

# THE SPRINGFIELDER

Vol. XXVIII

Summer, 1964

No. 2

THE SPRINGFIELDER is published quarterly by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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Indexed in INDEX TO RELIGIOUS PERIODICAL LITERATURE, published by the American Theological Library Association, Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

Clergy changes of address reported to Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, will also cover mailing change of *The Springfielder*. Other changes of address should be sent to the Business Manager of *The Springfielder*, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

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# An Exegetical—Devotional Study Of II Peter 1:16-21

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**B**EFORE WE BEGIN the study of II Peter 1:16-21, certain problems need to be faced concerning the author of this epistle as well as its place in the canon. The second letter of the apostle St. Peter is an antilegomenon which was recognized as canonical by the Synod of Laodicea in the year 370 and reaffirmed by the Council of Hippo in 393. Prior to this time and for many centuries thereafter, there were strong doubts and serious misgivings as to its authorship and, therefore, its genuineness. In fact, even today there is quite a consensus among Christian scholars that Peter is not the author. We find no trace of this letter until 200 AD. The Muratorian Canon of 170 A.D., the first official list of New Testament Books, does not include it. Evidently Clement of Alexandria didn't know of it. Origen called it a disputed book although he himself considered it canonical. Didymus claimed that many looked upon it as spurious. Eusebius frankly admits: "We have received this second epistle to be not canonical, although, since it appeared to be useful to many, it has been diligently read with the other scriptures". These are fourth century men, yet it was in this century that II Peter was included in the canon.

The arguments against Peter's authorship of the letter are many. There is the extreme slowness of the early church to accept it, for no other New Testament book won so limited and hesitant a recognition as II Peter in the canon of approved writings which the Church regarded as the Word of God. To many the language seems to be out of character and the style quite cumbersome. This letter has 57 words which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament. In addition, many feel that this is an attempt to imitate someone or to rework someone else's material. The background of the letter tends to indicate a much later date than the first century, for it appears that the hope of our Lord's second coming has been abandoned by many. Quite a stretch of time must have elapsed for this to happen, at least a generation or two, since the thrust of the rest of the New Testament is that the Lord is at hand. Besides all this, it is claimed that pseudonymity didn't carry the moral stigma which it does today. Heretics issued pernicious tracts and writings under an apostle's name, and it is argued that the church simply retaliated, putting down what the apostle surely would have said had he faced such a situation. It is the judgment of many that some

humble man put the message which the Holy Ghost had given him into the mouth of Peter because he felt that his own name was quite unworthy to appear.

On the other hand, one can press the case for the Petrine authorship of this letter. The many hapaxlegomena simply indicate that Peter wrote as Peter, which is exactly what you would expect. His language is strong and vigorous, certainly not out of line with his character. Instead of being reworked material into which Jude's letter was fitted and expanded, it is strange that no texts have been found with only two chapters of II Peter. The content of Jude's letter may well have been taken from II Peter—but that's another problem. The intense expectation of the Lord's immediate return may have dimmed in the hearts of many after some twenty or thirty years, and so would have necessitated this stern warning against the mechanistic materialists who proclaimed a world going on and on over against a world kept going only by the Grace of God. The one great difficulty concerning the Petrine authorship is its late reception into the canon. This could be due to the anonymity of those addressed rather than to its pseudonymity. But far greater than all this is the testimony of the letter itself. Boldly it states: "Simeon Peter, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ . . . I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me . . . we were eyewitnesses of his majesty . . . when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount . . . This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you . . . that you may be mindful . . . of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior". Quite a forgery—this! Such a forgery that it could be written by none other than the apostle himself!

### *The Background of the Letter*

What we have in this letter is certainly Petrine in character and a part of the canon. It is a letter that breathes the pastoral heart of one who has a deep concern for his people as he nears his end. He knows the dangers and temptations that lie ahead, the subtle ways in which the faith can be denatured and sabotaged when divorced from its historical content. He simply must warn them against those who would pervert the grace of God by interpreting the Scriptures to suit themselves. And yet for all of its strenuous warning, there is the steady encouragement to endure.

