

BEEGLE ON THE BIBLE: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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Dewey M. Beegle's *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* (second edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) is an all-out, no-holds-barred, always aggressive, sometimes insidious attack on the truthfulness of Scripture. Its basic thesis, used both as an axiom and as a conclusion, is the occurrence of indubitable errors in the Bible. This thesis is a conclusion when the author cites historical, archaeological and critical inductions to support it. It also serves the author as a premise from which he deduces theological conclusions concerning inspiration, the doctrines of the gospel, the purpose of revelation, the nature of truth and the attributes of God.

These subjects overlap and are repeated many times throughout the book. In spite of such intermixtures a sufficient separation can be made to give the criticism an appearance of logical form.

I. THE PHENOMENA

Discussions on inerrancy in recent years have often distinguished between the theological teaching of the Bible and the so-called phenomena—i. e., historical, chronological, geographical and statistical data. Louis Gaussen in his *Theopneustia* conclusively and overwhelmingly demonstrated that the Bible claims inerrancy. Beegle wishes to disallow this claim on the basis of an inductive study of the phenomena. Of course, if the historical details are wrong, then the Biblical claim to inerrancy is false and is just another error. Thus the issue is joined.

1. *Pekah*

One of these inductive arguments concerns the reign of Pekah as given in 2 Kings 15. It occurs mainly on pp. 180-184 and is used again on pp. 267-268. The general idea is that "for some years now the figure 20 [in verse 27] has been *known* to be wrong," because it does not fit Assyrian records. "Thiele has given sufficient evidence to clinch the matter. . . . Archaeological evidence has confirmed *beyond doubt* [italics mine] that Samaria submitted to the Assyrians in 722. It is *impossible*, then, to give Pekah his twenty years after 739 B. C. . . . II Kings 15:27 states quite unambiguously that Pekah reigned in Samaria twenty years after he became King of Israel, and this is precisely what did not happen" (pp. 180-182). Beegle explicitly rules out all attempts to support the truth of the Biblical text. He *knows* it is wrong; 2 Kings is unambiguously *impossible*; the Bible states *precisely* what did *not* happen.

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One may indeed wonder why the Assyrian records might not be in error instead of 2 Kings. Is this impossible and beyond doubt? As a matter of fact, the Assyrian inscriptions are fragmentary and require restorations. O. T. Allis, *The Old Testament* (pp. 422-424), says, "If the restoration is correct . . . [the scribe] must have been badly informed. . . ." "The two accounts are so different that we may well hesitate to accept the restoration. As to this, Smith tells us, 'In this case it is probable that the Assyrian writer did not know that the crowns had changed hands or that Ahaz and Pekah had more than one name.' " The present writer, admittedly, is in no position to evaluate the details of Assyrian inscriptions. The point is merely that the Assyrian material may contain error, rather than the Bible. However, there is more to be said.

Harold Lindsell in his *Battle for the Bible*, though he did not want to burden his book with lengthy archaeological details, chose the case of Pekah as an example. To understand both Lindsell and Beegle, one must know that the latter largely depended on the work of Edwin R. Thiele. The following quotation from Lindsell ought to be lengthy enough for the present purpose, but the public would do well to read the whole section and the whole book.

"Thiele wrestled with this problem in his doctoral dissertation. In 1951 his book *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* . . . brought order out of chaos as Thiele managed to reconcile the chronologies in such a way as to enforce the claim to accuracy of the biblical texts. Unfortunately he ran into an apparently irresolvable problem in the case of Pekah." It is on this basis that Beegle claims infallible certainty that the Bible is in error. "Since that time Edwin R. Thiele has published an article entitled *Coregencies and Overlapping Reigns Among the Hebrew Kings* in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. In this article Dr. Thiele has given the key to the Pekah problem. And Beegle's claim that Scripture has erred falls to the ground. Where Beegle went wrong was to assume that 2 Kings 15:27 was intended to mean that Pekah reigned twenty years in Samaria. At first glance, it appears to say that. But ironically the key to the problem falls in line with one of the claims of the historical-critical school, which argues that we must ask what the writer intended to say." Here follow two paragraphs of detail which should be studied in Lindsell's book and still more in Thiele's. "Thiele concludes that there are no longer any problems connected with the chronology of Kings and that the biblical data are shown to be accurate" (pp. 172-173).

The case of Pekah will be the only archaeological difficulty examined here. Now comes an example from historical criticism, after which a conclusion will be drawn relative to these so-called phenomena of Scripture.

2. Jude

This historical point on which Beegle convicts the Bible of indubitable error concerns the epistle of Jude. This seems to be an important point for Beegle, since he mentions it in at least six different places. As a

previous paragraph said, Beegle repeats, overlaps, and merges his points. On this subject two verses in particular engage his attention. Verse 9 refers to Michael's contention with Satan about the body of Moses, and verse 14 is Enoch's prophecy of our Lord's second advent. The argument is that Jude used apocryphal or pseudepigraphal books, that Jude asserts Enoch to be the seventh from Adam, that the writer Enoch lived around 200 B. C., and that therefore Jude is in error. "*Without question* Jude got his quotation from a copy of the book of I Enoch" (p. 177). "Tradition generally solved the problem by claiming that Jude's source was oral tradition. . . . This attempt . . . has proved to be baseless, however."

The crux of the matter is that inerrancy would have prevented Jude from placing the source of his quotation before the flood, when in fact it was only two hundred years old.

To this a twofold reply can be made. First, however plausible it seems that Jude quoted the apocryphal 1 Enoch, it is not quite "without question" as Beegle claims. Nor has anyone disproved the possibility of oral tradition. Until such proof is produced, inerrancy is unaffected. Secondly, inerrancy is also unaffected even if Jude had read and quoted 1 Enoch. The OT itself mentions non-canonical books of an earlier age that correctly report some events, from which books the writers of the OT may have taken some information. One example is the Book of Jashar (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18). Hence it is possible that 1 Enoch reports an oral tradition of what Enoch the seventh from Adam said, and that the original Enoch actually said it. There is no reason, no proof, that this is not the case. In fact, Jude's explicit designation "the seventh from Adam" can easily be understood as Jude's warning that the quotation's origin was not in 200 B. C. Thus the correctness of Jude's assertion is not "untenable," as Beegle thinks. The conclusion that Jude "without doubt" made a mistake is a result of fallacious logic.

