

THE CHRISTIAN MAN AND THE BIBLE

STEPHEN W. PAINE, PH.D.*

The Christian man is one who has faith in God through Christ. This faith is almost always based in part upon God's revelation of himself in the Bible. It is only natural, then, that the Christian man inclines from the start to receive the words of Scripture as from God and final. This is an act of faith, but it is not against reason. There are certain facts which support such an attitude.

And what are these facts which seem to call for the Christian man's faith in and loyalty to Scripture? First and most important, the fact that our blessed Lord received the Scripture of his day, the same books which comprise our Old Testament canon today, as being the very word of God written. That Christ's attitude toward Scripture is taken from Scripture involves a certain circularity of thinking which I shall mention again later.

Even a cursory reading of the gospels will impress one with the frequency and simple finality with which Jesus appealed to Scripture as to God himself. When speaking to the Sadducees about immortality, he asked them, "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God?" (Mt. 22:31). When referring to the Messianic reference in Psalm 2, Jesus declared that David had spoken this by the Holy Spirit (Mk. 12:36).

When hard pressed by the cunning temptations of Satan, Jesus three times quoted from the Books of Moses, letting his obedience to Scripture stand as obedience to God. Concerning this Adolph Monod has thoughtfully asked, "What! Jesus Christ, the Lord of Heaven and earth, calling to his aid in that solemn moment Moses his servant? He who speaks from heaven fortifying himself against the temptations of hell by the word of him who speaks from earth? How can we explain that spiritual mystery, that wonderful reversing of the order of things, if for Jesus the words of Moses were not the words of God rather than those of men?" (*The Fundamentals*, Vol. II, p.31, quoted by Frank E. Gaebelin, *Inspiration*, p.12).

It was in dealing with a somewhat incidental point in Psalm 82 that Jesus declared in the words now used on the seal of ETS, οὐ δύναται λυθῆναι ἡ γραφή, "Scripture cannot be broken." Present day scholars who do not share this view and who yet regard Jesus as the Son

*Houghton College, Houghton, New York. Presidential Address at the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society.

of God have gone to considerable effort to dissociate this statement from him.

Some aver that here was an *ad hominem* argument, as though to say to his hearers, "You must grant my point, for you yourselves hold that Scripture must be taken as final." But the more natural and obvious interpretation, namely, that Jesus himself accepted and used Scripture as final, fits in perfectly with his sincere and straightforward use of Scripture elsewhere.

Others urge that here was a concept of Scripture held by the later church and read back to Jesus' discourse by the writer of John's gospel. But the recent tendency even of secular scholars to date John's gospel prior to 70 A.D. robs this argument of much of its appeal.

Still others appeal to the theory that Jesus in "emptying himself of all reputation" (cf. Phil. 2:7) also assumed significant limitations of his knowledge. Such is the feeling of Dr. William Sanday, who is troubled by Jesus' apparent lack of awareness of some of the "facts" which have been discovered by modern Biblical scholars. Says he, "Moses is repeatedly spoken of as the author of the Pentateuch. A Psalm is quoted as David's which, whatever its true date, it seems difficult to believe really came from him. The book of Daniel is assumed to be really the work of the prophet of that name. . . . The stories of Noah and of Jonah are both referred to as literal history . . . and to crown all we have in the Sermon on the Mount that strong assertion, 'Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law till all be fulfilled'" (Matt. 5:17, 18). (*Bampton Lectures on Inspiration*, p. 409).

Of course the kenotic principle can be pressed to a point which would leave our Lord devoid of any marks of deity while on earth, lending itself admirably to any amount of demythologizing the gospel accounts. But the sacred writers knew nothing of such a kenosis, nothing of a Christ who shared any misapprehensions of his time. Mark records Christ's words about the time of his return, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (13:32). Here was apparently a specific item of knowledge not shared by him at that time. Our Lord was, however, under no misapprehension as to this item nor, we apprehend, any other.

