

See Scripture Straight -- not from the Loony Left, nor from the Romish Right!

-- by Rev. Professor-Emeritus Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

No earlier than about A.D. 64, Peter's Second Epistle (1:16-21) insists: "We have not followed cunning-devised fables! We made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and were eyewitnesses of His majesty.... We heard!.... [Yet,] we have too a **more sure word of prophecy**.... Know this -- that no forthtelling of the Scripture is from any private interpretation! For the forthtelling did not in olden times come by the will of man. But holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Here, Calvin comments (*Epistles of St. Peter*, Eerdmans's ed., pp. 337-44): "Peter declares that he was an eyewitness, because he has seen with his own eyes the glory of Christ which he describes. He contrasts this knowledge with the kind of cunningly-devised fables which astute men are in the habit of inventing to entangle the minds of the simple.... What is meant, is a subtle invention with intent to deceive...."

"We have the Word of Prophecy made more sure.... No Scripture is of private interpretation! For no prophecy of Scripture ever came by the will of man. But men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost'.... He [Peter] now goes on to show that the certainty of the Gospel is also based on the saying of the Prophets [as recorded in Holy Scripture]...."

"The Papists are always saying that the Church cannot err.... They imagine that it is ruled by the Spirit, even though the Word has been lost! But Peter, on the contrary, declares that all are immersed in darkness, who do not look to the light of the Word. Therefore, unless you want to cast yourself of your own accord into a labyrinth - you must take the utmost care not to deviate even a hair's breadth from the direction of the Word. Even the Church can follow only God as its Guide...."

"It is worth noticing further what he [Peter] says about the clarity of Scripture. This would be a false commendation, if Scripture were not a fit and proper guide to show us the way clearly. Therefore, anyone who opens his eyes by the obedience of faith -- will see, by that very experience, that Scripture has not for nothing been called a lamp.... It is therefore a damnable blasphemy of the Papists to imagine that the light of Scripture does nothing but dazzle the eyes -- so that they frighten off the simple from reading it...."

"Peter begins to show here how we ought to dispose our minds, if we want to make proper use of Scripture.... We ought not to rush at our reading of Scripture rashly, trusting in our own understanding...."

"The Spirit Who spoke by the Prophets, is His Own True Interpreter. This exposition certainly contains a true, godly, and profitable lesson.... The Prophets are only read with advantage, when we put aside our carnal understanding and subject ourselves to the teaching of the Holy Spirit.... It is an unholy profanation of Scripture, when we presumptuously bring our own native shrewdness to the understanding of it...."

"The Papists are doubly stupid in concluding from this, that no interpretation of private individuals ought to be looked on as authentic. They pervert this testimony of Peter, to arrogate to their councils the final authority to interpret Scripture. And in so doing, they act childishly indeed.

"Peter speaks of 'private interpretation' - not to prohibit any individual from handling Scripture by himself. But he is saying that whatever men bring to it of their own, is profane.... The faithful are enlightened by the Holy Spirit - and acknowledge only what God wills in His Word....

"Peter is saying that Scripture was not handed down from man, or by human desire.... Peter especially bids us trust the Prophets as the undoubted oracles of God -- because they did not give way to any private human impulse....

"What immediately follows, is to the same effect.... Holy men of God spoke, 'being moved by the Holy Ghost.' They did not blab their inventions, of their own accord....

"He [Peter] says that they [the Prophets] were 'moved' - not because they were out of their minds (as the Heathen imagine *enthousiasmos* in their 'prophets'). But because they [*viz.* the Old Testament Biblical Prophets] dared nothing by themselves, but only in obedience to the guidance of the Spirit Who held sway over their lips as in His Own Temple.

"The 'prophecy' [or 'forthtelling'] of 'Scripture' [in Second Peter 1:19-20] -- means what is contained in the Holy Scriptures." Even as those Old Testament Prophets or "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Second Peter 1:21=20

So then, Peter says that the Prophets were 'moved' -- but "not because they were out of their minds as the Heathen imagine *enthousiasmos* in their 'prophets.'" Pentecostalists, note well!

Furthermore, those Old Testament Prophets "dared nothing by themselves, but only in obedience to the guidance of the Spirit Who held sway over their lips as in His Own Temple." For "the 'prophecy' [or 'forthtelling'] of 'Scripture' [in Second Peter 1:19-20] -- means what is contained in the Holy Scriptures" and not in the traditions of a deformed Church. Romanists -- note well!

Both Pentecostalists and Romanists -- note very well indeed! The Apostle Peter was neither a raving lunatic, nor a self-interpreting Pope. But, according to his own Spirit-inspired Second Epistle - he was a Bible-believing Protestant.

Bad as Papistic Romanism is, pseudo-pentecostalistic Anabaptism is much worse. Hence, Calvin adds in his 1536 *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (I:9:1-2): "Those who, rejecting Scripture, imagine that they have some peculiar way of penetrating to God -- are to be deemed...under the influence not so much of error as of madness.

"For certain giddy men have lately [1522f] appeared.... They make a great display of the superiority of the Spirit -- reject all reading of the Scriptures themselves, and deride the simplicity of those who delight only in what they [the giddy Anabaptists] call 'the dead and deadly letter'....