The case of Michael's disputation with Satan is similar. Beegle seems to say that since Joshua never referred to the event it could not have happened. Of course, Beegle does not say it so crudely. He states, "There is no biblical reason, aside from Jude's allusion, for believing in the actuality of the story" (p. 180). But the orthodox doctrine of inspiration regards Jude's allusion as a quite sufficient *Biblical* reason for believing. Even if Beegle had said there is no extra-Biblical reason, his argument would have been logically fallacious. Events which in the nineteenth century had no extra-Biblical evidence in their favor are now supported by more recent discoveries. But the account is and was true apart from such corroboration.

In the case of Michael, Beegle asks the rhetorical question, "What becomes of the doctrine of inerrancy?" The obvious answer is that it remains unaffected.

Let it not be thought that the present writer has any hopes of an historical confirmation of the affair between Michael and Satan. If someone should find such a document, the liberals would not believe the story anyway. Treating the story as an error seems *a priori* plausible

in this twentieth century because of the widespread disbelief in the supernatural. Karl Barth must deny the empty tomb. Bultmann finds nothing but existentialism in the demythologized NT. Satan is a superstition; angels are fairies. But if one rejects modern scientism and believes the Bible, the book of Jude poses no problem for inerrancy.

Pekah and Jude are the only two "phenomena" necessary to discuss here. In these examples, however, deeper problems are involved. Hence some remarks on historiography and the logic of archaeological argumentation are appropriate.

3. *Historiographical Considerations*

Beegle was willing to assert the inerrancy of Thiele's early trouble with Pekah. Lindsell seems to think that Thiele's later investigations are correct. Now, in the nineteenth century Leopold von Ranke claimed to write history *wie es eigentlich gewesen*—"as it actually was." In those days scholars almost universally accepted von Ranke's position. But historiography has advanced in the twentieth century to the point at which most historians consider all history tentative. Objectivity is impossible, and reconstructions are always possible.¹ Therefore everyone must be prepared to admit that Thiele's later views may contain some errors. Beegle might take comfort in this, but his argument is none the less eviscerated, for he needs an infallible historian to convict the Bible of error. He permits not the slightest doubt that the Bible is mistaken. The destructive critics are inerrant; and evangelicals, imposing their own *a priori* ideas on a Scripture passage that contradicts them, are intellectually dishonest. Beegle exhibits his sense of superiority in saying, "It is quite evident that the advocates of inerrancy and infallibility have been conveniently deaf to the truth of the matter because of the upsetting consequences inherent in the facts" (p. 298).

Let it be noted, in case Beegle or anyone else should miss the point, that evangelicals, defined historically as those who hold to *sola scriptura* and *sola fide*, do not assert the truth of 2 Kings on the basis of Assyrian inscriptions; nor do they assert the truth of Satan and Michael, or David and Daniel, on the basis of archaeological or historical investigations. Evangelicals assert the inerrancy of the whole Bible on the ground of its own claims. The Biblical teaching is *axiomatic*. It is not deduced from previous external axioms.

But this does not make evangelicals "conveniently blind." They are very happy to face the "facts" of Assyrian inscriptions and other archaeological debris. But what they find in them is neither proof nor disproof of Biblical infallibility. What they find in them is *ad hominem* arguments discomfiting to the liberals—no more, no less. Of course, evangelicals have *a priori* axioms. The liberals also depend on indemonstrable assertions. Every philosophic system must have a starting point, or else it does not start. But sometimes the liberals talk as if they had discovered "facts" without starting from historiographical assumptions.

¹G. H. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious*, pp. 126-178.

II. LOGICAL FALLACIES

In the process of attacking the truthfulness of the Bible, Beegle of necessity must go beyond the "bare facts"; he must state the doctrine he opposes, and he must construct arguments. This second section now examines some of these procedures.

1. *Nelson Glueck*

The case of Nelson Glueck comes first, not by virtue of any logical priority over the succeeding points but simply because it connects so directly with the preceding archaeological and historical material.

On pp. 223-224 Beegle considers the evangelical contention that so many of the errors alleged by the liberals (such as the assertion that writing had not yet been invented when Moses was supposed to have written the Pentateuch, and the denial that there had ever been a Hittite nation) have turned out not to be errors at all—that very likely, at least very possibly, the present unsolved problems will not turn out to be errors either. In partial support of this view evangelicals have recently cited the Reform Jewish scholar Nelson Glueck, who said, "It is worth emphasizing that in all this work no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single, properly understood Biblical statement."²

Beegle's reply is a study in liberal evasion. Beegle "questioned Glueck personally. The latter made it quite plain that he had no intention of supporting the doctrine of inerrancy. . . . He cannot be claimed as a champion of the doctrine of inerrancy" (pp. 223-224).

But no one claimed that Glueck was a champion of inerrancy. The claim is that Glueck, as a scholarly liberal Jewish professor, and other liberals too, have acknowledged that "no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single, properly understood Biblical statement." Since this is so, since the liberal attacks have uniformly failed in the past, the evangelical can reasonably hope that the next attack will fail also. If the Bible were so inaccurate as Astruc, Wellhausen, Driver, Snaith, von Rad and Beegle have been claiming, should not a hundred, or at least a dozen, errors have been established by now—really without doubt? But Glueck acknowledges that not even a single error has been established. Therefore Beegle has no scholarly basis for his dogmatic insistence that orthodox theologians are dishonest. Nor can he exclude their expectation that future alleged errors will prove to be truths.

In the nature of the case archaeology never will be able to prove that the Bible is inerrant. Too many cultural or historical minutiae are beyond recall, not to mention the utterly foreign sphere of theological doctrine. But only an inerrant critic can expect to prove that the Bible errs.

2. *Pindar*

To discredit the doctrine of inerrancy, Beegle discovers its source in Greek poetry. "Homer . . . invokes the inspiration of the Muses . . .

²*Horizon* 2/2 (November 1959) 6.

to carry out his poetic work. . . . Hesiod describes a dream in which the Muses come to him. . . . Pindar repeatedly credits the Muses with being the true authors of the form and content of his Odes. The philosopher Parmenides . . . outdoes Hesiod. . . . Democritus held that the poet's inspiration came from outside himself while his rational powers were suspended, as in sleep" (p. 127). "Although the rabbis in Palestine were not interested in philosophy as such, their interpretation hinged on the precise wording of the text, so the need for a more authoritative doctrine of inspiration led them to accept the Greek concept of inerrancy" (p. 131). "Tradition accepted the biblical emphasis that God initiated the revelatory process, but one of the unanswered problems was that of authorship. Was God the author of Scripture as well as the originator? If so, what part did man play? Some, like Athenagoras, thought completely in terms of the Greek theory of inspiration where the deity dictates the message to his passive human instrument" (p. 198).