William Burt Pope summarizes the importance for us of Christ's attitude toward Scripture: "He took it into his hands and blessed it, and hallowed it forever as his own. . . . Knowing better than any human critic can know, all of its internal obscurities and difficulties, He sealed it nevertheless for the reverence of his people. The canon of the ancient oracles, precisely as we hold them now, no more no less, he sanctified and gave to his Church as the early preparatory records of his own gospel and kingdom" (*A Compendium of Christian Theology*, 2nd. ed., 1881, v. 1, pp. 39, 40).

Not only does the Christian man find in Christ's attitude toward Scripture great reassurance to his own faith, but he observes that the apostles, saints, and scholars of the historic church have also taken this view. Jesus before his departure told the apostles that he had many things to say for which they were as of then unprepared, but that after his ascension the Holy Spirit would bring these to them (John 16:12-15). In his high priestly prayer he mentioned the future word of the apostles as a vehicle of saving faith to men (Jn. 17:20).

The apostles accepted this authority with full knowledge of its importance. Peter demanded that the writings of Paul, though sometimes difficult to understand, be accorded the same deference as "the other Scriptures" (II P. 3:15, 16). Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian church makes bold on occasion to express personal judgments, differentiating them clearly and honestly from that divinely revealed truth which was the main burden of his letter (see Chapter 7. Some biblical scholars feel that Paul is not disavowing inspiration for his own statements when he says, for example in vs. 12, "To the rest speak I, not the Lord . . ." but that he means to indicate that in all of Jesus' extant sayings there seems to be no answer for this particular matter and so Paul is giving his own-inspired-comment.) And as though in anticipation of the human tendency to reply, "Well! Who does he think he is?" Paul told the Corinthians toward the end of the letter, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37).

In writing to Timothy Paul characterized any who refused his words as those who "consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Tim. 6:3).

This same attitude toward the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is reflected abundantly in the writings of the church fathers, scholars, and divines and in the great creeds of Christendom from apostolic times until now despite the learned attacks of infidels and, more recently, of devout men within the Church.

Dr. William Sanday admits, "Not only may 'testimonies to the general doctrine of inspiration' from the earliest fathers be multiplied to almost any extent, but there are some which go further and point to an inspiration which might be described as 'verbal'; nor does this idea come in tentatively and by degrees, but almost from the very first" (op. cit., p. 34).

The Christian man is reassured to realize that in his simple faith that because the Bible says something it can be counted upon as fact he is in the company of his Lord and of the apostles and fathers.

Who's Speaking?

Now whenever a bulletin is issued requiring a response which costs something or runs counter to inclination, man tends to question the

authority behind it. When as children, busy with playing outdoors, we found our fun threatened by the call of one of our smaller brothers or sisters, "Come to lunch!" the automatic answer was, "Who said so?"

The Bible, claiming to speak with all the authority of God as it calls man from his sin to obedience by direct and implied precept, is just such a bulletin. And from the days of Satan's insinuating words to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" until now brilliant men have been declaring that God has not given us a fully dependable written Word about himself.

The forlorn Jewish remnant who after the destruction of Jerusalem came to Jeremiah for a directing word from God promised to accept it "whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Jer. 42:6). But they did not like God's word to them when it came. So they did just what people have always done in that case; they decided it was not really God's word. To God's faithful and already much abused messenger they now replied, "The Lord our God hath not sent thee. . . . But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on" (43:2, 3). Sadly the prophet rebuked the idolatry which stood behind this unbelief, and recorded God's final rejoinder, "They shall see whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs" (44:28).

The writings of the fathers and the statements of the historic creeds reflect the continuing unwillingness of unbelievers to accept the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments for what they claim to be. Since the early years of the nineteenth century this anti-scriptural bias, this refusal to accord to Scripture the place which it demands as the Word of God written has been the single unifying theme of what has come to be the regnant body of Biblical scholarship, under whatever label it has been known as the styles of theological thinking have shifted.

Creaturely humility

What will be the proper deportment of the Christian man toward Scripture (in view of these negatives?) First, an attitude of creaturely *humility* which welcomes God's authority in these matters. Persons critical of Scripture repeat frequently the charge that the evangelical is guilty of circular reasoning. He is accused of appealing to Scripture to substantiate the divine inspiration and dependable accuracy of Scripture.

