

THE ONLY SURE WORD

John Sherwood⁴³

In the face of challengers in his second letter, the apostle Peter makes it clear in 1:16-21 that God's word is his source of authority and spiritual knowledge. In doing this, he shows that the knowledge gained in God's written revelation prevails over that gained anywhere else. Because of its superiority, Scripture deserves concentrated attention. All other conceivable sources of knowledge must bow the knee to God's Word.

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We were robbed! A Roman Catholic charismatic group snatched some key businessmen who had been studying the Bible with us for some months, and it hurt. In contrast to our steady work in God's Word, they could offer fantastic charismatic experiences like being spiritually slain and tongues-speaking without stepping outside the bounds of tradition and the Mother Church. How can we compete?

How often had we faced this type of question? A member of

⁴³John Sherwood is an Associate Director of UFM, International. Originally from Atlanta, Georgia, he earned a BA degree in History from Georgia State University and a ThM degree from Grace Theological Seminary. He is presently pursuing a DMin degree in Pastoral Counseling at Westminster Theological Seminary. Before assuming his present position with UFM, he served with the same mission doing church planting in the Philippines for nine years.

one of our Bible studies asks what I think about the recent apparitions of Virgin Mary on a neighboring island of the Philippines. An estimated one million were expected to visit. There they hoped to hear Mary's voice with a new message for the nation. How can we convince these new Bible students, coming from an experience-oriented culture, that any search for spiritual knowledge outside God's Word amounts to a rejection of God and His Word?

The advantages of ministering in the Philippines, the "only Christian nation in Asia"⁴⁴ (i.e., 85% Roman Catholic), include the assumption of the vast majority that the Bible is the Word of God. For example, missionaries to the Philippines rarely face inerrancy as an issue. However, the superiority of Scripture to all other sources of knowledge is constantly under challenge. Aside from direct apparitions, other "miraculous" happenings, signs and omens, superstition, various prophets receiving new revelation, and the more subtle traditions, teachings, and experiences of men all vie for equal status and even superiority to written revelation.

Peter evidently faced a similar challenge from foes of a pre-Gnostic variety in his second letter.⁴⁵ Consequently, in 2 Pet 2:16-21, he answers their challenge with a *comparison of four different sources of knowledge*. He moves through the passage from the least authoritative source to the one with most authority.

For Peter's readers and for the present time, it is not enough to recognize God's written revelation as without error; it is also *superior* to all other sources of knowledge and *sufficient* for "everything that relates to life and godliness" (1:3). An understanding of Peter's progress of thought in these verses, together with their context, will correct a wrong understanding of the passage perpetuated by most of

⁴⁴*World Christian Encyclopedia*, ed. David B. Barrett (Oxford: Oxford University, 1982) 562.

⁴⁵Michael Green (*Second Peter and Jude*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968] 81; cf. also comments on v. 16b) feels these false teachers are not pre-Gnostics because Peter is here answering their accusation that he was using fables, when they themselves used the same. This requires too much consistency on the part of false teachers, however, that they would not accuse Peter of doing the very thing they were guilty of. Moreover, it could be that Peter contrasts his method of not relying on legends with theirs to show the superiority of his authority.

the current English translations (see comments on v. 19 below).

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:16).⁴⁶

As Peter neared the end of his life, he wanted to remind his readers of the most important truths (1:12-15).⁴⁷ Yet even as he wrote, he remained mindful of attacks upon his authority, and therefore identified his sources of knowledge about these vital truths. His teaching is only as valuable as the source he bases it on.

FIRST SOURCE: ILLEGITIMATE MYTHS

The first possible source—an illegitimate one—Peter calls *mythos* (*muthos*, "myth") from which the English word "myth" with the same meaning comes.⁴⁸ The adjectival participle used to describe these myths as "cleverly devised" comes from σοφίζω (*sophizō*, "I become wise, skilled"). This word also took on a sarcastic meaning as early as Plato and Demosthenes (*Rep*, 496a; *Demos*. 25:18) possibly in relation to those clever Greek sophists who could invent ingenious arguments for any side of an issue. "Cleverly concocted" and "artfully spun" (NEB) both adroitly convey the idea.⁴⁹ Peter uses an instrumental participle of ἰακωλοῦμαι (*eksakolouthēō*, "I follow, depend on") to introduce this first source: "Not by means of following cleverly concocted tales. . . ."

⁴⁶All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise specified.

⁴⁷Note the phrases, "remind you of these things" (v. 12), "stir you up by way of reminder" (v. 13), and "call these things to mind" (v. 15).

⁴⁸It is unlikely that Peter had seen Paul's use of this word for fanciful Jewish genealogies in 1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:14 since these letters originated at approximately the same time as 2 Peter. Peter refers to this kind of error as "heresies" (2 Pet 2:1) and "false words" (2 Pet 2:3).

⁴⁹John Calvin uses some adroitness himself when he writes that Peter is explaining that he is not like the teachers "who presumptuously mount the pulpit to prattle of speculation unknown to themselves," in *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958) 383.

