

A BOOK REVIEW  
HEBREWS TO REVELATION/*THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS Not WRITTEN BY THE APOSTLE PAUL*

August 31, 2025

**TITLE OF BOOK:** Hebrews to Revelation/*The New Testament Letters Not Written by the Apostle Paul*

**AUTHOR:** Philip McCarty of Columbia, Missouri, who holds an MA in Christian Thought from Bethel University, and who has been studying and teaching the Bible for almost forty years, and who has authored three other books on Christian Theology and Hermeneutics, 1) *God: A Self Portrait*; 2) *All the Way from Kingdom Come: Basic Future Events*, and 3) *God Said, "Let's Babel": The Bible as Cross-Cultural Communication*. (Personal Note: The Author, Phil, is personally know to me, your Reviewer. I have worked with him and taught with him, and personally learned from him in classes taught or facilitated by him. I know him to be an extremely talented and effective Biblical teacher.)

**PUBLISHER AND DATE OF PUBLICATION:** iUniverse, 2025.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

As Noted in my, your Reviewer's, Introduction of the Author, Philip McCarty (who I will take the liberty to call "Phil" in this Review) I have personally known him for some time. I have worked with him, and co-taught classes with him, and have learned from him in classes taught by him. I know Phil to be, and to have been for many years, a highly knowledgeable, skilled and effective teacher of the Bible and of the many aspects of the Bible. He knows the Bible, backwards and forwards. He is (and I mean this to be a compliment) a real "Bible Nerd", but he is an "Every Person's Bible Nerd". He is very humble, and does not want to hold his superior knowledge over others. He truly wants to help the rest of us to gain greater meaning from, and love of the Bible, a love which he holds beyond all bounds. He has engaged in efforts to help others gain this meaning and love for over forty years. Therefore, knowing Phil as I do, I approached this book, Phil's book, with the expectation that it would be a book that will provide a great tool for teachers of the Bible, and for pastors who are preparing messages dealing with one of the New Testament Epistles which was Not authored by the Apostle Paul, *Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude and Revelation*. I was certainly not disappointed by what I found in this book. In my judgment, the judgment of your Reviewer, this book provides a valuable tool, an essential tool for: 1) Teachers of any Class which seeks to deal with one of these Non-Pauline Epistles, 2) Pastors who are preparing a message or series of messages dealing with one of these Epistles, 3) Scholars or Researchers, who can, with other resources, prepare to write a scholarly paper, thesis or other item of literature dealing with one of these Epistles, 4) Any Facilitator of a Bible Study group, in which the group is working through one of these Epistles (and, also, for each of the members of such a Bible Study group), and 5) Any Christian who engages, as most of us do, in the discipline of daily Scripture reading, and who approaches one of these Non-Pauline Epistles with the goal of going beyond a superficial reading of the Epistle but rather wants to engage in a deeper dive into its interpretation and significance, including the significance for his or her day to day Christian living.

There is an old saying that "Appearances can be Deceiving". That saying applies to this book. When you pick it up you will not find a book that presents itself in what I would refer to as a "marketable fashion". It does not have a Sexy Cover, or glitzy manner of presentation that encourages you to want to buy it and read it. Its initial appearance and manner of presentation give you the impression that it is going to be "dry and boring". Don't be fooled by this impression. It is anything but dry and boring. While

Phil claims that his book is written for the average person (presumably us “common person”, every day, non-scholarly Christian Bible readers), every page of this book contains an insight into a part of the non-Pauline Epistle being discussed which is eye-opening, and worthy of discussion, both a scholarly discussion and a non-scholarly discussion, such as one of those experienced by some of us in a “Bible Study” where comments of the participants often start out with some statement like “Well What This Says to Me”, or “What Jumps Out At Me”, or “What I See Here”, etc., but no one, including the facilitator, actually has a clue about what the author of the Epistle, or God, through the words of that author, actually said or intended to accomplish with the Epistle or one of its passages. If this book is used in such a Bible Study where one of these Epistles is being studied, then that Bible Study will have accomplished something quite meaningful. Here, in this book you will find, verse by verse, for each passage of the Non-Pauline Epistle under study, an interpretation (exegesis) of the passage, and a reference to other Bible Passages or teachings, including the many Old Testament (actually Hebrew Scripture) passages or teachings, which the Epistle’s author had in mind in writing or stating the passage, and reference to other Bible passages or Biblical teachings which are relevant to the consideration of the passage and its meaning and instructions, and suggested applications for the individual Christian and the Church of the message provided by the passage. Each of the writers of these Epistles was steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures and their Narrative (which appear in our Old Testament) and, as Phil points out, in many cases, a passage written by one of these writers has a reference to, or is derived from some passage or teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures, what we refer to as the “Old Testament”. Most of us are not really well learned in the Old Testament (and, unfortunately tend to give it sort of short shrift) and, therefore, the meaning of a passage in one of these Epistles might totally escape us since we aren’t aware of its Old Testament background. Phil solves this dilemma for us. If a passage is somehow based in the Old Testament, he makes the connection clear to us. For that reason alone, if no other, this book is a hugely valuable tool in any reading or study of one of these Epistles.