But the thoughtful and obedient person will realize that in all search for truth there is an element of circularity. Man takes a glimmer of an idea, goes to the facts, and finds that the facts substantiate his idea. From that point he goes on to a fuller realization of all that is involved.

Dr. E. J. Rushdoony has observed in this connection, "All reasoning is circular reasoning, but reasoning from God to God-given and God-

created data has the validity of conformity to the nature of things. The opponents of inspiration reason from autonomous man's reasons, through brute factuality which has no meaning other than man's interpretation, back again to man's basic presupposition. In other words, all reasoning moves in terms of its basic presupposition, either God or autonomous man, interpreting all reality in terms of the presupposition" (review of R. Laird Harris, "Inspiration and Canonicity," *Christianity Today*, Vol. I, no. 19, June 24, 1957, p. 36).

Circularity in authority

In the question of final authority there is bound to be a degree of circularity. Suppose I knock at the door of a house and ask the boy who comes to the door, "Who is boss in this house?"

He answers, "I am."

I say to him, "Can you prove that?"

He says, "Yes; just a minute and I'll get my dad to tell you." This appeal leaves no doubt as to who is boss, and it isn't the boy.

Especially when divine revelation is at stake, the only possible validation is self-validation. Jesus on occasion condescended to men's desire for non-circular confirmation and adduced witnesses outside himself. But when the discussion concerned his own person and origin, and when his questioners said to him, "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true," he answered, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true, for I know whence I came and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come and whither I go" (Jn. 8:13, 14). They could take their choice between accepting Christ's statement concerning himself or being in the dark.

The Christian man accepts the scriptures for what they claim to be, the word of God written. He takes a humble position before God's self revelation.

Creaturely patience

Again, this creaturely attitude would seem to postulate *patience*. The Christian man realizes that the Scripture presents its problems. Some of these occur to him as he reads; many are raised by those who have taken this as a project. I have recently been reading Dr. Dewey Beegle's book *The Inspiration of Scripture* (1963, Westminster Press, Philadelphia). Dr. Beegle is one who claims a high respect for Scripture, yet feels that it contains quite a few mistakes.

Beginning on page 44, he mentions ten matters which he considers to involve errors of Scripture, presumably the ten worst ones he can find. In practically every instance he mentions solutions which have been suggested by competent men, but he sets these aside—apparently

with scant consideration or rebuttal—as not appealing to him to be adequate.

The first two of these items relate to Jude's mention of Enoch as saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints" (ostensibly from the pseudepigraph of *Enoch*) and his citing as the words of Michael the saying, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan" (apparently from the *Assumption of Moses*). Beegle realizes the possibility that these sayings may have been brought down by tradition and incorporated thus in the apocryphal writings. But, he says, we have no evidence for this. Therefore these have to be regarded as only apocryphal, and Jude is in error for quoting them as true. However it must be pointed out that Beegle makes his conclusion on the basis of argument from silence, a frequent procedure. He cannot prove that Enoch and Michael did not originally make statements to which these could have been reasonable allusions. Similar statements are to be found in earlier Hebrew literature (Dt. 33:2; Zech. 3:2). Beegle himself is assuming error in his certainty that they were pure inventions, gullibly received by Jude.

His next two items alleged as "errors" both relate to a chronological discrepancy between Kings and Chronicles centering on the question of the length of the reign of Pekah, one of the last of the monarchs of the northern kingdom. He admits that Kitchen and Mitchell have worked out a possible solution. Dr. Harold Stigers has also presented a synchronization based on the earlier work of Dr. E. R. Thiele (see "The inter-phased chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Hoshea," *Bulletin of the E.T.S.*, Vol. 9, pp. 8 ff., Winter, 1966). But these do not interest Beegle. He feels he must "blow the whistle" on these items as errors. He does not take the time to refute the proposed solutions.

"Error Number 5" relates to the genealogies of Genesis, Chapter 5. Beegle realizes that the explanation has been made that the orientals do not consider it necessary in a genealogical statement to give an exhaustive list. "But when doing so," he says, "they did not pay such close attention to exact figures as in Genesis, Chapter 5." So it is an error. Beegle says so.

The Slips of Stephen?

