

Divine Revelation

Hebrews 1:1-2a

Dorothy Sayers:

HEBREWS

“Official Christianity, of late years, has been having what is known as bad press. We are constantly assured that the churches are empty because preachers insist too much upon doctrine—dull dogma as people call it.

The fact is the precise opposite. It is the neglect of dogma that makes for dullness.

The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama.”

Did You Know?

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Although most translations present this introduction in several sentences, Hebrews 1:1–4 in Greek forms a single, mult clause sentence, built around the main clause “God ... has spoken.”

It Was Greek to Me...

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1:1 “**p**olymeros kai **p**olytropos
palai ho theos lalesas tois
patrasin en tois **p**rophetais”

We miss the alliteration
present in the Greek.

Anthony Thistleton:

HEBREWS

[Hebrews 1:1-4] “provide one of the most arresting beginnings possible, combining elegance, alliteration, rhythm, rhetorical artistry, and unstoppable force with probably the most sophisticated and stylish Greek in the entire New Testament.”

Quiz Time!

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There are 4 Major
Christological Passages
in the New Testament.

What are they?

4 Christological Passages in the NT

1. John 1:1-18

2. Philippians 2:5-11

3. Colossians 1:15-18

4. Hebrews 1:1-4

Hebrews 1:1-4

HEBREWS

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **2** in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. **3** And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Divine Revelation

HEBREWS

Old Way

long ago
to the fathers
through the prophets
in many ways

New Way

in these last days
to us
in His Son
in one way

God has always spoken, but now, believers receive divine revelation through one source.

Ephesians 4:20-24

HEBREWS

20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Considerations Tonight

HEBREWS

1. “God...spoke”
2. “to the fathers”
3. “in the prophets”
4. “in many ways”
5. “in these last days”
6. “to us”
7. “in His Son”

A Clear Subject

HEBREWS

God is constantly before the author; he uses the word 68 times, an average of about once every 73 words all through his epistle.

1. “God...spoke”

God Speaks.

Try to grasp the immensity of such
a statement.

And if it is true that God has
spoken, what effect does that have
on us?

In Addition:

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At the time of the
Incarnation, God had
not spoken to Israel
through any means in
over 400 years.

Translators Differ

HEBREWS

- **Parallel:** “God spoke to the fathers and/but he also spoke to us”
- **Temporal:** “after He spoke to the fathers, He spoke to us”
- **Concessive:** “although He spoke to the fathers, He spoke to us”

Choose whichever you like...

The Main Idea

HEBREWS

Since it is the same God who is speaking, the issue is not so much when He spoke (then versus now), nor that He spoke to the fathers and then to us, but that He spoke through prophets and now in one who is by His very nature a Son.

2. “to the fathers”

HEBREWS

tois patrasin (τοῖς πατράσιν)

1. Does the term refer only to the patriarchs of Israel or does it convey a more general meaning of “ancestor, forefather”?
2. Does the article imply the possessive “our”?

Answer to Question #1

HEBREWS

- *patrasin* is commonly used in the New Testament to mean “ancestors.”
- Had the writer intended a more restrictive meaning, he had the option of using *patriarchai*.

Answer to Question #2

HEBREWS

2. The question at hand impacts our understanding of who the recipients of this letter were.

- For example, since *hemōn* (“our”) is not used with *patrasin*, at least some of the recipients may have been Gentile Christians.

4 Reasons

1. The article before the noun may function as a possessive and is taken this way by many commentators and translators.
2. The pronoun would have hindered the p alliteration in the verse (5 words begin with p).
3. Paul referred to “our forefathers” in 1 Cor 10:1 even though his audience was predominantly Gentiles.
4. Abraham is described in Rom 4:11 as “the father (*patrasin*) of all who believe.”

3. “in the prophets”

HEBREWS

en tois prophētais

The prophet in the Old Testament was one who proclaimed and interpreted divine revelation.

This phrase,, is most likely an instrumental of means indicating God’s speaking “through” or “by” the prophets.

Who Were The Prophets? HEBREWS

- Of course we know Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the 12 minor prophets.
- Moses is called a prophet in Gen. 20:7.
- Aaron is called a prophet in Ex. 7:1.
- Jesus mentions the prophets, “from...righteous Abel to...Zechariah” in Matt. 23:35.

The Author is:

HEBREWS

Contrasting Prophets with the Son.

Specifically, a prophet-kind of revelation
with a Son-kind of revelation.

