

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS

"Part LXI: Hebrews - Overcoming The Temptation To Backslide Into Judeo-Christo-Pagan Ritual Apostasies"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

divisiveness makes them **heretics**, that their **least divisive** route is to return home to the fold of Roman Catholicism!

(2) He's not alone: Archbishop Robert Runcie of the Anglican Church met with Pope John Paul II a while back. According to Associated Press reporter Mary Beth Sheridan, the Anglican leader "called . . . for all Christians to accept the pope as a common leader 'presiding in love.'"

(3) We have noted before that David Briggs of the AP reported from New York "leading Catholics and Evangelicals are asking their flocks for a remarkable leap of faith: to finally accept each other as Christians . . . They urged Catholics and Evangelical als to no longer hold each other at theological arm's length and to stop aggressive proselytization of each other's flocks . . ."

Syllabus of Errors, "(#18) Protestantism is **not** another and diversified form of the one true Christian religion in which it is possible to please God equally as in the Catholic Church . . . (#21) The [Roman Catholic] Church has power to define dogmatically the religion of the **Catholic** Church to be the **only true** religion [*This rather exclusivistic stand is called "being divisive" when **fundamentalists** to use it, but apparently not for **this body!**]."*

(Boettner, Roman Catholicism, p. 24-25) If those of us from former Catholic backgrounds are **wrong** in having left Catholicism, according to that group's doctrine, we are in **grave error!**

Question: **Since some Evangelicals and members of historical Protestantism are going back to the Catholic fold, should we go back into Roman Catholicism as well as returning strays coming home to Christ's "true" Church?!**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: *"Anglican Archbishop Robert Runcie has 'called for all Christians to accept the pope as a common leader.' (Mary Sheridan, AP) A number of Evangelical leaders have also urged closer ties between Evangelicals and Rome. Well, were Protestants WRONG to break from the Church of Rome, and should they now 'come home' to what some claim is the 'Mother Church of Christendom'?!"*

- I. **As the Early Church grew in numbers, Jewish converts felt increased pressures to RETURN to established, apostate Judaism.**
 - A. Early Jewish converts to Christ expected His Kingdom to come **soon!**
 - B. However, passing time with increased persecution from unbelieving countrymen and a decline in Scripture understanding led **Christian** Jews to wonder where Israel's Kingdom was and why Christians were "deprived" of the "consolations of Jewish [Old Testament] sacrificial worship and priestly atonement", B. F. Westcott, Hebrews, p. liv.
 - C. Thereupon many Christian Jews considered returning to Judaism.
- II. **The book of Hebrews was written by an Early Church author to CORRECT this backsliding tendency of Hebrew believers, Ibid.**
- III. **By APPLICATION, Hebrews also counters calls for Christians to revert to Catholic or pagan sacrificial and priesthood religions:**
 - A. When Constantine made Christianity his empire's official religion, the pagan mystery religions were accordingly outlawed, so their priests tried to survive by **blending** their rituals with Christianity: in the process, they found similarities between the Old Testament's sacrificial and human priesthood rituals and their own, so they infiltrated the Church to where some scholars say at least 75 % of the Roman Catholic Church's **ritual** contains pagan and Old Testament Judaistic roots, Loraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism, p. 10, 55.
 - B. Thus, though Hebrews was **initially** penned to counter **Jewish** Christians lapsing into **Judaism**, by way of **application**, it also confronts **Gentile** Christians who are tempted to relapse into **Roman Catholicism** or even **outright pagan witchcraft** origins (as follows):
 1. Christ's **Person** is superior to the Old Testament prophets, to angels and Moses as the Supreme Object of man's faith, He. 1:1-4:16.
 2. Christ's **Priesthood** is superior to **all other** priestly orders:
 - a. His is superior to Aaron's order as Abraham, Aaron's **ancestor, submitted to Melchisedec**, a type of Christ, He. 5:1-7:28.
 - b. His order is superior to others in its **eternal duration**, 8:1-13.
 - c. His priestly order is superior to all other orders in **ministry**, 9:1-10:18: (a) He used the **heavenly** temple, not an **earthly** one as in other priestly orders, 9:1-11; (b) He used his **own** priceless blood, not other inadequate sources as do other orders, 9:12a; (c) He needed **only** to offer His perfect atonement **once-for-all, not repeatedly** as other priests must practice in Judaism, Roman Catholicism or pagan witchcraft, Hebrews 9:12b, 24-26.

