

# Concerns over Hebrews through Revelation



## CHARACTERISTICS OF SO-CALLED “EARLY CATHOLICISM” (Rudolf Bultmann & Ernst Käsemann)

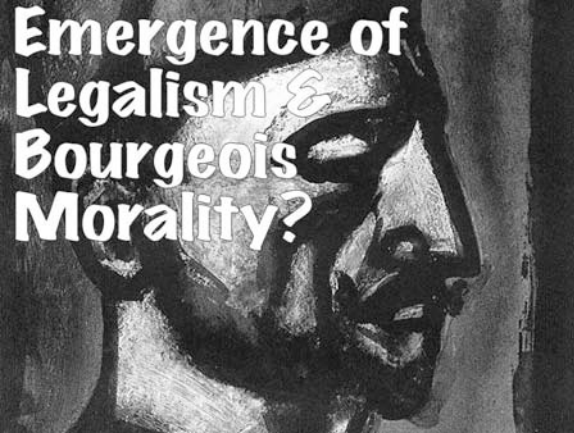


### Fading of Imminent Expectation

1,000 years (ch. 20)

- James warns against complacency in the light of the coming eschaton (4:13-5:7)
- 2 Peter is driven to “1 day is as 1,000 years” (3:8) — making a virtue of necessity?
- Revelation pushes the final consummation off
- Hebrews points folks away from the Jerusalem below to the partially already existing Jerusalem above (e.g., 12:22; cf. 13:14) — careful balancing of “already & not yet” a sign of maturing of the church

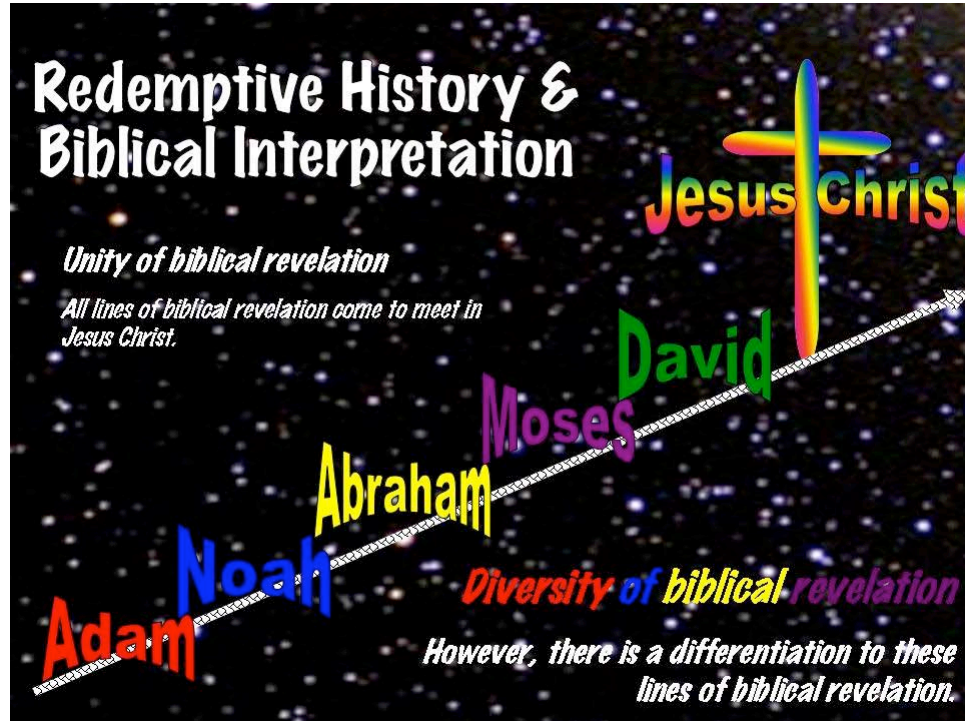




## Emergence of Legalism and Pedestrian Ethics

- James has to deal with “dead orthodoxy” — ch. 2
- Hebrews manifests faithfulness displaces faith — i.e., no longer dealing with the faith that justifies, but with the faithfulness that gets you through to the end (e.g., chs. 3-4; 11; 12:1-2)
- Hebrews evidences the problem of apostasy/falling away (Heb chs., 6; 10; 3:14; 2Pt 2:1,15,20-21; 3:17)
- 1 John has to address post-baptismal sin (3:9)
- Ethic of submission is grounded in the earthly example of Jesus (1Pt 2:18-25)
- Ethic of submission buys into contemporary devaluing of people of lesser status — 1Pt on women part of the problem; James on the rich part of the corrective
- Ethic of submission takes on apologetic value (1Pt 3:1-6)





*Historical progress is not the only means used by God to disclose the full contents of His eternal Word. Side by side with it we witness a striking multiformity of teaching employed for the same purpose. All along the historic stem of revelation, branches are seen to shoot forth, frequently more than one at a time, each of which helps to realize the complete idea of the truth for its own part and after its own peculiar manner... The more fully the light shone upon the realization of the whole counsel of God and disclosed its wide extent, the more necessary it became to expound it in all its bearings, to view it at different angles, thus to bring out what Paul calls the much-variegated, the manifold, wisdom of God. For, God having chosen to reveal the truth through human instruments, it follows that these instruments must be both numerous and of varied adaptation to the common end... God's method of revelation includes the very shaping and chiselling of individualities for His own objective ends.*

Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History & Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 13-14

Hebrews-Revelation  
Preliminary Considerations

**Authors**  
Audiences Documents

- Who wrote these books?  
James, Peter, John, Jude and ???
- Who were these books written to?  
Jews dispersed, Jews at home,  
Gentiles - great variety
- Why were these books written?  
Prophetic Warning, Christological  
Issues, Ethical Dynamics, Theology of  
the Church, Correct Covenantal  
Understanding, etc...

The "Already" and  
"Not Yet" Tension

Creation  
Fall  
Redemption

## Points to consider:

- What does each of these books contribute to the unity and diversity of biblical revelation?
- Be especially attentive to anything that is said in any of these particular books that is said nowhere else in Scripture.
- Ask yourself: how would life be easier for me if the book of “fill-in-the-blank” were missing? Be honest!
- At the same time, ask yourself: how would I be impoverished if any were not here, and how am I richer because each of these books is here?

## For Further Reading:

- Dunn, J.D.G. *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977, pp. 341-388.
- Kasemann, Ernst. “The Canon of the New Testament and the Unity of the Church,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes*. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1964, pp. 95-107.
- Kung, Hans. “Early Catholicism in the New Testament as a Problem in Controversial Theology” in *The Council in Action: Theological Reflections on the Second Vatican Council*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963, pp. 159-165
- Vos, Geerhardus. “The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980, pp. 32-24.