AUTHORED BY GOD TO THE BIBLE - DEUTEROCANONICALS: Concerning Josephus, some Protestants cite his mention of twenty-two books of sacred history that terminate in the reign of Artaxerxes of Persia (465—424 B.C.) as evidence that the Hebrew canon was closed before the deuterocanonical books were written. They first claim that these twenty-two books only account for the thirty-nine books of the Protestant Old Testament. Then they claim that this testimony proves there were no prophets in Israel during the time when the deuterocanonicals were composed, which means they can’t be inspired Scripture. Turretin said of Josephus, “The writings of his people after the time of Artaxerxes are not of equal trustworthiness and authority with the earlier ones, as not being in the true succession of the prophets.” But Josephus only says the exact line of succession among the prophets had ceased by the death of Artaxerxes, not that the divine gift of prophecy itself was no more. Josephus describes several prophets during the intertestamental period such as John Hyrcanus and Manaemus the Essene as well as Jesus, son of Ananus, before the First Jewish-Roman War (A.D. 66—73).

COMMENT: Why a line of prophets? This was a safeguard to avoid having maverick prophets who were fakes. Its best to see Josephus who complained much about such comen and false messiahs as saying authorised prophets were a thing of the past.

TRENT HORN WRITES ABOUT CATHOLIC CLAIM THAT PRIESTS GIVEN POWER TO FORGIVE SINS: Protestants usually claim that in John 20:23 Jesus was giving the apostles the power only to preach the forgiveness of sins rather than the ability to communicate the forgiveness of sins. According to this interpretation, if a person accepted the gospel, the apostles preached then that his sins would be forgiven, but if he did not accept the gospel, the apostles preached then that his sins would be retained. Other apologists claim that because the Greek word rendered “have been forgiven” (aphiami) is in the perfect tense and passive voice, this means the apostles were announcing that Christ only had already forgiven a person’s sins. But this interpretation is untenable for several reasons. In John’s Gospel Jesus rarely refers to the preaching of the apostles, and the subject is not mentioned in this chapter. In verse 23 Jesus simply said, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.” Jesus’ use of the perfect tense means that once the apostles forgave someone’s sins, those sins would now be forgiven because of the apostles’ actions. This is comparable to Jesus’ declaration about the sinful woman who anointed his head at the house of Simon the Pharisee. He said, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven [aphiami], for she loved much” (Lk 7:47). Note that Jesus said the woman’s sins were forgiven after she performed actions that demonstrated her love for him.

COMMENT: There is no getting away from the fact that it is really responding to God's mercy in faith and love that allows the forgiveness of sins.

Suppose Jesus did give that power to the Church to forgive sins. He was given the Church then the right to judge if the person sinned. That implies approval for Catholic tradition that gay sex is wrong - reason tells you that there always had to be penitents saying, "I did it for I loved him." There is no evidence at all of any other tradition. And even if there was a minority opinion cannot count. A religion is an overall view.

TRENT HORN WRITES ABOUT CATHOLIC DOCTRINE THAT BREAD AND WINE TURN INTO JESUS' BODY AND BLOOD: If consuming the Eucharist were cannibalism, then Protestants who celebrate “the Lord’s Supper” would still be guilty of practicing symbolic cannibalism. But since Christ would never command us to engage in either literal or symbolic evils, it follows that consuming the Eucharist is not cannibalism.

COMMENT: Its symbolic cannibalism then and even more so for Catholics! Its immoral.

TRENT HORN WRITES ABOUT JESUS IN JOHN 3 ALLEGEDLY TALKING ABOUT BAPTISM: Our analysis of the verse “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (v. 5) cannot neglect the fact that every Church Father who cited the verse before the Council of Nicaea agreed that it referred to baptismal regeneration. In the second century Justin Martyr spoke of converts who “are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. . . . They then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, “Unless you be born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Protestants who deny baptismal regeneration usually rely on one of two alternative interpretations of the phrase “born of water and the Spirit”. First, they claim that Jesus’ reference to water is a reference to our biological birth and the breaking of the amniotic sac and the fluid that is