3. Because of His Superiority in **Person** and **Work**, Christ's sacrifice offered **once-for-all** is **sufficient** to offer **COMPLETE salvation** unlike Roman Catholic, Jewish Old Testament or pagan sacrificial systems can offer, Hebrews 9:27-28; Ibid., Boettner, p. 55.
4. Consequently, His priesthood **REPLACES** the Old Testament Aaronic order, and thus, by way of **application**, it **replaces** all **other orders** in **CHRISTENDOM** or **paganism**, He. 10:1-39.
5. Thus, through Hebrews, God orders Christians **throughout** history to stick to Christ's all-supreme, all-sufficient priesthood and sacrifice of Calvary and **not to revert** to the incomplete man-made or Old Testament priesthoods and sacrifices, He. 11:1-12:29; 13:1-25. **Otherwise, God will discipline them**, He. 10:23-27!

IV. **Hebrews adds to the "thread of redemption" by showing that Christ's supremacy in Person and Work so supplants pagan and Old Testament priesthood and sacrificial systems that Christians can overcome pressures to revert back to apostate religious roots!**

Application: *To deal with pressures to yield to a Judeo or Christo or pagan group's lure to submit to their priestly or sacrificial order, (1) believe in Jesus Christ as Savior (Jn. 3:16) and He, the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec will eternally (He. 5:9), once-for-all (He. 9:24-28) and completely (He. 7:25 NIV) save the soul. (2) Then, as a believer, (a) confess any sins done for continual cleansing (He. 7:25; 1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) rely upon the Holy Spirit for behavior control (Gal. 5: 16-23) to (c) obey Scripture, 1 Jn. 2:3-6. (3) Then, use Hebrews for motivation to remain a follower of Christ rather than reverting back to apostate religions with artificial rituals!*

Lesson: *Christ so upstaged all of their former priestly orders and sacrificial systems that Christians must resist slipping back into Judaistic, Catholic or pagan systems in favor of remaining with their all-sufficient replacement, Jesus Christ, or face God's discipline, Hebrews 10:19-39!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon . . .)

Here is a summary of comparative teachings presented in Hebrews and Roman Catholicism on priests and sacrificial systems:

(1) The Priesthood: At the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church decreed that, at the **weekly** mass, "The priest remits sins as God, and that which he calls his body at the altar is adored as God by himself and by the congregation . . ." But Hebrews 9:25-26 NIV says of Jesus: "Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." **Thus, communion services do not offer Christ's body repeatedly; rather, they only recall His sole, SUFFICIENT death!**

(2) The Mass: In Catholicism's A Catechism of Christian Doctrine, we read: "The Holy Mass is the sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, really present on the altar under the appearance of bread and wine, and offered to God **for the living and the dead.**" Thus, living and dead Christians allegedly need the continual offering of the Mass for their salvation to be made more complete. (Ibid., Boettner, p. 175). But on the other hand, we read in Hebrews 10:11-14: "And every [Aaronic] priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can **never** take away sins: But this man, after he had offered **one** sacrifice for sins **forever**, sat down on the right hand of God . . . For by **ONE** offering he hath **PERFECTED FOREVER** them that are sanctified." **Thus, contrary to the teaching that the Lord's Table is repeatedly needed to complete our salvation, Christ's one death on the Cross is enough to PERFECT FOREVER those who put their faith in Him**, Ep. 2:8-9.

When we look at Scripture, we conclude that TRUTH resides not in man's efforts to repeat an Old Testament priestly or sacrificial system. Rather, TRUTH resides in the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ that REPLACED that outdated system. We should not therefore return unto errant priestly or sacrificial systems in Christendom or in paganism anymore than Early Church believers were to revert back into Judaism! "LET US [RATHER] GO ON UNTO PERFECTION", Hebrews 6:1b!