Surely this is an argument of defective scholarship. What documents can Beegle offer to show that the Greek poets claimed inerrancy or a verbally dictated message? What evidence is there that the Jewish rabbis took their theology from Homer or Hesiod? Beegle gives no references, which he ought to have done for such an important assertion; therefore a critic can only quote a few sample paragraphs. The following come from Pindar: Olympian Ode I, lines 111 ff.: "For myself the Muse is keeping a shaft most mighty in strength"; III, lines 2 ff.: "While I order my song . . . the Muse stood beside me, when I found out a fashion . . . by fitting to the Dorian measure the voice of festive revellers"; X, lines 3 ff.: "Do thou, O muse, and also truth, the daughter of Zeus . . . put an end to the blame for a broken promise"; Pythian Ode I, line 58: "I would bid my Muse also stand beside Deinomenes, while she loudly praiseth the guerdon won by the chariot of four horses"; Isthmian Ode VII, lines 38 ff.: "The Upholder of the earth has given me fair weather after storm. I shall sing with my hair entwined with garlands. Let not the envy of the immortals disturb me."

The fallacious logic of using Homer, Hesiod and Pindar as the source of the doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture can be seen not only in Gausson's careful study of the Biblical claims but also, if we wish to talk of poets, in a later poet of note: "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste / Brought death into the world and all our woe / . . . Sing, heavenly Muse."

Therefore Milton claimed that God had dictated to him every word of *Paradise Lost*!

3. *Papal Infallibility*

Another of the phenomena of Beegle's text, though not of major importance, is his repeated references to papal infallibility. In about ten sections Beegle discusses Roman Catholicism. This seems a little much, but the subject is not inappropriate in a general treatment of inerrancy. The use Beegle makes of popes, as one may expect, is of no great use

to Protestants; but neither is it of much help to Beegle's argument. He somewhat merges or compares the two forms of inerrancy, or at least does not keep them rigidly distinct, with the aim of condemning inerrancy in general. But from a logical point of view a successful refutation of one form of inerrancy may leave another form untouched. Romanism takes both the pope and the Bible as infallible. Orthodox Protestants insist that the pope contradicts the Bible, and on this basis one of the infallibilities must fall. But the other need not. Such an objection therefore is inapplicable to Protestants, who acknowledge only one infallibility.

4. *False in All*

Increasing awareness of the difficulties facing the doctrine of inerrancy, says Beegle, meets with "a reluctance to make the change on account of the haunting fear implicit in the legal maxim, 'False in one, false in all'" (p. 219). Beegle admits that perjury discredits a witness in court, but adds, "In no case is this legal rule of thumb adhered to rigidly in the courts. On what authority, then, must this be applied with absolute consistency to the Scriptures?"

Laelius Socinus is supposed to have been the first to introduce this legal maxim into theology. His nephew, Faustus Socinus, continued it. Yet Beegle admits that Socinus did not accept the maxim, "False in one, false in all," literally. Rather it was that "if a person could doubt concerning one passage, there was no reason why he could not doubt concerning all of them" (p. 220). It is this latter principle therefore that Beegle ought to refute, if he wishes to have some faith in an erroneous Bible.

But Beegle commingles the two different statements so as to discredit the latter by destroying the former. The former means that a document with one mistake in it can contain no true statement at all. The other means that if a man is guilty of perjury, no one can accept his other statements on his sole authority but must search out independent witnesses. Beegle confuses these two and deprecates the disjunction, "Either the autographs were inerrant or else human fallibility infected all of Scripture. Consistency would permit no mediating point of view. Even John Wesley resorted to this argument in later life [Did he earlier believe that the Bible taught falsehoods?]. . . and so retorted, 'Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from God'" (pp. 220-221).

But Wesley and the disjunction are correct, and Beegle must acknowledge it. This whole liberal attack on the Bible stresses the fact that men wrote the Bible, and men can err. On the liberal's own principles, therefore, "human fallibility infected all of Scripture." To err is human; Beegle himself says so. "To conceive of an absolute inerrancy as the effect of inspiration was not really to believe that God had condescended to the human sphere."

Right here let it be interjected that there is no reason to accept Beegle's arbitrary view of condescension.

Now, to continue the quotation: "A human literature containing no error would indeed be a contradiction in terms, since nothing is more human than to err" (p. 302). Hence Beegle must agree that on his grounds human fallibility infects the Scriptures from beginning to end. For this reason Bible believers insist not that if one statement is false all must be, but that if one statement is false the others may be.

A consequence of this is that reliance must be placed in Assyrian inscriptions and other criteria external to the Scripture. How then can Beegle show that the doctrine of the Trinity or Christ's propitiatory sacrifice is not an error?

5. *Indefectibility*

The topic, "false in one, false in all," and the quotation adduced merge into a discussion of inerrancy, infallibility and indefectibility (p. 302). In fact it is best to give the same quotation again in extended form.

The terms "inerrancy" and "infallibility" are absolutes that actually apply only to God. "Instead," Vawter declares, "we should think of inspiration as always a positive divine and human interaction in which the principle of condescension has been taken at face value. To conceive of an absolute inerrancy as the effect of inspiration was not really to believe that God had condescended to the human sphere but rather that he transmuted it into something else. A human literature containing no error would indeed be a contradiction in terms, since nothing is more human than to err. Put in more vital terms, if the Scripture is a record of revelation, the acts of a history of salvation in which God has disclosed Himself by entering into the ways of man, it must be a record of trial and error as well as of achievement, for it is in this way that man learns and comes to the truth."

This paragraph, quoted in its entirety, is an excellent example of the methods of propaganda. In it are half truths, statements that believers believe to be false, *a priori* philosophic assumptions, and bad logic.

The first sentence, which ascribes infallibility to God alone, may or may not be true. First, one must distinguish between persons and documents. If infallibility is ascribed to persons, and if infallibility means that the person has never made and never will make an error, then infallibility belongs to God alone, unless we wish to include the righteous angels also. On the other hand, if infallibility is asserted of a document, then it means merely that that document teaches no error. Believers believe that such is the case with the Bible. Believers do not believe that Isaiah and Paul never made false assertions. Paul clearly made many before his conversion; nor do we say he never made any afterward. We do not attribute infallibility to Paul. It is the Biblical text that is infallible. Nor need one insist that the Bible is the only infallible book. A first-grade arithmetic book may be infallible or inerrant. There is no reason to insist that a few pages of elementary arithmetic must contain a mistake simply because they were written by a human being. Thus in the first sentence the quoted paragraph is deceptive, indeed false, and by implication misrepresents conservative theology. Clearly,

therefore, the conclusion that is then based on it cannot command assent.