One of the vital truths that Peter emphasized in his first letter and about which someone may have accused him of concocting tales is Christ's "power and coming" (1 Pe 1:5, 7, 11, 13; 2:12; 4:5-7, 13; 5:4; cf. 2 Pet 2:9; 3:4, 7, 9-12).⁵⁰ As here, normally it is Jesus' return rather than His incarnation that Scripture associates with power (e.g., see the previous references in Peter's letters). In addition, "coming," *parousia* (*parousia*, "arrival, presence"), when used in relation to Christ in the NT, only describes His second coming. This agrees with its Koine use for a hidden divinity making his presence felt by a revelation of his power or, in a secular sense, for the visit of a high-ranking person.⁵¹

The mystery religions which surged in popularity in the Greek and Roman worlds around the first millennium's beginning developed elaborate schemes of the supernatural to which only the initiated were privy. Peter had nothing to do with those.

This first source of knowledge, being manmade, encompasses a large number of ancient claims of knowledge as well as modern ones.⁵²

⁵⁰This could possibly be an occurrence of *hendiadys* to avoid a long string of genitives, in which case *dynamis kai parousia* ("power and coming") would stand for *dynamis parousias* (power of [His] coming). Thus the Twentieth Century NT translates, "the Coming in power."

⁵¹Calvin (*Library of Christian Classics* 382) understood this as referring to the first appearance of Christ. In addition, John Owen, in a footnote in his translation of Calvin, writes, "The whole passage refers only and expressly to his first coming." This leads him to understand that it is the believer's own experience with the gospel ("star arise in your hearts") that renders the written prophecies more sure to him personally (*ibid.*, 386).

⁵²Such man-made guides addressed include religious leaders, modern counseling and psychology, new revelation in the signs and wonders movement, popular techniques of spiritual warfare, philosophy and rational thinking, science, tradition, and even personal experience and emotion. Several books have recently addressed this very topic from the point of view of the sufficiency of God's Word, including *Power Religion*, ed. Michael Horton (Chicago: Moody, 1992); Thomas Ice and Robert Dean, Jr., in *Overrun by Demons* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1990); and John MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Dallas: Word, 1991). We laughingly remember the occasion when I shared this passage in a devotional meditation before leaving from the mission field for a furlough. After the meditation, a woman approached my wife and remarked with emotion as she patted her heart, "I just *feel it in my heart* that you will return."

This very passage shows the deficiency of Catholic tradition and religious experience as guides to Christian experience.

SECOND SOURCE: LEGITIMATE PERSONAL PERCEPTION

But we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain (2 Pet 1:16b-18).

Next, Peter mentions the second source of knowledge, one which he did rely on and count as valuable. If the earlier participle, jakoloyuhsantew (*exakolouthesantes*, "following," v. 16a), is instrumental, so is probably the parallel participle, $\text{genhu\theta\text{ntew}}$ (*genethentes*, "becoming," v. 16b): "not by (means of) following cleverly concocted myths did we make known to you . . . , but (all', *all'*) by (means of) being (becoming) eyewitnesses. . . ."⁵³

Peter flings a verbal dart at his pre-Gnostic adversaries with his use of epoptai (*epoptai*, "eyewitnesses"). A NT *hapax legomenon* (i.e., used only this once in the NT), *epoptes* had become by NT times a technical term used in mystery sects to designate those initiated into a higher knowledge. If Peter intended this cultic sense, he did so to reverse their snobbish use of the word by excluding the false teachers from his circle of true eyewitnesses.

Peter, with John and James, had personally witnessed Christ revealed in glory on the mountain of Matt 17:1-8.⁵⁴ Clearly he consid-

⁵³One may take both participles to be causal without a change of meaning: "not because we followed . . . but because we were eyewitnesses. . . ."

⁵⁴This reference to the transfiguration experience confirms Peter as the author of this epistle, liberal scholarship notwithstanding. Peter even uses the emphatic pronoun $\text{h\text{mei}\omega}$ (*hemeis*, "we") and refers both to being an eyewitness (v. 16) and to hearing (v. 18). Many dismiss this as secondhand mention by someone who had heard of the transfiguration from Peter or another apostle (e.g., Bo Reike, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, vol. 37 of *The Anchor Bible* [Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1964] 142, 144).

ered this mountain experience to be a basis for belief in the Second Coming of Christ. That sanctified mountain⁵⁵ episode foreshadowed the glory and power in which Christ will return. All three of the Syntoptic Gospels record that Jesus also understood an intended connection between the transfiguration and "the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Matt 16:28; cf. Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27).⁵⁶

Perhaps this connection in Peter's mind is also visible when he records the messianic proclamation announced⁵⁷ by the Magnificent⁵⁸ Father (cf. Ps. 2:7; Isa 5:1; 42:1).⁵⁹ Unfortunately this title remains rather hidden in the KJV, NASB, RSV, and NIV renderings, all of which render "beloved" as adjectivally modifying "Son." More accurate are the NEB and RSV footnotes which translate the two articular phrases separately: "this is My Son, my Beloved," because Peter adds a second pronoun, *moy* (*mou*, "my") that none of the gospel accounts includes.

Verse 17 poses the interesting syntactical challenge of identifying which independent verb the participle *labv̄n* (*labōn*, "having received") modifies. Kistemaker, with others, explains it as an incom-

⁵⁵The mountain became "holy" because of what took place there. Similarly, Jerusalem was the "holy city" (Matt 4:5; Rev 11:2).