In this letter the apostle St. Peter addresses an urgent plea not only to the Church in his day, but also to the Church unto the end of time when the Day finally dawns. He writes to God's called ones, those who have obtained the same precious faith through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, and reminds them of the full-orbed goodness of God who delivered them from a world drowning in its lust. By that goodness they are summoned and in that goodness they are to live. The faith that beats within

them demonstrates itself in their God-like-ness by which they show to the world's lust a character that is pure. Deadly dangers surround them which threaten to choke off their light and smother them. He knows something of the long haul, the day-by-day plodding, the ridicule from without and the doubt from within—all this can take their eyes off the goal. While they have been summoned to the glory of being partakers of the divine nature, yet they can lose their vision, fall back into the slum of their old ways, and forget that they have been purged. The noise of the world can drown out the drums of God and the trumpets sounding on the distant walls.

It had happened before. They were not immune to the heart of a Lot's wife. If they do not work at making their calling and election sure, their last estate could be worse than the first. The siren call of materialism, the desire for the good life with an ever better and higher standard of living which consists nowadays of two cars and a boat, gripped them as it does us. The libertines, both ancient and modern, beckon all to live it up and enjoy the moment. So the apostle warns against the divided heart that seeks to do service both to God and self, God and flesh, God and things. These heresies in a Christian guise can lead to the ultimate of all heresies—the denial of Him who bought them, with the result that having a "ball of a time" for the moment, they end up having a "bawl of a time" in eternity.

Each age lived under the eyes of God. He was not absent in the past nor is He blind to what is going on now. They are not to mistake His patience for indifference or His goodness for inability. Remember the angels who sinned, he says, the world at Noah's time, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. There God spoke. And there He demonstrated His faithfulness to those who believed in a day no less difficult than this. Perilous and evil though the times may be, they are to grow in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for they are called to enter into His everlasting Kingdom.

Two threats confront them which seek to bar them from their entrance into that everlasting Kingdom. From without, there are the false prophets and scoffers, the pitchmen of the world who are kin to our Madison Avenue boys with their incessant bombardment drumming upon the ears, insisting that since you live only once, why not live now. They present a flattened out world and a one-story universe in which man is only high grade beef who reaches his fulfillment by living as a high class animal—and never mind what comes after. And the second thrust is the doubt from within which questions everything. Within their midst there were those who sought to discredit the apostolic message so that many wondered whether what they believed about the power and coming of the Lord could really be trusted. Were the prophets and apostles just dreamers who concocted a lovely legend and invented this fantasy of His coming?

Such is the background into which our text is placed. The scenery of the first century Church may differ vastly from that of today's staging, but the problems basically remain the same. The same questions are being asked with the same intensity and the same disbelief. Where is this Kingdom, and where does it get you? Who knows anything anymore—for sure? In the midst of the huge unbelief that has fastened itself on our age, the Church stands in danger of having its faith dampened, if not smothered. Yet amid the doubt of "who knows" and the despair of "who cares", the Church is summoned to declare her faith and call men back from the death that is upon them to the life that is of God. In Jesus Christ you have God made manifest in Man. This Babe who entered through the world's backdoor in a stable's crib at Bethlehem, this Lad who grew up in an obscure village of a despised province, this Man of Nazareth who was known of men in the walks and relations of our common daily life—this One is none other but God, very God of very God, Light of Light. In Him God stood before men to do His saving work, to call them back to their origin, to destroy the power of the evil one and his devilish hold on them, to cleanse them from their corruption and make them coheirs with the King of glory. This is the thrust of the Good News. And it all centers in this Jesus Christ who became our Brother that He might bring us back to His Father. And this One, who would hang desolate on a cross, despised by men and forsaken by God as He died our death in becoming our sin, this One who rose triumphant from the grave as the life of our Life, this One is coming back again in power and great glory. And at His coming all lies shall be done away, all truth seen, and a new heaven and a new earth shall stand before us in which only righteousness and goodness and love dwell. Is it really true? Can we be sure and so rest ourselves on Him and give Him our hearts and lives? Tell us! Or is it only a cleverly concocted myth, something on which you speculated and then fabricated a story to proclaim the reality of it, and so make merchandise of us to feather your own nest? And up stands Peter and says: Beloved!