The second sentence of the quotation is vague and ambiguous. Inspiration may well be "a positive divine and human interaction"; but "positive" means little, and interactions occur in various forms. Does the author intend to say that the doctrine of inerrancy denies a positive divine interaction between Paul and God? Even the crassest form of dictation theory would not make such a denial. "Face value" also is meaningless by itself. No doubt the third sentence is supposed to determine the meaning. It is a definition, partial or negative, of inspiration, inerrancy and condescension. The previous subhead pointed out the arbitrary non-Biblical nature of this definition. But further, inerrancy, says the author, not only denies divine condescension; it also means that God has transmuted the human sphere into something non-human. This implies that neither Paul nor an author of an arithmetic textbook could be a human being, if he wrote two pages without an error.

If the premises of Beegle's argument are not *a priori*, alien assumptions, imposed on Scripture, he should be able to show their Scriptural justification. The present writer is convinced he cannot do this; and every reader must agree that he did not do it.

Beyond these considerations something more profound in theology is also involved. Beegle has asserted that error and human nature are inseparable. The Bible, however, says that this is not so. Before the fall Adam was human, but he did not sin and therefore, however ignorant he may have been, he did not err—he made no false assertions. Errorless speech or errorless writing and human nature do not form a contradiction in terms. If perchance God condescended to tell Adam that two plus two are four, or if he told them that eating the forbidden fruit would bring death and all our woe into the world, and if perchance Adam had written this down on a piece of birch bark, would this action of writing have made the propositions false? Furthermore, how could this have transmuted the human Adam into something non-human?

But Beegle has an easy way out of all these difficulties. Since the Bible is so erroneous, Adam never existed.

However and nonetheless, another difficulty looms. When we all get to heaven, or at least when some of us do, will we still be human beings and therefore continue to exemplify the maxim, "To err is human"?

The last sentence of the quoted paragraph contains another definitional statement which no one need accept, plus an irrelevancy that befogs the issue. "If Scripture is a record of revelation" is partly definitional and partly befogging. Conservative evangelicals—that is, those who accept the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* instead of *scriptura et assyriana*—are glad to agree that God revealed himself in conversation with Abraham. Moses then wrote a "record of revelation." But the paragraph is deceptive in that it wishes to restrict the revelation not perhaps to God's *conversation* but to his *encounter* with Abraham. Evangelicals insist that the Bible is itself revelation, not just an erroneous record of a previous unwritten or unspoken revelation. Since we thus reject the if-clause, the conclusion does not convince us. In

addition, a record of God's dealings with man surely would contain accounts of men's sins and errors, as the writer says. But this is utterly irrelevant. Of course Abram was less than gallant when he told Pharaoh that Sarai was his sister. And David's sin was enormous. What is relevant, however, is the truth or falsity of the so-called record. To say that all saints sin does not imply that the record is erroneous. But such is the fallacious reasoning of the writer.

The quoted paragraph therefore imposes a non-Biblical *a priori* philosophy on the Scriptures; it deals in half truths and ambiguities; it lays down arbitrary definitions no one need accept; and its logic is fallacious.

6. Error

In his unceasing effort to belittle Bible-believing Christians, Beegle becomes ludicrous. After his insistence on errors in the Bible, he charges his opponents with an inability to define error.

On pp. 148-149 he writes, "The doctrine of inerrancy is a negative statement with the specific intent of protecting God and his Written Word." No doubt Beegle relies on the negative effect of the term "negative" to stimulate a negative reaction in his readers. Error is negative. Beegle is very positive that it is negative. But then every negative proposition can also be expressed positively—in this case, "Everything the Bible asserts is true." However, to continue the quotation, "The early adherents had no idea how complex and multifaceted the term 'error' was. They *naively* thought that the Bible had no deviation from absolute truth. . . ." Well, it seems that they had a fairly clear notion of "error" after all. Luther and Quenstedt were hardly puzzled by the term "mistake" when they declared that the prophets and apostles made no mistake, even in historical and geographical or other incidental details. At any rate, if Beegle can so easily identify errors in the Bible, why should Bible believers have such difficulties in knowing what the word "error" means?

Then Beegle adds another thought by which he hopes to reduce the inspiration of the autographs to the level of the alleged "inspiration" of the copies, with the result that erroneous documents may be regarded as "inspired": ". . . no deviation from absolute truth, and of course by Scripture they meant the copies at hand." Calvin certainly never meant the copies at hand. He explicitly mentioned scribal errors as opposed to the original text. But Beegle is certain that Paul attributed inspiration to the copies of the OT then in circulation, and he quotes 2 Tim 3:16 to prove it (p. 164). Again, he says, "Paul's use of *theopneustos* in 2 Timothy 3:16 applies to the manuscript copies of his day. In verse 15 Paul refers to 'the sacred writings' with which Timothy had been acquainted from his childhood. But what were these writings? The Hebrew, or the Septuagint, or both" (p. 170). Presumably Beegle would also conclude that Jesus, when he said, "It is written," meant to assert the infallibility of current manuscripts. But if Calvin, or any

half-educated evangelical today with reasonable knowledge of textual variants, can recommend "the Word of God written" and perhaps hold up some contemporary version for the congregation to see, without burdening his sermon with discussions of variants and versions, then Paul could also refer to "the holy Scriptures" without implying the inerrancy of the extant manuscripts. Beegle's ponderous and pedantic requirements do not apply to Billy Graham, or to Calvin, or to Paul. Let the point be clear: There is no need to discuss textual criticism in every sermon that mentions the Word of God.

7. *Et Alia*

In order that the number of these subheads may not rise unreasonably, but also that no one may suspect or assert the omission of anything crucial, a few other points will barely be mentioned. These with the six preceding are examples of logical deficiencies in Beegle's argument.

First, he reasons that if our defective copies are sufficient for the spread of Christianity there never was need for an inerrant autograph.

Two replies are at hand. One, any liberal argument based on textual criticism is considerably exaggerated. The great majority of variants are trivial, and someone has estimated that only one word in a thousand changes the sense. However, this does not perfectly answer the liberal position. It is better to point out that a copy of an inerrant original, though defective one thousandth of the time, is infinitely superior to an absolutely perfect reproduction of original falsehoods.

Two, when Beegle says that defective copies are sufficient, one must ask, "Sufficient for what?" Admittedly, the uneducated preaching of circuit riders often produced gracious results. But it would be unfortunate if Christianity itself had no better foundation than frontier preachers. Unless the foundation be truth, absolute truth as Beegle terms it on p. 148, there is no reason to receive the message.