So, in my view, the view of your Reviewer, this Book, while it is written by Phil “with the average person in mind”, it nevertheless provides a very valuable, in fact I would urge an essential tool for any Bible Teacher, Pastor, or Devotional, Bible Reading Christian who desires to achieve, or needs to present or teach a far beyond superficial view of, understanding of, and significance of each of these Non-Pauline Epistles. I, your Reviewer, was particularly impressed and helped by the book’s chapters on Hebrews (a wonderful, uplifting, powerful Epistle which I have somewhat overlooked) and Revelation, a book which I must confess, and I would suggest any honest scholar or Bible reader must confess is difficult to understand. Phil’s suggested conclusion for God’s intended message which is provided by Revelation is unique, and very eye-opening. You might disagree with that conclusion (and Phil humbly (and he is a very humble man) welcomes disagreements with each of his conclusions which appears in this book) but Phil’s approach to Revelation, and his conclusions about God’s intended message provided by Revelation certainly deserve strong consideration and discussion. In fact, for me personally, Phil’s chapters on Hebrews and Revelation would justify my paying a price for this book which would be far greater than the sum I actually paid.

So, I, your Reviewer, can recommend this book (and it is not hugely expensive, and can be quickly obtained from Amazon) for any Christian Bible Teacher, any Christian Bible Student, any Pastor who wants to better understand or present a message with respect to any of these Non-Pauline Epistles, any Bible Study Facilitator or participant, and any Christian who engages in the discipline of daily Scripture reading and who approaches one of these Epistles with a goal of achieving a deeper, beyond superficial understanding of that Epistle.

## WHAT IS THE AUTHOR DOING WITH WHAT THE AUTHOR IS SAYING IN THIS BOOK

Our Author, Philip McCarty ("Phil") has written this book as a written form of what he is, a Bible Teacher. He understands that any reader of any of the Epistles (including each of those discussed in this book) can find the Epistle to be confusing or difficult to understand because that reader is really getting only one side of a piece of correspondence, a letter, which was directed to an intended audience who lived in an ancient culture, and who was experiencing a situation or problem which might not be abundantly clear to the reader. Oftentimes the intended purpose of the Epistle's writer which caused him to say what he did say in his letter is unclear. Why did he say what he said? What was his purpose in saying what he said? Furthermore, the writer of each of the Bible's Epistles, including the Non-Pauline Epistles which were not written by the Apostle Paul that are the subjects of this book, was a person who was steeped in the writings of the Hebrew Scriptures which make up that which we refer to as the "Old Testament". That writer was a Jewish person. He had great knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, and had memorized most of them. He likely saw Jesus and the teachings of Jesus, and the story of Jesus as a continuation of the Narrative presented by the Old Testament. For example, the writer of Hebrews, who is not really known to us, clearly saw Jesus as the Messiah which had been long promised to the Jews and Jewish nation and had been predicted by the Hebrew Scriptures. Unlike the writers of these Epistles most of us are not so steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures, and when we read a passage of an Epistle which has a reference back to, or a justification in a passage of the Old Testament, we are, frankly, in the dark about that Old Testament Passage. So, if we speak honestly, we have to admit that we can be, and oftentimes are confused by what an Epistle writer has said in his letter. Phil seeks to eliminate this confusion for us. Quoting from Luke's description of Paul's Road to Damascus experience, Phil seeks to "lift the scales from our eyes" when we read these Epistles, and help us in better understanding what the writers are saying and why they said it.

Phil has spent a lifetime in the study of, and teaching about the Bible. He wants us to better understand the Bible, and acquire the love for it which he so clearly manifests. He urges that: "Understanding what the Bible says about God and humans is very important for our life". So, he wants us to be able to approach each of the Epistles which he discusses in this book with some understanding of, hopefully a good understanding of the important concepts that are presented by that Epistle and by each of its passages. He wants us to understand what the author of each of these non-Pauline Epistles intended (and what God, through the words of that author intended) to teach us about God, and about who we are, as human beings before God, and about how we and the Church are to properly serve God and each other. Therefore, he, Phil, takes each of the Non-Pauline Epistles. He provides for most of these Epistles an Introduction, in which he identifies its author (i.e. the not clearly known author of Hebrews, James, the half-brother of Jesus (they shared a mother but not a father), Peter, John, Jude and the believed to be author of Revelation, the Apostle John), and describes the cultural and historical context of the Epistle's writing and what he believes the situation addressed by the Epistle to be. He then provides, in this Introduction, some personal comments about the Epistle and its significance. Then, he launches off into a highly detailed discussion of, and interpretation and analysis of the Epistle, on a verse- by-verse basis. He cites the verse. He provides any Old Testament passage to which the verse might have reference or from which it might be derived or which is relevant to it. He provides reference to any other New Testament passages which might be helpful in understanding or applying the concept of the verse. He then provides his conclusion about how we, as Christians in our day-to-day living, or our Church, might or should apply the concept or teachings of the verse. So, if I take my Bible, and I am reading one of these Epistles and I want to achieve a deeper dive, beyond superficial understanding of that Epistle or of one of its verses, then I can take this book, Phil's book, and use it, side by side with my Bible to achieve my desired goals. If I am a Pastor or Teacher who needs to teach about one of these Epistles, or if I am a Bible Study