"Errors 6 and 7" relate to alleged slips made by Stephen in his sermon. Some who hold that Scripture is fully dependable do not think this implies that the quoted sayings, even of good men, must be free from all error. Beegle knows about this, but because Stephen was himself a Spirit-filled man, it would seem a cheap idea of inspiration that would not protect Stephen also from all error!

It should be inserted in this connection that some orthodox scholars, such as Dr. Edward J. Young in *Thy Word is Truth* (1957, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, pp. 175, 176), have felt it necessary to come to Stephen's defense, or at least have done so, and with cogent support.

"Error Number 8" concerns Paul's statement in Galatians 3:17 that the law was 430 years later than God's promise to Abraham, whereas Exodus 12:40 says that Israel "dwelt in Egypt 430 years," thus making the period from Abraham to the exodus about 645 years. Beegle realizes that there is a problem about the correct text for Exodus 12:40, in that the Septuagint says the time that Israel "dwelt in Egypt *and in the land of Canaan* was 430 years." Also the genealogies indicate only four generations from Levi through Moses, but "archaology suggests the longer period (in Egypt), 430 years." So Beegle feels we must chalk up another error.

Crowing Cock

"Error Number 9" relates to Mark's quoting Jesus as saying to Peter, "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice" (14:30), as compared with the accounts of the other evangelists that Jesus said, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Beegle goes on to say, "In explaining the difference in detail in Mark's report of the denial episode, some evangelical scholars suggest that Matthew and Luke generalized the cock's crowing twice to mean 'shall not have finished crowing'. But why generalize if they knew the cock crowed twice?"

We feel constrained to comment that this seems to be a fair example of Beegle's spirit. He does not question the validity of the explanation. Does it not make room quite simply for substantial accuracy in all the statements? Suppose Matthew and Luke *did not* know that the cock crowed twice; does that make their statement erroneous? Beegle seems to be saying in effect, "Wouldn't it have been more logical to have all the accounts agree word for word? Such, apparently, is his concept of dependable reporting.

"Error Number 10" relates to Paul's quotation in I Corinthians 3:19 of the words of Eliphaz (Job 5:13), "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Beegle does not question that the quotation is substantially accurate nor that, though spoken by one of Job's comforters, the saying is true. Apparently his only quarrel is with Paul for not being more careful whom he quoted.

One needs to be careful not to take too lightly the criticisms coming from an opposite point of view, but frankly this reader, finishing the list, could only think, "Is that the worst that can be done?" One cannot but feel that in every instance, Dr. Beegle bypasses plausible alternatives without even stopping to refute them. He simply prefers to regard these points as errors in Scripture.

Now to refer once again to the apparent chronological difficulty centering about the length of Pekah's reign, we cannot now know finally whether the suggested possible solutions will prove to represent what really happened. Until the final evidence is all in we shall not know whether this was the case, or whether there has been some corrup-

tion of the text. To be honest we also have to face the theoretical possibility of error on the part of the canonical writers both here and elsewhere, an eventuality which would prove us wrong. We do not expect this, and we feel sure of our ground, but we are human.

Indispensability of facts

But let us follow still further this need for patience by the Christian man. Dr. Beegle, for his part, is not in favor of waiting. He says of the orthodox attitude, "The usual mood is one of caution with respect to the interpretation of the phenomena. Problems are recognized, but there is little inclination to resolve them on the basis of the evidence at hand" (*op. cit.*, p. 61).

Speaking at the ETS meeting in Nashville in December, 1965, Dr. Kenneth Kantzer related a personal experience to point up the un-wisdom of making conclusions of error without access to the facts. He had, a while previously, learned of the accidental death of an aunt, who was said to have stepped from the curb on a busy corner and to have been struck down by a car.

A bit later he noticed a newspaper account which said his aunt had been riding in a car which became involved in a head-on collision, causing her death. When Dr. Kantzer had a chance to talk with his cousin he was anxious to know what had really happened. She told him that her mother had stepped from the curb and had been hit by a car and fatally injured. The driver of the car, greatly shaken, picked her up, put her into the car, and started for the hospital. On the way the car was involved in a head-on collision and her mother was instantly killed.