⁵⁶Though Green (*Second Peter and Jude* 82) says that mention of the transfiguration is rare in early Christian literature, in the Apocalypse of Peter someone familiar with 2 Peter also mentions it in connection with Christ's return (in the *Akhmim* and *Ethiopic* fragments, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. J. K. Elliot, [Oxford: Clarendon, 1993] 609-12). This may reflect the early church's interpretation of the verse.

⁵⁷"Announced" (*ἀνευξέσθη*, lit. "was brought," v. 17). The word also depicts God's utterance of a word or an announcement in vv. 18, 21. Could this be the origin of the southern expression, "Preacher sure brought a good message this morning"?

⁵⁸*Megaloprepoyw* is probably a euphemism for God.

⁵⁹*Toiasde* ("of such kind") evidently introduces the following announcement in much the same way as *τοιοῦτω* does in Classical Greek (BDF, par. 289). Joseph Henry Thayer adds that it suggests something excellent or admirable (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and rev. Joseph Henry Thayer [reprint, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958] 627).

plete sentence, broken by v. 18 and continued in v. 19.⁶⁰ An ellipsis is possible here such as "[the prophetic word was established] when..." but it is much simpler to understand the participle as temporally modifying the finite verb in v. 18, *h kōysamen* (*ekousamen*, "we heard"): e.g., "When He received honor and glory . . . we also heard this voice."⁶¹

In short, Peter considers his eyewitness experience as valid and even powerful for corroborating truth. Experience is not reliable as a final arbitrator of truth because the interpretation of experience apart from divine revelation is subjective. The next step in Peter's sequence demonstrates this. Nevertheless, experience is not without value.⁶² Accordingly, believers receive encouragement and an expansion of their faith when they see the truth of God's promises confirmed by some incident in their lives. We as Western missionaries, in our desire to elevate objective truth, must not be too hasty to demean experience in its valid role of fleshing out truth. The sad result will be an elevation of biblical truth out of the realm of practice and into the realm of theory.⁶³

THIRD SOURCE: SUPERIOR SCRIPTURE

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place . . . (2 Pe. 1:19a).

Verse 19 introduces one of the two major interpretive problems of this passage, both of which have theological importance. Green

⁶⁰Simon Kistemaker, *First and Second Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 267.

⁶¹Both the NASB and the RSV seem to handle the syntax this way.

⁶²Biblical signs and wonders provided testimony to the truth for those who witnessed them. Yet they are clearly inferior in the witness of written revelation and point to further revelation which interprets them (cf. Luke 16:29-31; John 20:29).

⁶³Rodney Henry (*Filipino Spirit World*, [Manila: OMF Publishers, 1971]) discusses this separation in the realm of the spirit world.

summarizes this first problem with the following questions: "Does it [the verse] mean that the Scriptures confirm the apostolic witness (AV)? Or does it mean that the apostolic witness [eyewitness experience] fulfills, and thus authenticates, Scriptures . . . ?"⁶⁴ Almost all the modern English translations reflect this second sense (including NASB, NIV, NKJV, JB, RSV, and NEB).

An examination of the NASB clarifies the issue: "And *so* we have the prophetic word *made* more sure. . . ." In this translation Peter's experience on the mountain serves to confirm the prophetic or written Word. In other words, Scripture would have lacked some of its authority had apostolic experience not authenticated it. Objective truth would thus be dependent upon subjective; signs and wonders would continue to confirm the canon; this might lead to reliance on philosophies and theories of men to complement the inadequacies of the Bible.

The translation choice revolves around the use of $\kappa\alpha\iota$ (*kai*, "even" or "and") and of $\beta\epsilon\beta\alpha\iota\omicron\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$ (*bebaioterou*, "sure").

Kai: Epexegetical or Simple Conjunction?

By adding the word "so," the NASB has supported the idea that v. 19 gives a *result* of the previous verses. In that case, written revelation receives its confirmation and is "made more sure" by the visual revelation of the transfiguration. Similarly Strachan suggests that the transfiguration experience made the OT "prophetic Word" more certain, even though it was already certain before Peter's time. Therefore he translates, "Thus we have still further confirmation of the words of the prophets."⁶⁵

Kai can sometimes contain that type of epexegetical or inferential sense (i.e., thus, so), but only rarely. Much more plausible, rather, is the simple *kai* copula introducing an *additional* source for the truths Peter is bringing to their memories as he continues to ascend, as it were, through his four-part sequence.

⁶⁴Green, *Second Peter and Jude* 86.

⁶⁵R. H. Strachan, "The Second Epistle General of Peter," *EGT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 5:131. Likewise, Moffatt translates, "gained fresh confirmation of the prophetic word."

The Meaning of Bebaios

Βἠβαιῶν (*Bebaios*, "Reliable, Firm") and its cognates, used 19 times in the NT, originally described something firm, fit to tread on; it "is concerned with that which is based, or still to be fixed or anchored to a foundation, assumed to be unshakable."⁶⁶ In secular Greek, it was often a legal term used of an unassailable position or guarantee. Good translations include "permanent, firm, reliable, dependable, certain." In a significant parallel usage of the cognate verb, Mark wrote that Jesus "*confirmed* the word by the signs that followed" (16:20).