released. This would mean a person must be born twice—once through a natural process (water) and again through a supernatural process (spirit)—in order to enter the kingdom of God. But the Bible never refers to biological birth as the process of being “born of water”. According to D. A. Carson, “There are no ancient sources that picture natural birth as ‘from water’, and the few that use ‘drops’ to stand for semen are rare and late.” Instead, the Bible uses phrases like “born of the flesh” to describe natural birth. Jesus even uses this phrase to refer to biological birth in the very next verse. According to the Baptist theologian Stanley K. Fowler, “The grammar of the statement seems to link water and spirit closely as two aspects of the same birth (in that the two nouns are objects of one preposition).” Jesus is not saying you must be born first from amniotic fluid and then be born again of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is instead saying a person must be “born of water and the Spirit”, or be baptized. Another approach involves interpreting the water to be synonymous with the word of God or the Holy Spirit. Even though Paul refers to the Church being washed with the word (Eph 5:26), the Bible never identifies “water” with Scripture. It’s true that Spirit is compared to water, but that is usually in a poetic context or with a modifying adjective. For example, in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to the Spirit as “living water” rather than just “water” (7:37-39). Those who object to the traditional interpretation of John 3:5 usually say that as a Jew, Nicodemus would have had no understanding of Christian baptism ---

COMMENT: This is not very convincing. We don't know if Nicodemus recognised baptism at all - not all Jews did. It does not matter if say the Bible never uses born of water as a way of saying born. The verses are too vague to base belief in water baptism on.

TRENT HORN WRITES: Some object that an act of willing, which infants cannot perform, is necessary for baptism to be spiritually regenerative. But the Bible never says baptism requires an act of willing, and the Gospels record several occasions where Jesus healed someone because others willed for the person to be healed. To the centurion who sought healing for his paralyzed servant, Jesus said, “Let it be done for you as you have believed” (Mt 8:13).

COMMENT: Unconvincing. You cannot use healings as a case for consent not being needed in baptism. A person spiritually reborn by choice sounds good. There is something disturbing and even imaginary about saying somebody is reborn without their consent! Their consent is not reborn! Its just a rationale for how Catholicism tends to promote nominal religion.

TRENT HORN WRITES OF BAPTISM: This parallels the rite of circumcision in the Old Testament that made a child part of the Old Covenant but did not obviate the need for further instruction in the faith. In fact, Colossians 2:11-12 connects circumcision with baptism. Paul says, “You were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.” In the Greek text of the phrase “the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism”, the Greek word rendered “and”, or kai, is not present. The passage literally reads, “You were circumcised with. . . the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism.” Making baptism the replacement of circumcision ---

COMMENT: There is a difference between using circumcision to tell you things about baptism and saying baptism has taken its place.

TRENT HORN WRITES: The Reformed pastor Nick Needham makes the following observation: Hilary of Poitiers, while recognizing merits in the sense of virtues that obtain divine reward, also makes it clear that the reward is ultimately gracious in nature: “For the very works of righteousness would not suffice to merit perfect blessedness, unless in our righteous will the mercy of God overlooked the defects of human changes and impulses. . . . Through the mercy of God, more will follow than is merited.”

COMMENT: Even rewards from God are really just gifts.

TRENT HORN WRITES: One popular way of describing this idea about works is found in the phrase “We are justified by faith alone, but faith is never alone.” The Westminster Confession puts it this way: “Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love” (11.2). In other words, we are justified or made righteous by faith alone, but everyone who is justified will, of necessity, perform good works. However, James does not say he who is justified does good works; he says, “A man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (Jas 2:24). The Bible is full of warnings not only to refrain from doing evil deeds, but also to refrain from failing to do good deeds. James himself says, “Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin” (Jas 4:17). To defend the idea that those with faith must also choose to do good works, James presents two examples: Abraham who offered Isaac on the altar and Rahab who protected the spies in Jericho. Concerning Abraham he said: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (Jas

2:21-24).

COMMENT: The Bible says that keeping the rules is not enough for if no good deeds are done you will not go to Heaven. It does seem though that the Bible teaches we are saved by obedient faith alone without good works that this fits the Catholic and Protestant understanding.

TRENT HORN WRITES ABOUT HOW GOOD WORKS CANNOT SAVE ACCORDING TO PAUL THAT HE HAS YOUR WHOLE LIFE NOT JUST UP TO NOW IN MIND: N. T. Wright says, "Paul, in company with mainstream second-Temple Judaism, affirms that God's final judgment will be in accordance with the entirety of a life led—in accordance, in other words, with works."20 Dunn further says that Romans 2:13 and 3:20.

COMMENT: Good. Seems to rule out death-bed conversion though!