Dr. Kantzer made the point that only because his interest was contemporary, was there any chance to get the information necessary for reconciling two apparently irreconcilable reports. Had it been a century later, only speculation would have been possible. The chance for arriving at a factual solution would have been very remote. Yet to conclude that one of the reports had been erroneous would itself have been an error.

The Christian man will naturally be interested in proposed theories about the Biblical records. But he will certainly not conclude the scriptures to be in error upon the basis of situations where the pertinent facts are not available. To do otherwise would be to assume error in the records.

Inerrancy and faith

Perhaps this is as good a place as any to state that the Christian man's acceptance of the full dependability of Scripture is not the result of inductive reasoning. It is an act of faith based upon the claim of Scripture and the attitude of Christ and his early followers toward that

claim. Hence it is not something that one "proves." Common sense alone should indicate as much. How could anyone command the necessary evidence for that!

Dr. Beegle seems to feel that he has made a great discovery or proved a great point when he says, "The totality of Biblical evidence does not prove the doctrine of inerrancy to be a fact. It is still a theory that must be accepted by faith" (*op. cit.*, p. 61).

It would not have been necessary for him to prove this. It has often been stated in so many words by orthodox scholars. For example, Dr. Robert Preus of Concordia Seminary has put it, "This 'recognition' of the truthfulness of the written Word of God is not primarily intellectual: it takes place in the obedience of faith. The truthfulness and reliability (of Scripture) is an article of faith" ("Notes on the inerrancy of Scripture," *Bulletin of the ETS*, Vol. 8, p. 127, Autumn, 1965).

Inspiration and semantics

Not only will the Christian man take a creaturely attitude of faith in Scripture as from God, but he will give care to the matter of keeping his position as clear as possible in view of the ever shifting semantic situation.

Those who believe in the full dependability of Scripture have been at some difficulty to express this idea unambiguously, particularly in the last century. In the early centuries of the Christian era it was enough to say that Scripture was inspired by God to indicate that its statements were considered dependable and accurate. Said Augustine, "Though it be but a single prophet or apostle or evangelist that is shown to have placed anything in his scriptures . . . we are not permitted to doubt that it is true" (*Contra Faustum Manichaeam*, xi, 5).

When the Westminster Confession was written, it was felt wise to use the word infallible to describe the full reliability of Scripture. This word was somewhat spoiled for evangelicals as ministers, under pressure for ordination, assented to it with inner reservations. For example, it was reported that the president of a seminary whose graduates would be required by the church to express adherence to the Westminster Confession in order to be ordained, advised these young men not to hesitate in doing so, because the word infallible simply meant that Scripture would not fail to accomplish God's purpose for it.

The description of the Bible as *true* or *inspired by God* has also suffered by semantics because of the constant desire of unbelieving churchmen to appear to conform to the beliefs still held by many ordinary church members, and because the paradoxical semantics so characteristic of dialectical theology have offered a convenient tool for this purpose. The word inerrant has been used considerably of late, but this writer has known of persons who have expressed adherence to such

a statement and who have later declared that they meant that the doctrines but not all the propositions of Scripture are inerrant.

Still, at the time of the Wenham Conference on Inspiration in the summer of 1966, the word inerrant still seemed sufficiently potent so that some of the scholars would not join in a declaration using it although they would and did subscribe to a statement affirming that "The Scriptures are completely truthful and are authoritative as the only infallible rule of faith and practice." If the words "completely truthful" mean what they ordinarily mean, it would appear to this writer that the word "inerrant" could just as well have been used.

The Christian man, sincere in his own allegiance to the Word of God written, revealing as it does the Word of God living, will endeavor to keep abreast of the semantic situation as it affects this important area of his faith.

Inerrancy and the autographs

Again he will do his best to keep his Biblical faith adequately defined. For example, in the increasingly meticulous discussions of inspiration the question is frequently asked, "What Bible is it that is inerrant? Is it the King James? Is it the RSV? Or if the original languages are intended, which text is inerrant?" To this the only possible reply from one holding Scriptural inerrancy, in view of the many known scribal errors and the occasional corruptions of the text, is to say that we hold to the complete dependability of Scripture *as originally given*, as recorded by the divinely inspired writers.