The focus is not on the content of the revelation, or on the way God spoke to the prophets, but on the nature and relationship of the mediators (prophets and Son) to God himself and the way God spoke.

4. “in many ways”

- Direct Revelation
 - Moses on Mount Sinai
- Urim and Thummim
- Visions
 - Daniel
- Dreams
 - Joseph
- “Breaking the 4th Wall”
 - Ezekiel 11
- Alternative Means
 - Balaam’s Donkey

5. “in these last days”

HEBREWS

ep' eschatou tōn hēmerōn

Contrasts with the “long ago” of v. 1.

And so, we have a closing out of one age and the inauguration of a coming age.

What has changed?

“in these last days”

HEBREWS

In the Jewish mind, there were two ages: this age and the coming eschatological age, in which Messiah will appear.

The linkage of these two eras happened in real time at the Incarnation, and so the readers of this epistle in the 1st century along were in the “last days” just as we are.

6. “to us”

HEBREWS

At the very least, *hēmin* includes the author and recipients of the letter, and most commentators broaden its meaning to include the entire Christian community, including those who would hear the message in the future.

And in that is an extraordinary truth.

God's Revelation

HEBREWS

Is “in His Son” and “to us.”

This is amazing.

The text could have easily said, “Now he has spoken to us through the apostles.”

But it doesn't...

7. “in His Son”

HEBREWS

Whereas the prophets conveyed God’s word in their speech (and writings), God spoke not only through Jesus’ words, but also by his person and work. Jesus—in all He is, said, and did—reveals the Father.

Son (*huios*)

HEBREWS

- The author included no article prior to the word “Son.”
- Whereas in many languages this may suggest that Jesus is merely one son in a crowd of sons, the emphasis here is on the unique relationship of Jesus with the Father—one who relates to him as Son.

Jesus is Identified

HEBREWS

As the Son seven times in the
book of Hebrews.

And that doesn't even count
the OT references to the
promised Son.

In the New Testament: HEBREWS

- There is no messenger and word-event formula as one finds in the Old Testament, such as “the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah” (e.g., Jer 28:12).
- On no occasion did Jesus say, “Thus says the Lord” or “The word of God came to me.”

Amazingly...

HEBREWS

- The author viewed the revelation of the Son as God's "speech" to us, and thus it is an appropriate metaphor for all that God does through Christ in the world and not just in reference to the words of Christ.
- Additionally, when Scripture speaks of the "word of the LORD" addressed to and through Old Testament prophets, the Son, as the second Person of the Trinity, is always involved as well.

Furthermore...

- It was God's speech that created the universe.
- Thus, the word that God now speaks through his Son is in no way discontinuous with God's word spoken through the prophets or even in creation.
- This may sound redundant, but the word of God has always been the word of God.

Contrast & Continuity

HEBREWS

The speech of the prophets is contrasted with the speech of the Son.

However, continuity is maintained in that God's final revelation in Christ can be understood only in the context of God's revelation to Israel in the OT.

A misunderstanding of this continuity can bring unfavorable results...



One Might Argue:

Hebrews argues that the old covenant has been rendered obsolete by the new covenant in Jesus Christ.

And one would be correct.

However...

The Argument is Made: HEBREWS

By showing that the Old Testament itself affirms this truth, so it is neither anti-Judaic nor anti-Semitic.

The old covenant revelation is certainly not obsolete since the author uses it as the linchpin on which he builds his case.

In Fact...

The author on occasion placed the old covenant revelation on the lips of Jesus.

The very word of God in the Old Testament is proclaimed “in these last days” by Jesus the Son who is in continuity with the prophets of old, and the author of Hebrews makes constant use of the words of these prophets to glorify Jesus.

One More Thing:

- Hebrews stresses the culminating character of God's revelation in Jesus Christ compared with what He had given the Old Testament prophets.
- His statement establishes the fact of progressive revelation and strongly suggests the cessation of revelation in the apostolic age.
- Man has not taken the initiative to discover God, but God has taken the initiative to reveal Himself to man.

In Summary:

- God is the communicator, His word is effective, His now exalted Son (both in his person and work) is the ultimate means of his communication, and the church is the immediate recipient of that communication.
- **Simply put: God has something to say to the church, and that message focuses preeminently in the person and work of the exalted Son.**

So...

HEBREWS

How do we know that this
revelation through the Son
is the highest, fullest, and
most complete that the
Father can give?



**KEEP
CALM
I'LL BE BACK IN
TWO
WEEKS**

HEBREWS