Beegle next asserts that an appeal to inerrant autographs is impossible because as a general rule there never was an autograph. Not to mention that Jeremiah's prophecy was shredded and burnt, Paul regularly dictated his letters and added only a few lines in his own hand (p. 152). On this basis we may conclude that Beegle never checked his typists' work and that the book was published without his ever having seen the galley sheets and page proofs.

Another example, not of fallacious argumentation but of the absence of argument, is his contention that evangelicals never can explain how God could keep an author from making a mistake. Says Beegle, "All the creedal statements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries . . . neither elaborated nor reconciled the divine and human elements of Scripture in any systematic way. . . . John Wesley . . . , Irenaeus . . . , Gausson defined inspiration as 'that inexplicable power which the Divine Spirit put forth of old on the authors of Holy Scripture in order to their guidance even in the employment of the words they used. . . . Although admitting that he could not explain how the full activity of God and

of man were possible at the same time in Scripture, Gausson asserted, 'There, all the words are man's; as there too, all the words are God's' (pp. 145-146).

This is merely a report that certain theologians could not *fully* explain inspiration. There are lots of things we cannot fully explain. One may ask whether there is anything at all we can fully explain. But the case of Absalom, even if the text does not explain how, shows that God causes men to think as they do. God caused Absalom to think that Hushai's bad military advice was good.

One may also note that men cannot explain how God created the world. The reason is that there was no *how*. Creation was not a process to be described. God spoke, and it was done. The initial creation was instantaneous. Inspiration too, though not instantaneous, is none the less direct. Various ideas pass through the mind of the prophet, and God directly causes him to write down some and not others.

The reason Beegle finds this to be an insuperable objection to inerrancy is that he has a poor idea of omnipotence and also does not believe the Bible when it teaches that God controls our every thought. He caused Absalom to think error; he caused Moses and Paul to think truth. As they thought, so they spoke or wrote. "Who hath made man's mouth . . . ? Have not I, the Lord? . . . I will teach thee what to say." If a person accepts the Scriptural teaching on the sovereignty of God and his absolute predestination of all his creatures and all their actions, Beegle's words seem only lamentable.³

The concurrence of the divine and human also occurs in the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity. Bible believers have often argued that if a theologian accepts the deity of Christ he cannot consistently reject inerrancy. The reason is that a sinless Christ is an example of such concurrence more stupendous than the errorless writings of an apostle.

Beegle rejects this argument. To disparage it, he seems to imply that Warfield's distinguishing between incarnation and inspiration compromises the argument. However, no compromise is visible. Of course inspiration and incarnation are not identical; but if the second Person can become man without sin, the lesser miracle of Paul's inerrancy is all the more possible.

To escape this *a fortiori* argument Beegle denies that error is sin: "Sin is in man a disorder that error is not" (p. 290). This is another case of the imposition on the Bible of an alien assumption. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Sin begins in wrong thinking. No doubt, as with external actions some thoughts are more sinful than others. A decision to steal is not so heinous as a decision to murder, but both thoughts are sins. A still more heinous sin would be to declare falsely that such and such a doctrine is the word of God, spoken by the Holy Spirit,

³Cf. G. H. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, pp. 117-119; *Biblical Predestination*, passim; "Fundamentals of the Faith," *Revealed Religion* (ed. C. F. H. Henry) chap. 1.

through the mouth of David. If what Luke said is false, then he was a great sinner and the Bible is untrustworthy.

The last of these *et alia* is the strange accusation that the doctrine of inerrancy is a deduction from the Biblical conception of God, whereas one's view of Scripture should be an induction from the so-called phenomena: "The inductive method . . . is an honest approach" (p. 19); it contrasts with "arbitrary" definitions (p. 30); deduction is subsidiary.

The verse from which evangelicals deduced inerrancy was, according to Beegle, "God is not man that he should lie" (Num 23:19). The syllogism was: "God is perfect, God revealed himself in the autographs, therefore the autographs had to be inerrant" (p. 156). This idea is repeated on p. 198. Later he adds: "Because God did not override some biblical writers in their use of erroneous sources does not mean that God is a liar. He can hardly be charged with the defects of the human instruments and their sources" (p. 265).

Now in the first place, Beegle's method is not inductive. It is as deductive as any other. All valid argument must be deductive, for induction is a fallacy. The Westminster Confession is right when it says, "The whole counsel of God . . . is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture. . ." (I, vi).

The important point now is from what premises Beegle's deduction starts. The evangelical starts with Scripture, but Beegle's argument is: The Assyrian inscriptions contradict the Bible; the Assyrian inscriptions must be right; therefore the Bible is wrong. Granted, the argument is perfectly valid; deduction is an honest method of arguing. But no evangelical admits the second of the two premises.

The evangelical premise is, "God cannot lie." We have no objection to or apology for this verse in Numbers. We do object to the resulting impression that this is the only verse on which to base inerrancy. Gausen gives a hundred or more. To ignore all these may hide them from uneducated readers, but it does not diminish their logical force.

Again, we agree that God "can hardly be charged with the defects" of the authors—unless God guaranteed the truth of what they wrote. And that is precisely what God did. One of Gausen's hundred verses is, "Thou, God . . . , by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David, said. . . ." This is what God said, and the God of truth cannot lie.

III. THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

The second part of this study has analyzed several instances of fallacious reasoning. In doing so it was inevitable that some theology had to be included, for the fallacies were committed on theological material. But now it is necessary to make theology the direct object of attention, for here the fundamental motivations are revealed.

1. *The Purpose of the Bible*

Obviously Beegle must assign to the Bible a purpose consistent with

its alleged errors. How does he determine what that purpose is? Does he determine it by what the Bible says, errors and all? Or does he impose a purpose borrowed from a non-Christian philosophy? The evangelical ought also to determine the purpose of the Bible. His method is clear, but his use of the method and the results must nonetheless be evaluated. In either case, this is no simple affair; it embraces quite a complex of problems—for example, the value of doctrine as distinct from history, or the value of “encounter” or “experience” as distinct from both. Underlying these obviously important matters is the very nature of truth itself. But before penetrating the profoundest recesses of philosophy the discussion will begin on a more commonplace level.

To determine what the purpose of the Bible is we should look at the Bible, rather than imposing on it unsupported *a priori* principles. In one place Beegle seems to do this: God’s “purpose is that his creatures come to the truth . . .” (p. 294). As quoted this is a very good statement. As used by Beegle, however, it implies that a certain amount of the Bible frustrates God’s purpose because those parts of the Bible are not true but false. Now Beegle may want to restrict the errors to only a few trivial matters. Yet for one thing, restricting the number of errors to a very few does not solve Beegle’s problem; for if it is God’s purpose to bring men to the truth, even one error in the Bible would frustrate that purpose. For another thing, Beegle never explains the method of restriction, nor even how to distinguish between important and trivial. If Pekah is a mistake, maybe justification by faith is a mistake too. How can Beegle determine which doctrines, if any, are the truth to which God wants to bring man? Similarly with trivialities. If Pekah is trivial, are not the contents of Numbers and 2 Chronicles also trivialities? Perhaps all history and doctrine are trivial, and neither the one nor the other is God’s truth.