For this there is much disdain by persons holding a critical view of Scripture. Emil Brunner refers rather contemptuously to "the infallible Bible-X." He judges that here is a somewhat underhanded device for avoiding some of the apologetic burden involved in this high view of the Bible, as though to say that if we had the original, this or that difficulty would disappear. "Thus," he says, "an otherwise absolutely honorable orthodox view of the authority of the Bible (it is good to hear Brunner using the adjectives!) was forced to descend to apologetic artifices of this kind" (*Revelation and Reason*, p. 275).

This writer has seen very little appeal to the autographs for the purpose of apologetics. Actually there has been much more emending of the text by liberal scholars desiring to be freed from this or that troublesome reading! And there are so many copies of the scriptures that the science of textual criticism has reduced to a very small locus the matter of variations in the text.

Dr. Beegle expends his greatest effort against the validity of referring inerrancy to the autographs. He declares, "The Bible makes no essential distinction between the three categories of Scripture (i.e. autographs, copies, and translations). All these are considered trust-

worthy and authoritative because they derive ultimately from God" (*op. cit.*, p. 41).

Yet he also makes it a point that "there are many errors in translations" (*op. cit.*, p. 40), and he certainly knows that there have been many errors in copying. So in asking that the doctrine of Scriptural inerrancy be considered as applying to these "many errors" he is in effect asking that the doctrine of inerrancy be abandoned just by redefinition. This is all right for Dr. Beegle, who is frankly opposed to inerrancy. He should, though, at least say "Please." But one who holds the scriptures to be accurate can see from this the importance of referring to the autographs in his definition of inerrancy.

The fathers and the autographs

Dr. Beegle makes still further, and somewhat dubious, use of his idea concerning the autographs. Since, he contends, all the testimonies to inerrancy in the early church, both of our Lord and of the apostles and fathers, had reference to the ordinary translations or copies which these people used (this is inferred because they do not specifically refer their comments to the autographs, so far as we know), therefore these cannot be considered as applying to inerrancy in the sense in which we use it, but in the sense in which Dr. Beegle holds it—that is, in a sense which would admit all the errors which he alleges to exist in the scriptures, plus the errors of translators and copyists. And he does seem to be arguing that this would not be incompatible with the idea of full scriptural dependability which Christ and the fathers admittedly held.

This may seem an almost impossible accusation, but Dr. Beegle is very specific. In Chapter 7, "Tradition and Inspiration," he takes up the fathers one by one—Philo, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and so on, excluding them one by one from the group of inerrancy believers. Some are out because, like Philo, they believed too much—they believed, or are presumed to have believed, in the inerrancy of the Septuagint.

He includes in this group Irenaeus, the one whom Dr. John Lawson called "a Biblicist and the first great representative of Biblicism" (*The Biblical Theology of St Irenaeus*, 1948, p. 23).

He quotes Augustine's letter to Jerome in which Augustine says he believes "most firmly that not one of their (Scripture's) authors erred in writing anything at all" (*Letters* [1-82], Vol. 12, *The Fathers of the Church*). Of him Beegle says, "Of all the church fathers, Augustine's formulation seems the closest to expressing the doctrine of inerrancy, but his theory appears to be vitiated in practice, both by dependence upon allegorical and numerical interpretations of Scripture and by belief in the inspiration of the Septuagint" (*op. cit.*, p. 111).

It is difficult to see what Augustine's high view of the Septuagint

and his penchant for allegory and numerology had to do with his belief in the full reliability of Scripture. Surely a man need not himself be inerrant to believe in scriptural inerrancy. Beegle is making this a very restricted club.

Augustine himself makes it crystal clear that he does not include the work of copyists and translators in his view of inerrancy. For in his letter to Jerome he goes on to say, "If in one of these books I stumble upon something which seems opposed to the truth, I have no hesitation in saying that either my copy was faulty, or that the translator has not fully grasped what was said, or that I myself have not understood.

By chance we have this specific statement from Augustine. It seems to this writer a rather gratuitous assumption that because our Lord and the apostles doubtless used the Septuagint, and because we do not have their specific words referring their statements about Scripture to the originals they must have been talking only about their copies when witnessing to the dependability of Scripture.