Paul, though carried up even to the Third Heaven [Second Corinthians 12:2f], ceased not to profit by the doctrine of the Law and the Prophets [Romans 2:13-16 & 3:2 & 13:8-10 & 15:4f & 16:26].... In like manner, he exhorts Timothy...to give attention to reading (First Timothy 4:13). And the *eulogium* which he pronounces on Scripture, well deserves to be remembered -- viz. that 'it is profitable...for correction..., so that the man of God may be perfect (Second Timothy 3:19 [to 4:4]. What an infatuation of the devil, therefore, to fancy that Scripture -- which conducts the sons of God to the final goal -- is of transient and temporary use!....

"I should like these people to tell me whether they have imbibed any other Spirit than that which Christ promised to His Disciples.... Their madness is extreme.... What kind of Spirit did our Saviour promise to send? One Who should...suggest and instil the truths which He Himself had delivered through the Word [John 16:13f]! Hence the task of the Spirit promised to us, is not to form new and unheard-of 'revelations' or to coin a new form of 'doctrine' by which we may be led away from the received doctrine of the Gospel, but to seal on our minds the very doctrine which the Gospel recommends....

"We must give diligent heed both to the reading and hearing of Scripture -- if we would obtain any benefit from the Spirit of God. Just as Peter praises those who attentively study the doctrine of the Prophets (Second Peter 1:19).... Any 'spirit' which bypasses the wisdom of God's Word and suggests any other doctrine -- is deservedly suspected of vanity and falsehood. Since Satan transforms himself into an angel of light [Second Corinthians 11:14f] -- what authority can the Spirit have with us, if He be not ascertained by an infallible mark?...

"These miserable men err, as if bent on their own destruction -- while they seek the Spirit from themselves, rather than from Him.... They say that it is insulting to subject the Spirit to Whom all things are to be subject, to the Scripture. As if it were disgraceful to the Holy Spirit to maintain a perfect resemblance throughout, and be in all respects without variation consistent with Himself!....

"It ought to be enough for us when once we hear His Voice [in His written Word]. But, lest Satan should insinuate himself under His Name -- He [the Spirit] wishes us to recognize Him by the image which He has stamped on the Scriptures. The Author of the Scriptures cannot vary and change His likeness. Such as He there appeared at first -- such He will perpetually remain!"

The Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* (I:1-4) adds that "for the better preserving and the propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world -- the Lord committed this revelation wholly to writing, which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be the most necessary.... Second Peter 1:19....

"The books commonly called Apocrypha not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the Canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority to the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of, than other human writings.... Second Peter 1:21....

"The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (Who is truth itself), the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.... Second Peter 1:19-21.... The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture, is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is

not manifold but one), it must be searched and known by other places [of Holy Scripture alone] that speak more clearly. Second Peter 1:20-21."

So too in the *Westminster Larger Catechism* 3 cryptically though adequately and very simply states: "Question: What is the word of God? Answer: The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God.... Second Peter 1:19-21.

The great Puritan Rev. Dr. John Owen explains (*Works* II:236): "Peter tells us, Second Epistle 1:21. 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; (that is, in writing the Scripture). *Hupo Pneumatos hagiou pheromenoi* – borne up by Him, carried beyond themselves, to speak His Word and what He indited to them."

Owen continues elsewhere (*Ib.* III:131-33 & its n. 1 on its p. 132): "The immediate effects of inspiration were that those inspired were moved or acted [upon] by the Holy Ghost. 'Holy men of God spake,' *hupo Pneumatos Hagiou pheromenoi*, Second Peter 1:21 – 'moved' or acted 'by the Holy Ghost'.... [This involved] the preparation and elevation of their intellectual faculties, their minds and understandings, wherein His revelations were to be received. He prepared them for to receive the impressions He made upon them, and confirmed their memories to retain them.... For their own illumination and edification did they diligently inquire, by the ordinary means of prayer and meditation, into the meaning of the Spirit of God in those prophecies which themselves received by extraordinary revelation. First Peter 1:10-11....

"The Ancients contend -- against the Ebionites, Marcionites and Montanists -- as Epiphanius [in his] *Adversus Haereses* II:1 and *Heresies* 48, [and in] Jerome's *Proemium Commentary on Isaiah* -- that the Prophets were not used ecstatically but understood the things that were spoken to them.... They were not in or by prophecy deprived of the use of their intellectual faculties, as it befell satanical enthusiasts.... Cf. Augustine's *City of God* VII:32.... In the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and His actings on the minds of the holy men of old, He gave them infallible assurance that it was Himself Alone by Whom they were acted. Jeremiah 23:28."

Owen insists (*Ib.* XVI:300): "The Word is come forth unto us from God, without the least mixture or intervenience of any medium obnoxious to fallibility.... I shall further consider it from one full and eminent declaration thereof given unto us, Second Peter 1:20-21.... 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

That which he speaks of, is *propheeteia* Graphees. The 'prophecy of Scripture'; or Written prophecy!"

Let us too then be like Moses (and his writings)! Let us look neither from the Loony Left nor from the Romish Right, but straight ahead "seeing Him Who is!" Hebrews 11:27 cf. Deuteronomy 5:32 & 17:11 & 17:20 & 28:14.