We were not following cleverly spun stories when we made known to you the power and coming visit of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were actually eye witnesses of His majesty; for instance, when He received honor and glory from God the Father in the voice that proclaimed to Him so uniquely out of the magnificent glory: This is My Son, My Beloved, in whom I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that was uttered from heaven, being with Him in the holy mount.

Thus we possess more sure the Prophetic Word to which you do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark and dirty place until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first: Every prophecy of Scripture is not of one's own peculiar interpretation. For prophecy was

never made by the will of man, but men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

I. THE GLORY AND CERTAINTY OF THE WORD—  
 INCARNATE AND WRITTEN  
 II PETER 1:16-18

In summoning the believers to ardent, strenuous living as God's children in the corrupt world, the apostle encourages them with the certainty of the Lord's coming. He knows that he won't be long with them, but he hopes through this letter to keep on encouraging them long after he is gone from this scene. Throughout the letter he points them to the grand finale of God's redemptive work—the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the pole around which their lives are to swing and this will give them the steadiness by which they are to walk each day. But while his great aim is to remind the Church of the certainty of the Lord's coming, at the same time he underscores the utter reliability and truthfulness of the Christian faith. False teachers had infiltrated the Christian congregations with a denial of the Lord's coming in order to make room for their antinomian liberty by which they sought to enjoy themselves to the fullest. Since the Lord had been long gone and since every day is much the same even as it has been from the first day of creation, all this talk about His return is nothing but a cleverly concocted story which the apostles invented. In fact, the sneers of the false teachers were that the apostles not only had been proclaiming sophisticated myths, but obviously they had been drawing deductions from them. So the apostle writes:

For we were not following cleverly concocted fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were made eye witnesses of His majesty"—and then he proceeds to point out the certainty of it by referring to what they had actually witnessed at the transfiguration—"receiving, for instance, from God the Father honor and glory in the voice that proclaimed to Him so uniquely out of the magnificent glory: This is My Son, My Beloved, in whom I am well pleased. And we ourselves heard this voice that was uttered from heaven, being with Him in the holy mount.

Peter is contrasting the apostolic message with that of the false teachers: Not this — *sesophismenois muthois exakolouthesantes*, but *epoptai genethentes tes megaleiotetos*; not something that springs out of men's minds like cleverly concocted legends (the apostle returns to this again when in verses 20 to 21 he states that no Scripture is of anyone's own explanation nor does it ever come from human fancy), but it was something imposed upon them, something that actually happened before their very eyes. The power and coming of the Lord wasn't even some truth which had been revealed to

them and for which they then dreamed up a lovely story like the transfiguration in order to convey it. Far from it. They were *epoptai*. They could not help it. They had no choice in the matter.

The power and coming—*dunamin kai parousian*—is one idea, for the Lord's return will be in all of His omnipotent power (cf. Matthew 24, 30-31; 25, 31-32; I Thessalonians 5, 23; 2 Thessalonians 2, 1). *Parousia* (in I Peter *apokalupsis* is used) was often used for an official visit for a person of high rank. Peter is stating that he and the other apostles know something of the power of Jesus Christ and His sure advent, His royal visit, for they saw something of that majesty which one day will be demonstrated in all fullness.

Not *muthoi*, no; but we were made eye witnesses—all' *epoptai genethentes*. According to the Gospels there were only three eye witnesses of our Lord's majesty at the transfiguration, and at this writing, James had long been dead. Could it be that the writer is referring to all the apostles when he states that "we were eye witnesses of His majesty", such as St. John states: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"? Such would be the case if the transfiguration is singled out as only one of the many events. They saw His glory at Cana, a glory that was the glory of the Creator; they beheld the *mega-leiotetos* of His resurrection; they were present at the sublime grandeur of the Ascension and they heard what the angel said then: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1, 11). Yes, they saw the majesty of the eternal King.