That Dr. Beegle himself realizes the precariousness of this argument upon which he has hung so much seems evident from his hesitating remark in the same context, "However the Biblical writers did not express themselves in many technical aspects related to the doctrine of inspiration; therefore there is the genuine problem of trying to determine just how far implications and areas of silence can be elaborated and still be true to the intent of the writers" (*op. cit.*, 41). Exactly!

Not only in statements about the Bible's authority or accuracy do we refer implicitly to the autographs, though nonexistent. Any discussion of scripture's place in the church or of what it is in itself relates to scripture *as originally recorded*. The very existence of and deference to the well-developed science of textual criticism witnesses to one thing—the importance which Biblical scholars have from the earliest Christian times attached to ascertaining the original words of scripture. In all branches of philology the search is for the actual words of the author. How much more when that author is believed to have recorded the words of God.

Inspired writers or inspired Bible?

The Christian man will also be well advised to give attention to the dichotomy which appears, in the discussion of inspiration, between the "inspiration" of the sacred writers and the "inspiration" of the writings. Following the lead of critical scholarship generally, Dr. Beegle knows only of inspired writers. This involves a turning aside into considerations of *how* God worked, a topic which the Westminster divines felt to be inscrutable. In this vein, he states confidently that inerrant inspiration would have to be verbal dictation. "God could not have given a verbally inerrant Scripture through human channels without

dictating the correct information directly to the Biblical writers where they or their sources were in error."

As a matter of fact, we do not need to choose between inspired writers and an inspired book. Both received divine aid so that there might be a fully dependable result. To be sure, the word "inspired" is an import and not used in Scripture. Peter declares (II Pet. 1:21) that the holy men of God were "borne along" (φερόμενοι) by the Holy Spirit. And Paul writes to Timothy (II Tim. 3:16) concerning the holy scriptures that "all scripture is God-breathed" (θεόπνευτος).

The Israelites in Old Testament times, as in the New Testament, thought of Moses and David and Samuel as writers of Scripture. But they also thought of Scripture *as such*—of God's law (the *torah*), his testimonies or witnesses (*adah*, *eduth*, *teudah*), his statutes (*choq*, *chuqqah*), commandments (*dath*), precepts (*mitsvar*), judgments (*din*, *mishpat*), yes of God's word (*dabar*, *imrah*). In this connection think of Psalm 119, where inscripturation is often clearly in view. And the New Testament writers, not unlike Billy Graham today, many times simply say, "The Scripture saith."

To focus alone on the writers and the specific degree of divine influence they did or did not receive soon involves us in questions as to who was most and who least "inspired." For instance, Beegle hazards the opinion that Luke did not experience "inspiration of a *different kind* from that of the Holy Spirit's activity in the hearts and minds of God's servants down through the history of the church" (*op. cit.*, 134).

"Rock of Ages" in the Psalms?

By the same token, these "degrees of inspiration" are referred to the writings. Some of these come to be thought of as more and some as less "inspired." For example, Dr. Beegle, although he finally pays grudging tribute to the canon, wonders why Esther and Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes were included. Wisdom of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus would have been so much better (*op. cit.*, pp. 92-95). Many of our present day hymns would deserve a place in the Psalter, he feels (*op. cit.*, p. 140).

From all such speculations the Christian man is relieved by simple confidence that "all Scripture is God-breathed, and profitable." God gave it all to us for his good purposes.

The doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture in the autographs, then, seems to us to be the best formulation that the Christian man can presently find to express the opinion held concerning Scripture by our Lord and the historic church. We do not unchristianize any who do not share this confidence.

But neither do we abandon it because all questions about the Scriptures are not yet clear. Think of the tragedy of persons who may

be supposed to have given up their faith in Scripture in the 1800's, influenced in some significant degree by the confident assertions of Wellhausen that there never had been any such people as the Hittites, or that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because there was no writing in his day!

With wisdom the church did not wait for these supposed difficulties to be exploded—as actually happened in due time. But instead the church kept its compass and held its saving and savoring course of obedient constancy and faith. Surely all of us here are determined by God's grace to be in this number.

Houghton College

Houghton, New York