A verbal interpretation of *bebaios* in the present verse, "*made more sure*," seen in many versions including the NASB, is unlikely for two reasons:

(1) *Bebaios* is clearly an adjective and it seems tenuous to translate it verbally, "made more sure," as if it were *bebaivonta* (*bebaiōthenta*). In fact, Peter does use this adjective with a verbal sense only a few verses earlier in this very letter, *but only* with the complementary *poieisthai* (*poieisthai*, "do, make"), "to make certain" (1:10). (Incidentally, the reduplicated stem adds no more of a perfective or verbal sense than in *bēbhlos* [*bebelos*, "worldly"] or *pepoithēsiw* [*pepoithesis*, "confidence"].)

(2) A different approach translates *bebaios* elatively so that the comparative adjective implies no comparison: "We also have the *very* certain prophetic Word." However, of the seven other times Peter uses a comparative adjective, he always uses it comparatively instead of elatively, sometimes with an expressed object of comparison (1 Pet 1:7; 3:17; 2 Pet 2:20, 21), sometimes without (1 Pet 3:7; 5:5; 2 Pet 2:11). (First Pet 5:5 is a possible exception in using a comparative adjective substantively if translated "young men.") If the present verse follows that norm, he must be comparing the prophetic word to something. Since the following verses make clear that he is speaking of the written Word, he has now advanced to present the written Word as superior to the audio/visual experiences of vv. 17-18.⁶⁷

⁶⁶H. Schönweiss, "Firm, Foundation, Certainty, Confirm," *NIDNTT* 1:658.

⁶⁷Comparatives can sometimes be used for superlatives. Thus Bo Reicke (*Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* 158) translates, "And we regard the prophetic word as most reliable." This would fit well if Peter is comparing three different sources of

Hence, *bebaios* as in all its nine uses in the NT, is an adjective, moved forward in its clause for emphasis.⁶⁸ Almost alone, the AV correctly translates, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy."⁶⁹ Barbieri paraphrases, "If you don't believe what I have said, then believe what is written in the Word of God."⁷⁰ In good presuppositional form, Peter asserts that the written Word needs no authentication from religious experience or otherwise.

Theologically, such an interpretation makes especially good sense coming from a Jew whose heritage traditionally favored written revelation to oral.⁷¹ Furthermore, in the larger context of the NT, support from the OT was the irrefutable source of authority of the

knowledge, namely, myths, direct revelation, and written revelation. The suggestion offered above is preferable.

⁶⁸Interestingly, this construction, verb-adjective-article-adjective, is quite uncommon. A study of its occurrences is inconclusive as to whether the adjective, in this case $\beta\beta\alpha\iota\omicron\omega$, is used attributively or predicatively. Apart from its idiomatic uses with $\pi\alpha\omega$ ("all, every") and $\delta\ \lambda\omicron\omega$ ("whole, complete"), the construction appears only a few times. Luke 5:7 has the adjective, $\alpha\ \mu\beta\omicron\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\alpha$ ("both"), used attributively in this construction. Particularly parallel to 2 Pet 1:19 is Acts 17:16, which describes Athens as "the full-of-idols city." (Or is it "that the city was full of idols"?) Hebrews 11:23 can either be understood as attributive, "they saw the beautiful child," or predicate, "they saw that the child was beautiful." Cf. also Rom 4:16, with $e\ \delta\eta\ \nu\alpha\iota$ ("to be").

⁶⁹The presence of the article would be better translated as "the more sure word. . ."

⁷⁰Louis Barbieri, *First and Second Peter*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1977) 105.

⁷¹Unfortunately, this preference for written revelation was not applied to a preference for the OT. In fact, the Rabbis seemed to favor the *Mishnah* and *Gemara* to the OT. Edersheim, citing the Talmud tractate Baba Met 33a, writes, "The Talmud has it, that he who busies himself with Scripture only (*i.e.* without either the *Mishnah* or *Gemara*) has merit, and yet no merit" (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* [reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendricksen, 1993] 75). However, concerning the value of oral revelation, the Rabbis had developed the concept of the $\text{לִבְנוֹת} / \text{ב}$ (*bat qol*), literally the "daughter of a voice," "an echo of a heavenly voice that was audible on earth and proclaimed some divine oracle or judgment" (M. J. Harris, "Quiet, Rest, Silence, etc.," *NIDNTT* 3:113).

apostles, the "final word" as it were.⁷²

Kistemaker takes yet another approach and writes,

This wording [the common translation in which the transfiguration serves to confirm written revelation] does justice to the sequence of the apostolic message confirmed by the transfiguration and by the Old Testament Scripture.⁷³

In this case, he confines "the prophetic Word" to the OT Scriptures and chronologically juxtaposes it with the apostolic witness in the NT which confirms the former.

But Peter does not seem to be confining himself to the OT. He rather equates this "prophetic Word" (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, *ton prophetikon logon*) with the "prophecy of Scripture" (προφητεῖα γραφῶν, *propheteia graphes*) in v. 20. With the reuse of that same term, γραφή (*graphe*, "writing"), he equates "prophecy of Scripture" with other writings of Scripture, including Paul's mentioned in 2 Pet 3:15-16. Further, προφητικὸς (*prophetikos*, "prophetic") appears again only in Rom 16:26 where it refers specifically to the NT. Finally, a study of Peter's use of the word λόγος (*logos*, "word") suggests no restriction to OT.⁷⁴ Kistemaker's limitation to the OT fails here.