Facilitator who is leading a Bible study of one of these Epistles, I can and I should teach from the Bible, and this book, side by side (possibly in connection with other sources) to try to enable my audience or group to achieve a better understanding of the Epistle and of its teachings and of how its important lessons or concepts might be applied by us or our Church.

So, what is Phil trying to do with this book. He, as a wonderful Bible teacher wants us (whether we are a devotional Bible reader, a Pastor, or a Bible teacher) to look at one of these Epistles and each of its passages, and to have an understanding of its connections, if any there are, to the passages of the Hebrew Scriptures (since the author of this Epistle was steeped in and almost swimming in those Scriptures), and of how it mirrors or supplements, if in fact it does mirror or supplement, other New Testament teachings or passages, and of its important concepts or teachings and of their applications today.

So, what was Phil trying to do with what he says in this book. He is trying to perform the role which he has so excellently performed for over 40 years, the role of a Bible teacher. He wants this book to be used, as a tool for better understanding of each of these Non-Pauline Epistles, by Pastors, Bible Teachers and Devotional Bible Readers. In the Summary which appears on the back cover of this book, A summary of the general purpose or concept of each of these Epistles is eloquently stated as follows: *“The letters of the New Testament studied in this book are written by various authors, each with something important to say to the Church of their time and ours. Hebrews reveals Jesus as the Messiah. James gives guidance for practical Christian living. Peter helps us sustain faith with truth amid suffering. The writings of John emphasize the command for Christians to love others. The letter of Revelation guides us to place our hope in God instead of misplacing it in other objects”*. This statement of the purposes or concepts or teachings of an Epistle, are, in Phil’s Introduction of that Epistle and his verse-by-verse breakdown of that Epistle, expanded in the chapter of Phil’s book which deals with that Epistle.

This book is a great teaching and learning tool.

### **HOW TO READ THIS BOOK**

Since I am a Reviewer, I read this book, cover- to- cover. However, I would, with some trepidation, state that such a cover- to- cover reading is not necessary, or, probably, will be all that helpful. Candidly, while I was deeply interested in trying to achieve a better understanding of Hebrews and Revelation, and felt like I learned a great deal about these Epistles when I read this book, cover-to-cover, I can’t honestly say that I, today, have a great recollection of what I read. So, when, in my daily Bible reading I reach Hebrews or Revelation, or any of these Epistles, I need to read that Epistle or book, with Phil’s book sitting side by side with my Bible so that I can consult Phil’s book, verse by verse, as I try to better understand the Epistle. I think that this book is a tool. It is a tool to be used side by side with your Bible when you are, for whatever reason, approaching one of these Non-Pauline Epistles. In my case, and in my current season of life, I am more of a day-to-day devotional Bible reader than I am a Bible teacher. In that current season, when I get to one of these Epistles, for example Hebrews, I will take my Bible, and take this book, and put them side by side, and read each verse of the Epistle and then read and consider Phil’s teachings about that verse. I want to meditate on the verse and Phil’s teachings. Perhaps I will agree with Phil. Perhaps I won’t. Perhaps I will agree in part and disagree in part, and he humbly allows for disagreements. However, if I disagree, then I am forced to justify my disagreement with something approaching Phil’s scholarly approach to his conclusions. My view, therefore, is that a serious Bible student or Teacher should obtain this book, look at its opening Introduction and its Table of Contents in order to be aware of what it contains, and then use this book, as a tool, when, for whatever reason, he or she approaches one of these

Non-Pauline Epistles in order to help him or her better understand the Epistle, or to, as a Teacher or Communicator, better explain the Epistle or better convey its teachings.

**IS THIS BOOK A BOOK WHICH SHOULD BE HELD IN THE TEI LIBRARY OR ONE THAT SHOULD BE USED IN A TEI/ECLI CLASS?**

This book should, absolutely, be held in the TEI Library and should be made available for use or study by any Student, Pastor or Teacher who, for whatever reason, is approaching one of the Non-Pauline Epistles and has a need or desire to achieve, or teach or convey a better understanding of that Epistle and of each of its passages. This is a great resource or reference book. However, I am not sure how it might be used in a TEI/ECLI Class, unless that class is devoted to a study of one of these Epistles. I can see, however, how it might be used in a Hermeneutics class, where it is used as a part of a case study in which we want to provide an exercise which requires the use of proper methodologies for interpreting, and understanding, and possibly applying the teachings of a book or passage in the Bible. All of this said, I completely endorse and recommend this book.

Thank You!

Dan Simon