The evangelical will agree that the purpose of the Bible is to present us with the truth. To give content to this very general principle, the evangelical appeals to the “phenomena” of the Bible. Beegle dare not object to an appeal to the phenomena. These phenomena include Numbers 20 and Judges 10. Or, upon our recommendation the reader may open his Bible and read the remarkable chapter, Genesis 36. What is the purpose of Genesis 36? One might facetiously say that God included that chapter in his revelation for the express purpose of refuting Beegle’s theory. Nor is this altogether facetious. Genesis 36 shows that God places a value on historical information. To assign to the Bible a purpose that would make half of it useless is to impose an alien, secular *a priori* on the sacred text. The purpose of Scripture should be discovered in it, not imposed on it.

Even so, people who rely on common opinion may with a show of plausibility maintain that Pekah and the dukes of Edom are trivialities, and on that basis they may excuse Beegle for not explicitly distinguishing the trivial from the important. But common opinion, unless extremely liberal, would deny that historical information concerning Christ’s resurrection is unimportant. Does Beegle believe in the resurrection? Further, common opinion among Protestants, until recently, has ac-

knowledge and emphasized the importance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The questions therefore are: Are justification and the resurrection essential to Christianity, and are they true? These most serious questions Beegle refuses to answer: "Is there an authority that can tell a man what he has to believe and what he must do? No, there is not! That is an old-fashioned notion best gotten rid of..." (p. 301). It is true that Beegle tries to modify the impression these words make: "On the objective side, Scripture becomes the basis of appeal in all matters pertaining to the content of faith and the practice of Christian living." In a moment something will be said about faith and practice, but here let it be noted that no method of procedure, no directions as to how to appeal, no definite application of Scripture to a problem receives explanation. This failure is admitted and compounded by Beegle's use of Bright's words, "Let the right of each free individual to believe what he will without let or hindrance or threat of coercion, by all means be granted." Bright and Beegle then agree that the Church need not regard one belief as much Christian as another; but apparently there is nothing the Church can do about it if one of its ministers repudiates predestination, justification or the Trinity.

To return for a moment to the matter of historical information, can the Church require its ministers to believe and to preach that the resurrection of Christ was an actual occurrence on the third day? Karl Barth scoffs at the empty grave. Bultmann mythologizes everything. Does Beegle also deny the resurrection? In reply to Bultmann Beegle says, "Yet surely something happened" (p. 57). How true; surely the sun rose that Easter morning, and sunrise is something. Beegle does indeed propose several objections to Barth, Brunner and Bultmann (pp. 57-60). Marxsen finds no historical evidence of a resurrection; he finds evidence only of the apostles' belief in a resurrection. But he cannot accept their view literally, and this Biblical interpretation cannot be the basis of faith today; belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus is unfounded (pp. 60-61). Beegle then "concurs with him in acknowledging that the biblical passages dealing with the resurrection *swarm* with difficulties," though there is an "historical core" behind the erroneous accounts. Pannenberg sounds much more orthodox (p. 62); but what does Beegle believe? Is the resurrection another Biblical error? Instead of giving a straightforward answer, Beegle hides under a page of obfuscating verbiage, the clearest sentence of which is, "Neither this writer nor any other Christian has the authority to declare that Marxsen cannot possibly have genuine faith because he cannot bring himself to believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus" (p. 63).

Not any other Christian? What about the apostle Paul in 1 Cor 15:14-17?

This makes it clear that on Beegle's view Scripture establishes neither doctrine nor history. It is also as little the norm of practice and conduct. Those contemporary theologians who try to salvage a role for Scripture by limiting its purpose to faith and practice misunderstand faith and twist practice to suit their liberal theology. Paul K. Jewett acknowledges that the NT forbids the ordination of women. Is ordination a matter

of practice? It has been practiced for many centuries. Jewett, however, holds that Paul was mistaken as to the role of women in the Church because of his cultural conditioning. But if ordination is not a case of practice, how can one define practice?

Such are the questions that plausible phraseology and irrelevant remarks never answer. God's purpose is left vague. When Beegle asserts that errant texts are sufficient for faith and practice (p. 151), he cannot tell us what parts of the Bible are matters of faith as opposed to superstition and what parts are ethically normative as opposed to being culturally conditioned. To be specific, he excludes not only the Levitical law from the category of revelation but also Paul's opinions in 1 Cor 7:25 (pp. 70-72). Paul's opinions are temporary "secondary" or derivative revelation; but Einstein's mathematics is "primary" revelation (p. 73).

Such a view negates one of Beegle's most warmhearted sentences. "Many Christians, recognizing the untenable nature of the theory of inerrancy, have maintained a warm vital faith with deep concern for Scripture" (p. 285). Warm, no doubt; but its persuasiveness evaporates when one asks, "If such a faith is warm and vital, is it also Biblical and Christian?" Even the most radical critics show a deep but not a Christian concern for Scripture.

The question of purpose is inseparable from that of doctrine and truth. Faith and practice are not themselves bad terms, but when left unexplained they are vague and ambiguous. Liberals exclude much of Genesis, Job, and half of Isaiah from the faith. Bible believers, on the other hand, insist that God purposed to give us all the information the Scriptures contain. The liberal view minimizes doctrine as well as history. Conservatives want all of both.

Note Beegle's disparagement of the Reformation's stress on doctrine. Because of doctrine and the absence of love—Beegle seems quite sure that the Protestants were loveless people—"during the seventeenth century—a century filled with wars—the Protestant theologians often fought viciously" (p. 40). How can Beegle so ignore the vicious Romish persecution of Protestants? What about the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, threatening a second Bartholomew's massacre? Does Beegle condemn Cromwell for protecting the Protestants in Savoy? Does he condone the cruelty of Jeffries and the efforts of James II to force Romanism on England and his persecutions and massacres under Claverhouse in Scotland? This is a tawdry way to besmirch heroes of the faith in their defense of doctrine, truth, and their very lives.