Because written revelation remains the highest authority for truth during the present age, Peter commends his readers for focusing on it.⁷⁵ ΠΡΟΣΕΧΘΕ (*prosechō*, "pay attention") usually pairs with a dative to

⁷²Especially prominent in Matthew, the apostles' sermons in Acts, Romans 9—15, Hebrews, 1 Peter 2.

⁷³Kistemaker, *First and Second Peter and Jude* 269.

⁷⁴A study of Peter's 14 uses of λόγος (including those in Acts) reveals a wide variety of meanings, most often referring to the gospel. It never refers only to the OT.

⁷⁵Strachan ("Second Epistle General" 131 f.) suggests that the pronoun *αὐτὸ* refers not to the preceding noun, but to the whole preceding clause. In that case the "lamp shining" would refer to the transfiguration as an especially crucial sign of Christ's return, substantiating the prophecies. Conversely, of the 49 times *αὐτὸ* appears in the NT without a preposition, it *always* refers to a noun or pronoun, usually expressed and rarely implied, but never to a clause. In addition, the transfiguration has not, in fact, served such a significant role historically.

define its focus, what occupies attention. When used positively, the word speaks of deliberate concentration on something (e.g., Heb 2:1).

Moulton and Milligan point out that εὖ (*eu*, "well") or καλῶ (*kalōs*, "well") with the future tense ποιῆσειν (*poieseis*, "will do, make") and a following participle, can suggest an imperative similar to "please" or "kindly"⁷⁶ (e.g., 3 John 6). However, in this clause ποιεῖτε (*poieite*) is a present indicative, and so Peter is commending them for something they were already doing (e.g., Jas 2:8, 19). Of course, a commendation can have the same practical force as a mandate. Peter knew that this focus on the written Word would protect them from false teachers who relied on manmade tales.

Peter's comparison of God's Word to a lamp suggests several OT passages (2 Sam 22:29; Ps 18:28; 119:105; Prov 6:23). The word for "dark," ἀγμῆρῃ (*auchmerō*), only here in the NT, also connotes a dry place, or even murky and filthy.⁷⁷ The light from Scripture shows the dirt of people's lives and the filth of false teaching, cleaning them out and providing guidance for a straight walk. God's Word alone provides everything needed pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3) so that believers can grow in Christlikeness (1:4).

When over a million flock to a small Philippine town and claim to hear Mary's voice commanding them to pray the Rosary, to see Mary cry tears of blood, we can only point back to the unchanging Word for protection. Subjective experiences are subject to man's misuse while God's unchanging Word explains itself.⁷⁸

FOURTH SOURCE: FACE-TO-FACE WITH CHRIST

Until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts (2

⁷⁶MM, 95.

⁷⁷One Koine epitaph reads: "May there be many blossoms upon the newly-built tomb, not *parched* [ἀγμῆρῳ] bramble, not worthless goat-weed." It is also used to describe the dark and dry sleeping place called Hades (MM, 95).

⁷⁸Experiences which were valid and legitimate in the time of Peter, such as witnessing the transfiguration, no longer continue in the same way in this time following the completion of the NT canon.

Pet 1:19b).

Several different interpretations of 2 Pet 1:19b are possible, none of which is without difficulty:

(1) Some, pointing at the final phrase, "in your hearts," suggest "until" refers to a time when a higher level of divine insight in a Christian's life will supersede a lower level of faith in the written Word.⁷⁹ This view smacks of the very Gnostic elitism that Peter is confronting. Paul clearly refutes the notion of perfectionism in Phil 3:12-14.

(2) Kistemaker⁸⁰ and Hiebert⁸¹ think that this time alludes to a subjective response ("in your hearts") of those awaiting Christ's return. Yet ϵ $\omega\omega$ (*heos*, "until") introduces a terminal point, whether related to location, quantity, some activity, or time, as in this case. In what sense would that positive attitude toward Christ's return provide an end to the need to concentrate on Scripture?

(3) A more novel approach would have this final part of v. 19 providing the terminal point neither for the reliable Word,⁸² nor for the time of focusing on that Word, but modifying the immediately preceding clause, "as to a lamp shining in a dark place" (v. 19a). Accordingly, the lamp of God's Word shines in a dark heart until the day of salvation faith dawns. This finds support in 2 Cor 4:6, "God . . . is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." This interpretation is unlikely because of the following thoughts.

(4) The most common explanation emphasizes the need to concentrate on God's Word until the time that Christ returns and

⁷⁹Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4th ed., 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903) 4:400.

⁸⁰Kistemaker, *First and Second Peter and Jude* 271

⁸¹D. Edmond Hiebert, "The Prophetic Foundation for the Christian Life: An Exposition of 2 Peter 1:19-21," *BSac* 141/562 (April-June, 1984):158-68.