TRENT HORN WRITES: N. T. Wright focuses on these ceremonial requirements and says they comprise the curse Paul associates with the Law. He says Paul's complaint is that "the law gets in the way of the promise to Abraham" by creating barriers for Gentile inclusion into the covenant. Dunn says the curse applies to "all who restrict the grace and promise of God in nationalistic terms, who treat the law as a boundary mark." But against Wright's and Dunn's interpretations, Thomas Schreiner says, " 'Works of law' are defined as doing all the things commanded in the law, which shows that a general critique of the law is intended." Other scholars make the same point, saying that Paul was concerned about the Torah as a whole, and not just its ceremonial aspects.

TRENT HORN WRITES: Just because keeping the Torah is not necessary for salvation, it doesn't follow that every law in the Torah is not necessary for salvation.

COMMENT: He is thinking of how Paul drops the rules and commands that things such as idolatry and homosexuality and adultery are still sins that keep you out of Heaven.

TRENT HORN WRITES: John 10:27-28 does not teach that if a person is one of Jesus' sheep, then he will always hear and follow Jesus' voice, and thus have perseverance of the saints. Jesus is actually saying the opposite: those who hear Jesus' voice and follow him are his sheep, and that is why they will never perish. Moody says, "Some read the passage as if it says: 'My sheep "heard" my voice, and I "knew" them, and they "followed" me, and I "gave" to them eternal life.' " But, Moody argues, the verbs indicate continuous, ongoing action by the sheep and by the Shepherd, not something that happened at a single moment in the past. Being a sheep does not guarantee one will always be obedient to Christ. Instead, consistently being obedient to Christ is what makes someone his sheep. Concerning John 6:37, the Greek text of this passage indicates that Jesus is referring to "all"

COMMENT: Interesting.

TRENT HORN WRITES: The author of Hebrews even says that "if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries" (10:26-27). He then compares the punishment for lawbreakers in the Old Covenant, which was death, to the worse punishment awaiting lawbreakers in the New Covenant. He then asks, "How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?" (10:29). If the punishment in the New Covenant is "much worse" than the punishment in the Old Covenant, then it can't be the same punishment, or physical death. It must instead be everlasting spiritual death or separation from God. This passage can't refer to the fate of false professors, or people who never were "true Christians", because it speaks of those who were previously sanctified and had received knowledge of the truth. Norm Geisler agrees that the author is speaking of true believers, but he denies that these verses refute the doctrine of perseverance of the saints. He claims that the passage refers only to a loss of rewards and not a loss of salvation because the author is "affirming with confidence that believers will not be lost [v. 3]"

COMMENT: The text approves of the Old Testament punishments as laid out by God.

TRENT HORN WRITES: Even though Protestants do not regard the deuterocanonical books as Scripture they should at least recognize their role as a historical witness to purgatory. Indeed, a careful review of Second Temple and Talmudic literature reveals the belief that Gehenna, or the place for the wicked after death, included a state of purification for less wicked souls prior to their admittance into paradise (the Talmud says this process takes at most twelve months). According to Simcha Paul Raphael, a professor of Jewish studies at Temple University, "Gehenna served as a realm of purgation and purification. . . . After this experience, the soul is sufficiently purified and able to enter the supernal postmortem realm of Gan Eden, the Garden of Eden."

COMMENT: Jesus then denied Gehenna can be gotten out of. It follows that if a Catholic gets to Gehenna-purgatory they

are in for a shock and all Catholics are prepared to go there!

TRENT HORN WRITES: Jimmy Akin, The fact that necromancy was for purposes of gaining information is made clear by the Hebrew terms for “medium” (sho’el’ob, “a spirit inquirer”), “wizard” (yidde’oni, “a spiritist”), and necromancer (doresh, ‘el-ha-metim, “an inquirer of the dead”). The focus on gaining information is also made clear by the context in Deuteronomy, which specifies that God will send his people prophets instead of allowing them to use mediums, wizards, and necromancers (Deut 18:15).

COMMENT: If you need to know something God will send you prophets. Trying to get around that is never necessary. That is a strong affirmation that if God started Christianity then it is the truth and we should not go beyond that.

TRENT HORN WRITES: Prayer is not always an act of worship, even if it is made to God. An agnostic might pray, “God, if you exist, please give me a sign”, but we wouldn’t say the agnostic is “worshiping God” through such a prayer. He is instead asking God for help using the medium we call prayer. In the same way, when Catholics ask the saints for help, they pray to the saints but do not worship them as gods.

COMMENT: So praying to a saint is like what the agnostic does?

CONCLUSIONS: The book is scholarly from a Christian conservative position but there are slips which ruin the points it tries to make.