2. *Truth*

Beegle no doubt dislikes the Puritans and the Covenanters, but the reason for his dislike and the object of his main attack is their fidelity to Biblical doctrine and their idea that God reveals information. He has a different notion of "truth" and "revelation," if it can still be called truth and revelation. For Beegle the Bible is not a revelation from God. Revelation is not doctrine, nor is it history either. "Proposi-

tional truths, like doctrines, cannot be considered revelation because they cannot save" (p. 46). Since therefore most of the Bible—exceptions being (1) the imperatives of the Ten Commandments, which nonetheless can be put into propositional form, and (2) lyrical ascriptions of praise, which can also be similarly translated—is propositional, most of it has not been revealed by God. To support his dialectical neo-orthodox views, he quotes from three distinguished authors.

First, Baillie says: "We speak of a man's revealing himself, that is, his character and mind and will . . . , but we also sometimes speak of a man's revealing to his fellow certain items of knowledge other than knowledge of himself. . . . According to the Bible, what is revealed to us is not a body of information concerning various things of which we might otherwise be ignorant. If it is information at all, it is information concerning the nature and mind and purpose of God—that and nothing else. Yet in the last resort it is not information about God that is revealed, but very God himself incarnate in Jesus Christ our Lord" (p. 41).

BeeGLE also quotes Dodd with approval: "Jesus was primarily concerned not with delivering 'doctrine,' but with making men anew. . . . Similarly the most important thing we find in the Bible is not 'doctrine' but something that helps us into a new attitude to God and life" (p. 42). Then Brunner: "Divine revelation is not a book or a doctrine; the Revelation is God himself in his self-manifestation within history."

These three quotations agree in drawing a sharp distinction between a man's, or God's, revelation of himself and his revelation of information. Baillie's terms were "items of knowledge other than knowledge of himself" versus a revelation of "his character and mind and will." So stated, this is a triviality. Of what use is it to say that Bob can tell Jack the score of a football game (mere information), or that he can tell him he has a toothache and thinks that pain is evil (not information)? Of course men can talk about themselves or about the daily news. The only way to escape this triviality is to operate on the underlying assumption that "certain items of knowledge other than knowledge of himself" cannot be a revelation of the revealer's "mind and will." This underlying assumption is not well supported. Men who constantly talk about sports and use no subjective psychological analysis in so talking nevertheless reveal their mind, will and values. Such talking gives the hearers some information about the speaker. Thus when God spoke to Job or Cyrus, God revealed himself. But Baillie continues by saying, "According to the Bible, what is revealed to us is not a body of information concerning various things of which we might otherwise be ignorant." This statement is false. It is not "according to the Bible" at all. The Bible in Genesis 16 reveals a family squabble in Abraham's family. This is information the Bible gives us of which we otherwise would surely have been ignorant. 2 Kgs 6:12 shows that Elisha revealed to the king of Israel the words that the king of Syria spoke in his bed-chamber, which words the Lord had revealed to Elisha. Otherwise both Elisha and Jehoram (?) would have been ignorant of the facts. This

is according to the Bible. What Baillie says is according to the Bible is not.

Philosophically, knowledge of a person, his mind and will is itself propositional information. We know a man's mind when we know what he is thinking, and we know God by receiving a statement of his ideas or doctrine. That God is merciful, that he forgives sin, that he is just and punishes the impenitent—these are all propositional pieces of information. If Bob keeps talking about football and never talks about forgiveness, Jack easily understands what sort of person Bob is. This is information.

Beegle, however, wants to exclude information from revelation and restrict the latter to the incarnate Christ. Strange! Where did Beegle get the useless, historical, non-revelational information that Jesus was God incarnate? And to the same end Beegle's Christ-revelation must remain silent, for if Jesus should speak, as he did, he speaks in propositions and reveals information about God. For example, "All manner of blasphemy shall be forgiven . . . but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." This is revealed information concerning the mind of God, of which we otherwise would be ignorant.

The second quotation, the one from Dodd, begins with a false disjunction. He said Jesus was not primarily concerned with doctrine but with making men anew. Now of course Jesus was concerned with making men anew; he told Nicodemus that he must be born again. But though the last half of Dodd's statement is true, the first half is only a half truth. The antithesis is false. Jesus' concern for the new birth does not preclude a concern for doctrine. Indeed, to prepare for Nicodemus' new birth, Jesus rebuked Nicodemus for not understanding some doctrines that a teacher of Israel should have understood. Regeneration and orthodoxy or correct doctrine are indeed different; but as the new life cannot begin without regeneration, so it cannot continue without doctrine. The Holy Spirit raises the elect to newness of life, and God gives to them the gift of faith. That is, God causes them to believe the gospel. The gospel is good news, it is information. Throughout the gospel of John Jesus places great emphasis on doctrine, truth, words. Examples are: "He who hears my doctrine and believes him who sent me has eternal life." "You do not have his word remaining in you." "If anyone keeps my doctrine, he shall not see death, ever!" "If anyone loves me, he will keep my doctrine; he who does not love me does not keep my doctrine." "You are already clean because of the theology I have spoken to you." "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."⁴

This should be sufficient to show that Beegle depends on false disjunctions to support a theory that contradicts the Bible.

Finally, in the third quotation, Brunner said, "Divine revelation is not a book or a doctrine." This certainly is not the Biblical concept

⁴G. H. Clark, *The Johannine Logos*, pp. 40, 41, et passim.

of revelation, for the Bible is a book. What has happened is that these men have imposed an alien theory of truth upon the Bible, by which they rid themselves not only of alleged historical errors but of all information as well. Though Beegle tries to avoid what may appear as the excesses of Brunner, and though both of them attempt to salvage some Christianity, the operation turns out to be a failure. Even Brunner, though in one place he said that "God and the medium of conceptuality are mutually exclusive," makes some room for doctrine. Beegle says, "A minimal amount of theological ideas or teaching is necessary as a prerequisite for true faith" (p. 44). This is a fine statement, but Beegle has vitiated it by excluding information and has left it dangling because he cannot give an example of true doctrine. The Church he talks about can have no doctrinal standards whatever, for there is no criterion and everyone must have the freedom to believe or disbelieve as he pleases. But even if Beegle, without any reason for doing so, could select one particular doctrine as true, the role he assigns it is empty. Note: "There is no assurance that this rational objective truth will lead to or preserve genuine faith" (p. 44). The evangelical will of course say that this belief is itself genuine faith. But Beegle has a different notion of faith. For him faith is not a belief in anything. He calls Brunner to support him: "It is possible to hold correct views of doctrine without faith. . . . It is extremely bad for the church to confuse that which is the gift of the Holy Spirit alone with that which anyone with a good brain can learn at a good college." After another line or two Beegle quotes Brunner again: "It is possible to understand the new message of the apostle Paul completely, intellectually, and logically, and that means theologically, without having real faith. The believer [in inerrancy?], it is true, will reply, 'Then the message has not been rightly understood!'"