⁸²Both the NASB and Nestle's 26th edition of the Greek NT suggest this with their punctuation.

believers receive fuller light in heaven directly from Him.⁸³ Scripture frequently compares Messiah Jesus to a star or light (Num 24:17; Mal 4:2; Luke 1:78; 2 Cor 4:6; Eph 5:14), even a Morning Star (Rev 2:28; 22:16).⁸⁴ Moreover, the day of Christ's return relates to an ending of darkness for believers when they stand in the complete light of God's presence (Rom 13:12; Rev 21:23-25). Many people understand 1 Cor 13:9-12, "when the perfect comes . . .," to speak of this superseding of written revelation by Christ's presence. Presence with God, then, would be the fourth source of spiritual knowledge, but one not yet available to the believer.

This preferred view prompts some interesting questions: Will written revelation be of no more relevance at the revelation of Christ? Or will it rather be replaced by something superior such as "adult" things inevitably replace C. S. Lewis' child's sandbox? Will Christians know all in heaven, or will heaven be a place of eternal learning?

The only obstacle to this view lies in the final phrase, "in your

⁸³Green, *Second Peter and Jude* 89. This interpretation would be even more obvious if the textual variant is followed which places the article before η $m\acute{\alpha}ra$ ("*the day*"), but the textual support for the article is weak.

⁸⁴Though Revelation uses a different term, $\theta\acute{\alpha}$ $st\acute{\alpha}r\acute{\alpha}$ $prv\#n\acute{\omega}$ ("morning star"), rather than $\acute{\nu}\varsigma\sigma\acute{\tau}\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega$ ("morning star") used here, the terms are synonymous.

hearts," which does not seem to fit an eschatological interpretation recommend that this refers to the final transformation of the believer connected with Jesus' return (1 John 3:2),⁸⁵ but this is a weak rejoinder.

A convenient and preferable solution to the problem lies in beginning the sentence with the problematic phrase and continuing into v. 20: "Since this first of all in your hearts. . . ."⁸⁶ 1En (*en*, "in") prepositional phrases sometimes introduce nominative participial clauses, even starting new sentences on rare occasions.⁸⁷ Furthermore, in an idea parallel to knowing someone's heart, Eph 1:18 explains that when the heart is enlightened, one has hope to which God has called believers.⁸⁸

This explanation of the prepositional phrase has it introducing 2:20-21, where a second major interpretive problem exists.

THIRD SOURCE REVISITED

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20-21).

Divine Origin of Written Revelation

After his brief look at the ultimate, face-to-face exposure to knowledge to come, Peter returns to the present and written revelation. Strachan and Skontew (*ginōskontes*, "knowing") *temporally*—"while realizing this"—renders it as an *imperative*—"Recognize this truth to be of utmost importance" but it suits the context better to see a *causal* force, giving the reason why one should concentrate on Scripture, "Since you know this above all."⁹⁰ T

⁸⁵Calvin, *Library of Christian Classics* 381 ff.

⁸⁶Green (*Second Peter and Jude* 89) does not allude to this possibility.

⁸⁷Cf. Matt 11:25; 13:1; Eph 3:17; Phil 2:7; Col 1:10, 11; 3:16, 22; 1 Tim 5:10; Titus 3:3; Heb 1:11; Jude 20. The first two begin even a new sentence in the Nestle 26th ed. Greek Text.

⁸⁸Many other activities take place within believers' hearts, including sin (Matt 5:28; 9:4; Jas 3:14), thinking and remembering (Matt 24:48; Mark 2:6; Luke 2:19, 51; 3:15; 9:47), and God's love (Rom 5:5), belief (Rom 10:9). Further, the Holy Spirit dwells there (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 3:17).

⁸⁹Strachan, "Second Epistle General" 132; Green, *Second Peter and Jude* 89. Though the temporal participle is very often possible, it is often best to resort to it only when interpretive possibilities fit (Dan Wallace, "Selected Notes" [unpublished syllabus, Grace Seminary, circa 1981]). The NASB and the NIV understand an imperatival participle in 2:20 and 3:3. This is possible, but the rarity of this use of a participle makes it unlikely. In contrast, 22 times the nominative participle of *ginōskō* used adverbially appears in the NT, 19 either probably express the cause for an associated action (Matt 12:15; 16:8; 22:18; 26:10; Mark 15:45; Luke 9:11; John 5:6; 6:15; Acts 23:6; Rom 1:21; 6:6; Gal 2:9; 4:9; Eph 5:5; Phil 2:19; Heb 1:3; 2 Pet 1:20; 3:3).

returns to the earlier emphasis, reminding them of the most important truth.

Verse 20 gives one of the reasons why written revelation is so subjective experiential knowledge.⁹² The final clause of v. 20 includes the major syntactical problem of the passage. The problem revolves around *pilysew* (*epiluseōs*, literally "loosen, untie"). The NT uses the noun only. Mark 4:34 uses the verb to speak of interpreting a parable, and Acts unravels and settling a dispute. Though the semantic connotation is the object of the interpretation remains unclear. Four potential meanings are of discussion.

