

A LOOK AT ARGUMENTS FOR BELIEVING THE CATHOLIC CLAIMS ABOUT SACRAMENTS

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 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 the 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.