The very language which the apostle uses is that of an event that actually happened. Far from spinning out tales, Peter lays it out line upon line: We were made eye witnesses, there was the voice that uttered, we heard the voice that uttered. Employing verbs in the aorist, he is underscoring facts that were rooted in time and place. Instead of our Lord's power and coming being some myth, an old wives' tale, a Jewish fable, Peter is saying that we already have had a down payment and a foretaste of His glorious coming in the transfiguration. What happened in the holy mountain was a verification of the promises of God. The transfiguration was a fulfillment that one day would be completely full. No wonder the apostle was ready to lay aside this tabernacle.

Now the writer demonstrates and refers to a specific instance. He could give you an almost endless parade of events as another eye witness himself stated when he said that the world wouldn't be big enough to house all the books that could be written. Look (*gar*), he says, and then he points them to the transfiguration which they all knew. There Peter, James and John saw the very honor and glory which this Jesus of Nazareth was receiving from God the Father when His whole being shone with the brilliance of the sun and His garments became whiter than a fuller's white. There they heard that shattering voice as Moses and Israel had heard it, on an-

other mountain. In fact, the Law which God spoke on Mt. Sinai found its fulfillment on the Mount of the transfiguration. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Christ Jesus. Life was offered to Israel in their obedience to the Law, but it only brought them death. Here on this other mount was the obedience of Mt. Sinai in the flesh, the One in whom the Father was well pleased, the One whose obedience even unto the death of the cross would bring life. So the law and the prophets, Moses and Elijah, were finding their fulfillment in this One, born of Mary, who is the Father's utter delight and upon whom He bestows the fullness of His love. There God owned Him even in the flesh as His very Son. This Jesus is none other but the only begotten Son from eternity and is now declared to be the well beloved as He takes on the work of redemption as our Brother. Language breaks down as the apostle seeks words to describe the indescribable. The honor and glory brought to Jesus by God is undergirded by the voice that was brought out of the heavens in a magnificent glory. Such was the voice that spoke so that the only way to describe it is glory most magnificent.

This *megaloprepes doxa* is the eternal God. And the staggering thing is this—in this Jesus of Nazareth the glory of God centers. In this blazing moment, its full meaning unknown to them at the time yet indelibly impressed upon their minds, they knew that this One was not only the God-ordained Messiah, but the very Son of God, the One in whom God was well pleased with His choice. In Luke's account of the transfiguration *eklegmenos* — the chosen, elected one—is used for *agapetos*, pointing back to Isaiah 42, 1: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth . . . a bruised reed shall He not break . . ."

The words which the Father had spoken at the transfiguration are the same words which He spoke at our Lord's baptism when He entered upon His Messianic work. And here they are spoken in confirmation as Jesus faces the prospect of the cross. That glorious voice would speak once again just before the passion, the voice that some mistook for thunder and others for the voice of an angel (John 12, 28-30). But the voice was given also for the disciples as they faced the desolate time when all their human expectations were to be smashed. Here was glory, the glory of the Incarnate Word whom the written Word was all about, yet a glory whose very height would be the very depth of humiliation when on the cross the wrath of God would sweep over Him for us men and our salvation. Here, then, you have evidence of what prophecy foretold, but here also you have the evidence of what His power and coming would be like as well as the guarantee that it will come off.

So, far from being a myth, this event on the mountain was revelation. It was no delusion nor an isolated esoteric experience belonging to one person. It was an actual happening that took place in a definite spot and witnessed by several. We were there. We heard the voice. We saw the glory which He received. And this One will come in power and glory, no matter what the scoffers say.



## II. THE GLORY OF THE INCARNATE WORD IS THE GLORY OF THE WRITTEN WORD AND THE CERTAINTY OF IT II PETER 1:19-21

Thus we possess more sure the Prophetic Word to which you do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark and dirty place until the day dawns and the daystar arises in your hearts. But know this first: Every prophecy of Scripture is not of one's own peculiar interpretation. For prophecy was never made by the will of man, but men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

What can we know for sure in this dark and dirty world where everything is confused and sickening? Is it all just myths, human opinions? Are we to bet our lives and stake our souls on these? "Brethren," Peter is saying, "we have had the sure word which the prophets spoke and wrote in the Old Testament, and now we have it even surer because of the fulfillment which Christ brought about!" At the time this letter was written there was little of the New Testament that had been put down in writing. As his readers behold the fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the apostle calls upon them to pay close attention to all the prophets had written, for it is a sure light that will lead them until the day of our Lord's coming breaks upon them. Then their faith will give way to sight.