(1) Individual interpretation must yield to corporate interpretation.

primarily the Roman Catholic tradition that understands Peter to be disallowing individuals from trying to interpret Scripture apart from the authority of the church—i.e., he forbids private interpretation by individual readers.⁹³

Idias ("one's own") can mean private in contrast to corporate (Mark 4:34; Gal 2:2). However, this view is contextually difficult because v. 21 is useless, although the verse's clear function is to support what it expresses.⁹⁴ Moreover, this meaning contradicts other Scripture that recommends that the individual approach Scripture to understand it fully (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 2:15; 1 Pet 2:5, 9; 1 John 2:27). Calvin asks how Scripture can be called "light" if it is not clear to the individual Christian. He writes, "Execrable, therefore, is the blasphemy of the Papists, who pretend that the Scripture does nothing but dazzle the eyes, in order to keep the simple from reading it."⁹⁵

(2) Verses must be interpreted in light of other Scriptures. Here, *idias* means "its own" (as in Luke 6:44; John 15:19; 1 Cor 15:38; 1 Tim 5:8), emphasizing

"above all" in the LXX of Isa 9:1, stressing urgency of action.

⁹¹This verse is grammatically similar to 3:2-3 where Peter gives the reason for his command: "Remember the words of the prophets."

⁹²Though Peter may view prophecy in its narrow sense—those truths and events foretold by prophets—he probably sees it in the broader sense of all Scripture. The same word in this verse has its wider sense because of its similarity to 2 Tim 3:16.

⁹³The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* explains, "This is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the Church" (eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and Roland E. Murphy, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1968] 496). The Jerusalem Bible translates, "Interpretation of prophecy is never a matter for the individual." In our own setting in the Philippines, our lay organization of the Roman Catholic Church advised members to read the Bible devoutly, but to depend on the Church and its clergy for deeper interpretation.

⁹⁴Although *gār* ("for," v. 21) can sometimes function in ways other than expressing a supporting reason for a previous statement, of the 25 times Peter uses the conjunction an overwhelming number of times it provides a supporting reason for a previous statement.

the solidarity of God's Word. Indeed, extraction of verses from their n greater contexts leads to error. This view certainly harmonizes with bib but is an unlikely meaning here. Aside from leaving v. 21 hanging, i properly handle the very unusual clause, "is *a matter* of one's own inter (NASB, RSV,¹ d̄awê pilysewv ḡnetai, *idias epiluseos ginetai*). A fuller dis this clause relates more closely to the next view.

(3) Meaning is not dependent on the individual reader's interpreta

view, held by Barbieri, Kistemaker, and Green, invalidates all arbitrary denying that any one verse can have multiple meanings for different ind Rather, as v. 21 explains, because God Himself wrote Scripture, it is s single, objective meaning exists for any passage and the interpreter mus discover it. Divine origin (v. 21) implies a divine and immutable meaning.

This view fits nicely into the context by showing why objectiv revelation is superior to the subjective, visual revelation of vv. 16-18, th which lends itself to various interpretations by various witnesses.⁹⁷ Pet offering this as a corrective to the false teachers who were twisting Sc support their myths and stories (3:16).

The use of *idias* in this instance is impersonal, referring to any rea own (novel) interpretation. Of the other eight times Peter uses this pr antecedent is always clear. Yet here the only possible antecedent is "your" in v. 19b. This cannot be the antecedent because the subject of v. interpretation. It is necessary to infer an antecedent. The impersonal tra possible, but unlikely because it is uncommon in the NT. This is the onl NASB translates *idios* by "one's own."

The meaning of the genitive, *idias epiluseos*, with *ginetai* pose perplexing problem. This coupling of *ginomai* ("I become") with a geni predicate is very rare.⁹⁸ If *ginetai* were translated as the simple copul genitive would then carry a loose descriptive meaning, such as "a r "related to," or "dependent on."⁹⁹ It is also possible to perceive di purpose in the genitive: "no prophecy . . . is for one's own interpre

⁹⁶It is important to distinguish between meaning, which is singular for any p application, which can be multiple.

⁹⁷Thayer suggests that the point is the believer's need of the Holy Spirit to underst reads, "an interpretation which one thinks out for himself, opp. to that which the teaches" (*Greek-English Lexicon* 296). Just as the Spirit is the source of the writing, v. 21, the source of interpretation or understanding.

⁹⁸Of the 3 other possible occurrences of this combination of ḡnomai and a gen predicate, Mark 13:18 uses a genitive of description, "happen in the winter"; Rev 11 genitive possessively; and Acts 20:3 remains enigmatic.

⁹⁹In Rom 9:16, the genitive has the idea of dependence: "so then it *does* not *depend* on t wills. . . ." A. T. Robertson admits that the genitive had become very broad by Koine

designed for a personal interpretation."¹⁰⁰

(4) Scripture did not originate in the human author's interpretation he saw.¹⁰¹ *Idias* in this instance refers to the writer of Scripture rather than the reader. Human authors and prophets did not receive visions and have no authority to explain personally those visions resulting in Scripture. Nor in foretelling events do they personally decipher the meaning of current events to forecast what will come. Instead, as v. 21 clarifies, their prophecies came from God. Both Luther and Calvin, together with the NIV, hold this final view which describes the inspiration process.¹⁰²

In this case, interpretation of Scripture itself is not the final step in the interpretation of history or visions in order to write Scripture. Like the other previous views, this one does find support in other Scripture (Dan 12:10-12) and in v. 21 which parallels and expands the idea. Further, this view receives its strongest recommendation from *ginetai* plus the genitive which describe Scripture's origin. *Ginomai* often carries the meaning "come about," "arose," describing the origin of something (e.g., 1 Tim 6:4; 1 Pet 4:12; 2 Pet 1:17). This semantic connotation pairs nicely with a genitive (or ablative) of source—"comes about *from* the author's own interpretation"—or of means—"comes about *by means of* the author's own interpretation."¹⁰³

The fourth interpretation that refers v. 20 to the divine origin of the revelation is preferable, but the third is a definite possibility.