But the believer, if he has a fair knowledge of the Bible and average intelligence, will make no such reply at all. The whole series of quotations is full of confusion. To take the last phrase first, the believer will not make the reply that Beegle and Brunner wish to put in his mouth, because *understanding* the doctrine and *believing* the doctrine are two different things. True enough, as the arduous language training of missionaries testifies, it is impossible to believe what is not understood; but it is far from impossible to understand what is not believed. Before his conversion Saul, the persecutor, understood Christian doctrine better than most Christians; but because he did not *believe* it, he persecuted them. Had he not understood, he probably would have merely disliked them. Contrary to the implications of Beegle and Brunner, believers in inerrancy do not quote the New Testament as saying, "Understand and be saved," but "*Believe* and thou shalt have everlasting life."

Understanding may indeed be had by anyone with a good brain at a good college. But faith or belief is the gift of the Holy Spirit alone. It is indeed extremely bad for the Church to confuse natural learning with the supernatural implantation of faith. But faith, unfortunately a Latin term, correctly "*belief*" in Greek, is the belief in the message—a voluntary assent to an *understood* proposition. Christ never disparaged his words or message. The gospel is good information.

3. *Two Kinds of Truth*

Beegle's non-Biblical assumptions go beyond those already discussed. There are other still more fundamental presuppositions, particularly concerning the nature of truth. Early in the book (pp. 17, 53) he advertises a theory of two kinds of knowledge. Between these pages he has a subhead, "Two Kinds of Truth" (p. 42).

Beegle's theory of twofold truth, different from and worse than the medieval theory of the same name, derives not from the Bible but from Soren Kierkegaard (pp. 36 ff.). This Danish theologian (if the term "theologian" can be stretched that far), Karl Barth, and Emil Brunner (at least in his earliest books) exclude all historical information from Christianity. God's revelation is eternal and descends straight down from above to transect the horizontal time line at a point that has no duration. Therefore neither Christ's teaching nor his actions are revelations. Eternal salvation cannot be based on the tentative results of historical investigations. But this is Kierkegaard, not Jesus, John or Paul. It is a theory that deprives us of the Bible completely.

Then, next, prior to Brunner's publications the Jewish scholar Martin Buber had developed Kierkegaard's subjectivity into a distinction between it-truth and thou-truth. Beegle, at least in this book, makes no use of the time-eternity dialectic, but the theory of two sorts of truth is indispensable to his position. The following summary is partly *verbatim*.

"Basic to an understanding of this qualitative distinction between revelation and doctrine is the recognition that there are two different kinds of truth: objective and subjective. Objective truth is rational truth that has to do with" both concrete things and "abstract things in the realm of ideas, values, laws, and culture. Since it is ascertained by means of reason, and thus impersonal in nature, objective truth is referred to as 'it-truth'" (p. 42).

Here the term "impersonal" is pejorative because it connotes an offense to one's personal dignity. It conveys no information, however, and merely tends to create a dislike for whatever is going to be degraded. Neither are the terms "objective" and "subjective" very helpful. Do these mean that a knowledge of arithmetic is objective because arithmetic is an object, while a knowledge of John Doe is subjective because he, as a human being, is a subject and not an object? The distinction between arithmetic and a human being is undeniable, but it hardly fits Beegle's theory. For him subjective truth is personal—not because it is knowledge about a person, but because it is not rational. Whatever "is ascertained by means of reason [is] thus impersonal . . . objective . . . 'it-truth.'"

How can anyone deny that knowledge of persons is rational, intelligible, understandable, and ascertained by reason? If I listen to John Doe as he talks about his politics and religion, about sports and about his favorite restaurants, and if as I listen I think and reason out that he must be a man of such and such a character, then according to

Beegle my knowledge is "impersonal." But if I do not think, do not reason, do not understand, what sort of *knowledge* could I possibly obtain? Irrational knowledge, unintelligible truth, is simply not knowledge or truth at all.

Beegle uses some phraseology in an effort to produce intelligible meaning. "Subjective truth," he says, "... is personal because it involves the heart and happens only between persons." Does he think that rational knowledge happens only between rocks? "The difference," he continues, "... is quite evident even on the level of human love. One can read love stories . . . , but this rational knowledge or 'it-truth' can never be the 'thou-truth' that two people in love experience."

This is very lovely, but it is not very Biblical. In the first place it seems evident that Beegle uses the term "heart" to indicate something other than the mind or reason. Now if one should study the some 750 instances of the word "heart" in the OT, one would find that the meaning is much closer to "reason" or "mind" than to anything else. It is the heart that thinks. Ps 15:2 says, "He speaketh the truth in his heart." Isa 6:10 says, "Lest they . . . understand with their heart." The heart is the organ of thinking and understanding. This "heart knowledge" includes such a thing as having used shavings to start a fire and bake bread (Isa 44:18-19). This is surely impersonal enough to qualify as it-knowledge. Furthermore, the romantic love experience that Beegle depends on is far from the Biblical idea of love. The latter consists in obedience to the law of God. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13:10). This love is a volition, not an emotion. But the romantic "love experience" sometimes turns very quickly to hate. It often induces false beliefs, predictions and anticipations. It is undependable for a correct understanding of the person loved. It is so far from anything that should be called knowledge that a philosophy that tries to do so is unacceptable.

After another paragraph, here omitted, Beegle continues: "A rational knowledge is not the answer . . . because it is not the true Thou that makes me a new creature in Christ. With respect to thoughts about God, Brunner comments: 'Even God is here part of *my* rational world, in which I am the center; even he is the *Object* of my knowledge. It is true that I think of him as Subject, as the absolute Subject; but I myself am the subject of this thought.'"

Sentences like these are the best evidences of the irrationalism of neo-orthodoxy. God is not a part of the world. He is its Creator. Of course, God is one of the objects I think about. But I am not the center of the world I think about. The language Brunner uses is at best metaphorical. It is certainly ambiguous. And if it is understood in a sense in which it can support Brunner's conclusions, the language is irrational and meaningless. It is clearly not Biblical. These people are not the ones who can proudly castigate believers in inerrancy for imposing alien philosophies on the Biblical material.

To sum up: Kierkegaard's, Buber's, Brunner's and Beegle's theology is a theology of irrationalism. It has no place for truth. Therefore it

is not surprising that the arguments used to support this theology—no, this non-theo-logy—are so frequently fallacious. And finally, if liberal dogmatism on the inerrancy of Assyrian inscriptions is irrational, Biblical infallibility emerges unscathed.