The King James translation almost leads one to think that we have a surer word of prophecy than what Peter had mentioned in the transfiguration, or that Christ is now the surer word, a kind of inner light that we are to follow. But *bebaioteron* is used as a predicative: We have or possess more sure the Prophetic Word. How is the Prophetic Word made more sure? And what is *ton prophetikon logon* and the *pasa propheteia graphes* of verse 20? Is it general or particular? Does it refer to the entire Old Testament and thus is being used in a technical sense? Or do these terms refer just to the prophecies about Christ? The answer is clear when we look at verse 21 where Peter states that the prophets, holy men of God, spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Certainly this is verified also by the way our Lord dealt with the Emmaus disciples on Easter afternoon: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken . . . and beginning at Moses and the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24, 25-27). The apostle is stating that the Old Testament is authenticated by the fulfillment in Christ, even as our Lord said to His disciples: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye heard, and have not heard them" (Luke 10, 23-24).

It isn't as though what the prophets said is more sure than what Peter witnessed, thus making their word a surer guarantee, although this is a very possible meaning; rather, Peter is stating that what he and the others saw on the Mount of Transfiguration makes even more certain what the prophets foretold. All that the apostles had witnessed of Christ, including the transfiguration, has served to make more sure all that the Old Testament told of the Christ. Peter isn't comparing the Prophetic Word with the transfiguration and/or all that the apostles had witnessed of Christ as though the one was more sure than the other. The two aren't antithetical. No, because of what happened on the mount the Old Testament was surer now than ever. It was that even before, for the voice that God spoke from heaven upon His Son is the voice that God spoke through the prophets. In Jesus Christ prophecy became history; *ho prophetikos logos* became *ho logos sarx*. Instead of myth-making, they saw and heard before their very eyes and ears every word of prophecy fulfilled in Jesus as they walked with Him.

Therefore the apostle called upon the Christians to pay close attention to the Prophetic Word, for it's like a light that shines in a dark and dismal place. Certainly the world is *auchmeros* with all the conflicting beliefs and opinions, a veritable jungle of heresies that sicken a righteous soul. Yet in this kind of a world we must make our way. The danger is very real that we can become lost and miss out on all that God has promised. But there is hope and help. There is a sure light shining which they cannot help but see. It is the Prophetic Word which will make solid and sure all that they had heard of Christ. That will keep them faithful to Him until the day Christ comes and all darkness is swept away. Then the lamp of the Word won't be needed, but until that day dawns we shall need its light and walk in it. This Word calls for commitment. It will assume the responsibility for what it says and for what I do in acting upon it.

But what does the apostle mean when he writes *kai phosphoros anateilei en tais kardiais humon*? If the dawning day: *hemera diaugasei* refers to our glorious King's appearance, then what is this "light bearer" that arises in our hearts since these two phrases are intimately linked together? Does he mean that until the great day dawns, we shall have the sure lamp of the Word from without to guide us as well as the "light bearer" within? Is this "light bearer" the light of the Holy Spirit, His testimony in our hearts, He who will guide us in all truth from the day our Lord left to the day He returns? Is it that the sure Word of prophecy whose radiant beams point out Christ is authenticated by the Holy Spirit so that what we see outwardly in the Holy Scriptures become the light shining within us?

Or does daystar (*phosphoros* is a hapax; Revelation 2, 28 we have: *ho aster proinos*—the morningstar) refer to the signs of the times, signs that precede the great day of the Lord's coming? Dawning day and rising star are linked together. Before the sun

risers there is the bright object in the sky that heralds the coming of the sun and tells that the darkness is soon over. John the Baptist was such a burning and shining light in heralding Christ and preparing the way in people's hearts for His coming. The apostle states that the day will dawn and this forerunner of the day will rise in your hearts. Our Lord said: "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draws near" (Luke 21, 28), or Matthew 24, 32: "Ye know that summer is near." In other words, the believer will know in his heart what is really happening when all others are filled with fear. As fulfillment comes, prophecy recedes. Just as the apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty and beheld in Jesus all that the prophets had said, as fulfillment displaced prophecy, so it will be somewhat like that at the end prior to His coming. But until that greater light bearer arises, we need to pay attention to the Prophetic Word, this Light in a dark place. It will cast out all gloom and doubt, all sadness and questioning, until the day dawns.

At any rate, to this Word we must give utter heed. Our Lord says of the Scriptures: "They are they which testify of Me" (John 5, 39). The Scriptures speak Christ! Because they speak Christ, we accept the Scriptures, every word of them, and place ourselves completely under them, for they bring us Christ. Without Christ, they become another law book with no good news. And that is why we must pay close attention to, and study every word in, the Bible because in these words Christ comes to us. This is the glory and the majesty of the Scriptures. Therefore the apostle says that no one dare use the Scriptures willy-nilly to his own ends. They are not man's word of which he is lord and master and interpreter. The prophetic Word is the Word of God in which God speaks and acts. We had better listen to what He is saying so that we may be caught up into what He is doing and be held in His embrace.

But the apostle sounds a warning and flashes a red light. Or is he underscoring the complete reliability of the Scriptures when he states: "Know this first: Every prophecy of Scripture is not one's own interpretation", something that originates with the one who wrote it? He is reminding us that what the prophets of the Old Testament tell us as well as everything that you have in the Old Testament is not a human opinion or a human attempt to discover God's dealing with men, and thus really no more valid than anyone else's. They weren't giving us an intelligent guess or a human forecast. At the same time he is lashing out at the false prophets who also appeal to the Scriptures. Yes, they use Scriptures, but he warns of their use of the Scriptures when he writes: "They that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3, 15).

It is quite obvious that no one is to take any Scripture and interpret it as he pleases. He points out that even the prophets did not formulate an idea and then dreamed up a prophecy to fit it.

Rather we are called upon to let the Word of prophecy speak to us and not we to it and so shape its meaning. Evidently Peter is striking again at the cleverly concocted myths mentioned in verse 16. The power and coming of our Lord was under attack as something invented by the apostles. Peter is saying that as the apostles didn't dream up a coming of Christ and then formulated some myths as proclaiming the Lord's coming, so none of the prophets themselves formulated prophecy to fit their own interpretation.

The apostle here makes a universal statement concerning the entire Old Testament Scripture. In no case can any prophecy of the Scripture be subjected to one's own interpretation. It isn't *idia epiluseos* but the *phones enechtheises*; not *thelemati anthropou enechthe* but *theou anthropoi pheromenoi hupo Pneumatos Hagiou*. Therefore, we are to listen to what the prophet himself is saying. We aren't to go to the Scriptures and make them fit our opinions and views and so make the Scriptures suit us. False teachers may deal with the Scriptures whimsically (2 Peter 2, 1), but we must listen to what the Holy Spirit is teaching through the Prophetic Word for He moved them so to write. Any other way is disastrous. Any other way is to wrest the Scriptures to our own destruction. When the prophets spoke, they were giving us a revelation from God and so we must carefully listen and heed what they are saying. They were God's spokesmen and more. They weren't just speaking for God, but God was speaking through them.

It is a word to all of us. We do not sit in judgment upon the Scriptures and so set ourselves up as though we were the judge of what Scripture can or cannot do. Nor can we be selective about the Scriptures and say that this is God's Word and this is not. Even a Christological approach per se will not do. Nor dare we use the dictum of Martin Luther: "Was Christum treibet" to unwarranted ends and say that when it does not bear Christ to us, according to our understanding or judgment, then it isn't the Word of God. While Christ is the very Center and Key of all Scripture, yet He subjected Himself to it, used it as His authority, and fulfilled it.

Yes, how can the Scriptures be of any private interpretation since the Prophetic Word did not come by human will? Peter states that prophecy, the Scriptures, was not a human creation by men who had a religious bent or genius. It wasn't due to the whims and fancies of men, and thus something that evolved out of their own making. Prophecy came through and is of men, yes, but men of God who were moved and pressured by the Holy Ghost. They were men who were *pheromenoi* by the Holy Spirit, men who were seized upon, men who were pressured. Using the stuff of men, God moved in upon them, seized them, so that when they spoke or what they conveyed by their writing, was verily God's own message. They were compelled and constrained by another Agent than human desire or human creativity. *Pheromenoi* carries here the same concept or picture which St. Paul uses in 2 Timothy 3, 15: *theopneustos*—God breathed. In Genesis 2, 7: "God

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul". God breathed His very life into man; God pushed, moved with His holy breath the words that bring life to man through men. As man received life and so lives, so these Scriptures, once inbreathed, carry the living Word. Using the dust of the earth God formed man; using the earthly stuff of these men God forms His Word. And just as in Genesis God does not tell how man was formed out of the dust of the earth, so here we also are not told the mechanics as to how this is done. We know the *hoti* but not the *pos*. We know *that* the Scriptures are inspired, but the *how* of it is a mystery which we cannot probe.

Verse 16 reaches its climax here in verse 21. The apostles were not following fables and myths, cleverly devised and skillfully wrought, but prophecy that came from God and whose fulfillment they had witnessed in Christ. In all of it you have God acting and working, God saying and doing. The Scriptures are no human construct. They are not a human way of looking at God and our relationship to Him. They are His quickening breath, His Word that giveth life. Therefore give it your utmost attention for your very life depends upon it. Really!

Contrary to the false prophets who spoke only their own minds (Jeremiah 23, 16: "They speak a vision of their own heart; and not out of the mouth of the Lord"; Ezekiel 13, 3: "Woe unto the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing"; Jeremiah 14, 14: "They prophesy . . . the deceit of their own heart"), true prophecy is the very opposite. It came by men from God, men being born along by the Holy Spirit, and thus they spoke. *Pheromenoi*, present participle, describes the prophets as being born along by the Holy Spirit as they spoke. They spoke, yes, but they spoke from God. Nehemiah 9, 30 "by Thy Spirit in Thy prophets": Hebrews 1, 1 "God . . . spake by His prophets"; I Peter 1, 11 "the Spirit of Christ which was in them did testify". *Anthropoi*—the human element is placed at the very last. That's why the Scriptures are the sure Word, the shining light. And that's why the Christians are to use the Scriptures, knowing that they were never any private opinion but always the very Word of the living God.

This in no wise implies a docetism of the Scriptures. Just as in the Incarnation and in the Lord's Supper, so here in the Scriptures God uses earthly means. He uses man's language just as He once became flesh and spoke as man but which was nonetheless God speaking. This is God's grace and to ignore it is to turn away from His devastating and incredible humility. In the Incarnation of our Lord, divinity is concealed under humanity. In the Holy Communion Christ's presence is under the bread and wine. In the Scriptures God speaks through human words given through human beings. In both God's action for sinners is conveyed. Through the earthly elements of bread and wine in the Sacrament and through the human words of the Bible Christ's body and blood are

given, His forgiveness and suffering in our stead. We dare not spiritualize or transsubstantiate either the Sacrament or the Word. We dare not dismiss the human form and say that it is only the meaning that counts.

We dare not be more clever or wise than the Holy Ghost. A helpful discussion on this can be found in Norman Nagel, "The Authority of Scripture", *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Volume XXVII, September, 1956, page 702 ff., as well as in Ragnar Bring, *How God Speaks To Us*, Muehlenberg Press, 1962, pages 20-3.

Let us not lose our way. The time is late. The darkness deepens. We are called upon to interpret the Scriptures in the fear of God and so bear Christ before men with all that He has to offer—the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation; indeed, the Gospel. But above all, we are to obey it and be led by Him who is the glory of it all and so finally, by His grace, enter into His glory.