The Method of Divine Inspiration

In what amounts to an example of synthetic parallelism, Peter repeats in v. 21 the essence of v. 20 with further details on inspiration's mechanics. He places emphasis to his first statement by moving *uelhmatià nur/voy* (*thelematià*, "will of man") forward to its beginning and by the addition of *potê* (*potè*, "ever") to the negative *ou* (*ou*, "not"): "for *never* by means of human will was prophecy uttered."¹⁰⁴ This reference to human will is reminiscent of the parable which describes mistaken sources of regeneration.

¹⁰⁰For other genitives of direction/purpose in Peter, cf. 1 Pet 2:16, "as a covering *for* evildoers, that they may have no appeal to God *for* a good conscience"; 5:2, "exercising oversight . . . not *for* sordid gain."

¹⁰¹The Living Bible paraphrases, "was ever thought up by the prophet himself."

¹⁰²Hiebert, "Prophetic Foundation" 165. In a similar vein, Strachan ("Second Epistle to the Hebrews," 165) understands it to mean that the prophet, when he described a revelation applied to the present generations' historical situation, did not give the only application, but other historical applications were possible: "The prophets . . . saw clearly only the contemporary political or moral situation and the principles involved and illustrated therein."

¹⁰³Admittedly, both genitives (or ablatives) of source and means are rare, but 1 Pet 3:2 is an example of the former, "dirt *from* the flesh," and the participle in 1 Pet 2:15 is certainly an example of the latter, "by doing right you may silence the ignorance. . . ." In the latter case, the genitive of means would parallel the dative of means, *uelhmati* ("through the will") in v. 15.

Peter gives the most detailed description of the inspiration process of a biblical writer. Evidently a cooperation took place, by which the human writer, while normally not losing self-control or bypassing his own self, received inspiration from God to write God's words. Although the nominative participle *(pheromenoi*, "being carried along"), can be either adjectival or adverbial, the adverbial participle is more enlightening. Whether it be a participle of "men by means of being carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" or "men because they were carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God"—the participle clarifies *how* men spoke from God. The same participle describes the powerful sound of blowing wind when the Spirit controlled the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:2). Perhaps more descriptive is the word used of a ship uncontrollably driven by storm wind (Acts 27:15, 16). It brings out the idea of cooperation with these appropriate comments: "The prophets raised their sails, so to speak (they were obedient and receptive to the Holy Spirit filled them and carried their craft along in the direction He wanted)." ¹⁰⁵

The preposition $\rho\beta$ (*hypo*, "by") indicates the Spirit's role as the agent of God's revelation. Second Sam 23:2, Acts 1:16, and 1 Cor 2:10 indicate the Spirit's work. ¹⁰⁶ do John 14:26 and 16:13-15. God's work *through* a man, while not forcing his personality, and yet totally controlling the outcome, surely manifests His power. Indeed, God's Word is one of His greatest miracles!¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Of the approx. 134 times Peter uses the anarthrous, nominative participle (the adverbial participle is uncommon), both adjectival and adverbial are very common.

¹⁰⁶Green, *Second Peter and Jude* 91.

¹⁰⁷Several important texts add $\gamma\iota\omicron\iota$ instead of $\epsilon\kappa\ \omicron\prime\alpha\ \rho\ \epsilon\kappa\ \omicron\prime\alpha$ (3,0), resulting in the "holy men of God spoke" (cf. KJV, RSV footnote). Mss. supporting the alternative include the Majority text, uncials $\text{A } 68 \text{ C}$, and Vulgate. But the reading with $\epsilon\kappa\ \omicron\prime\alpha\ \rho\ \epsilon\kappa\ \omicron\prime\alpha$ (3,0) ⁷² and in B P and numerous other mss. is stronger. Fully appreciated, it certainly surpasses the slain in the Spirit or a crying, dancing image of Mary.

A FINAL SUGGESTED TRANSLATION OF 1 PET 1:16-21

¹⁶For it was not by means of following cleverly concocted tales that we were made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but because we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For at the time that he received honor and glory from God the Father when such an announcement was uttered by the Magnificent Glory, "This is My Son, My Beloved in Whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸we also heard this voice uttered from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. In addition, we have the more dependable prophetic word, to which you are doing well to devote yourself as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises, ²⁰since you know this above all things, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from an author's own interpretation; ²¹for prophecy was never uttered by means of human

CONCLUSION

In our age, enemies of Christianity disbelieve God's Word, but even professing Christians belittle Scripture by adding to it. Added to Scripture are myths and miracles of still quasi-pagan religious, fabulous experiences sought by people looking for excitement instead of truth, and so-called psychotherapies and theories grounded in godless presumptions. These "Methods of Addition" demean Scripture's sufficiency by suggesting alternate sources of spiritual knowledge and solutions. To them Peter responds with his reaffirmation of Scripture's superiority. To them God uttered this same message more than two centuries before Peter when He said about those who advised Isaiah elsewhere for answers:

And when they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spirits who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak