

***God-Breathed: The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, by Louis Gaussen.** Originally published in French, 1840; English translation *Theopneustia: The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, translated by David Scott, 1841. Edited by John Robbins and reprinted by The Trinity Foundation, 2001. 348 pages. \$16.95 (paper).

—Reviewed by John Robbins

Francois Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen is little known in the United States, even among those who profess to be Reformed. Born in Geneva, Switzerland, on August 25, 1790, Gaussen's principal ministry was in Geneva, where he died on June 18, 1863.

Two years after completing his studies at the University of Geneva, he was appointed minister at Satigny, near Geneva, in 1816. Under the influence of his predecessor at Satigny, Cellier, and that of the Scotch layman Robert Haldane, Gaussen became an ardent champion of Reformed theology in Switzerland. About this time there was a renewal of interest in Biblical Christianity in French Switzerland, the *Reveil*. This awakening coincided with Haldane's visit to Geneva in 1817, where he began a weekly Bible study on the *Epistle to the Romans* for the theological students at the University. Because of interest in his lectures from both students and professors, Haldane had to move the study from his apartment to larger quarters. On May 7, 1817, the *Vénérable Compagnie des Pasteurs de Geneve*, concerned about the growth of Christianity in their city, issued an order virtually prohibiting the preaching of certain important Christian doctrines. Gaussen and his predecessor at Satigny, Cellier, protested against this ruling, chiefly by republishing a new French edition of the *Second Helvetic Confession*, to which they added a preface asserting that a church must have a declaration of faith, and that the *Second Helvetic Confession* correctly voiced their personal convictions.

Gaussen continued to pursue his ministerial duties in Satigny, and held religious meetings in his own home, as well as in his mother's home in Geneva, striving to reform the National Church, but not advocating separation from it. At Geneva, which gradually became the center of his activity, Gaussen founded a missionary society that held meetings, first in private houses and later in the church building. In 1828, through the intervention of the *Vénérable Compagnie des Pasteurs de Geneve*, new members were elected to the missionary society's governing board whom Gaussen considered errant in their views, and he withdrew from the society. This conflict with the clergy of Geneva was typical of frequent storms that affected his career. (Christ's conflict with the clergy of Jerusalem was, of course, another and more important instance of the ancient opposition between ecclesiastical authority and truth.) Calvin's catechism had long been used as a basis for the instruction of the young, but in 1827 the *Venerable Compagnie des Pasteurs* substituted another catechism and ordered Gaussen to use it. He tried to do so, but found it unsatisfactory because of its Rationalism. The clergy of Geneva then lodged a complaint against him for refusing to obey their order, and after a lengthy dispute he was finally censured by the *Venerable Compagnie des Pasteurs* and deprived of his right to take part in its meetings for a period of one year.

With his friends and fellow Christians, Merle d'Aubigne and Galland, Gaussen now founded the Evangelical Society to distribute Bibles and tracts, and to interest the public in

missionary work among the heathen. Shortly afterward, the Evangelical Society decided to found a school for the dissemination of Christian doctrine, and this resolve was disclosed to the State Councilor of Geneva, as well as to the churches, in circular letters signed by Galland, Merle d'Aubigne, and Gausсен. Because of this, Gausсен was deposed from the ministry by the Consistory on September 30, 1831, and his two colleagues were suspended from the ministry. For two years Gausсен traveled through Italy and England, awakening strong sympathy for his cause in the latter country, and warning all that the Roman Catholic Church was a threat to Christianity. In 1834 he returned to Geneva and accepted the position of Professor of Systematic Theology at the *Oratoire*, the newly established Evangelical theological school.

Gausсен was a strict Reformed theologian, and he deviated from Reformed doctrines only with regard to his theory of predestination, for he denied supralapsarianism. During his career, Gausсен published books in three major divisions of theology: the deity of Christ, which was denied by the Rationalistic clergy of Switzerland; prophecies; and the divine authority of Holy Scripture. In addition to *Théopneustie* (Geneva, 1840; first English translation, *Theopneustia: The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, London, 1841), in which he argued that the entire Old and New Testaments were verbally inspired by God, an argument that was attacked by members of his own theological school, Gausсен wrote, in vindication of his position, *Le Canon des Saintes Écritures* (Lausanne, 1860; English translation, *Canon of the Holy Scriptures as Viewed Through Science and Faith*, London, 1862). He was the author of numerous other works, including *Geneva and Jerusalem*, 1844; *Geneva and Rome*, 1844; *Lessons for the Young*, 1860; *Leçons sur Daniel* (3 volumes, uncompleted, 1861; English translation, *The Prophet Daniel Explained*, 1873-74), consisting of several of his lectures on *Daniel*; *Les premiers chapitres de l'Exode*, and *Le prophète Jonas* (the latter two published posthumously). His works enjoyed a wide circulation both in England and in France during the nineteenth century.

Gausсен's defense of the full and detailed inspiration of Scripture by God is one of the principal works on this subject by any Christian theologian. He advocates what has come to be called the "organic" view of inspiration, a word that unfortunately conveys little information to the reader's mind. His view, based firmly and completely on Scripture itself, is that God not only controlled which words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs were to be set down as Scripture, but also controlled all human history so that at the exact time chosen, the author of those words would be properly prepared and available to write the words that God dictated to him. The result is an exact statement of God's thoughts in human language, language perfectly adequate to express divine thoughts.

Like Calvin before him, Gausсен frequently used the words "dictate" and "dictation" to explain the Bible's view of its own inspiration. For the past two centuries, and especially during the twentieth century, the "dictation view of inspiration" has been ridiculed by those who do not believe the Bible. But the problem with the liberals' view of dictation is not that it is too strict, but that it is not nearly strict enough. Gordon Clark explained in his book *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics*:

When God wished to make a revelation (at the time of the exodus or of the captivity) he did not suddenly look around as if caught unprepared, and wonder what man

he could use. We cannot suppose that he advertised for a stenographer, and, when Moses and Jeremiah applied for the position, that God dictated his message. The relation between God and a prophet was not like that at all. A boss must take what he can get; he depends on the high school or business college to have taught the applicant shorthand and typing. But if we consider the omnipotence and wisdom of God, a very different picture emerges. God is the Creator. He made Moses. And when God wanted Moses to speak for him, he said, "Who has made man's mouth?... Have not I, the Lord?".... To this end he so controlled events that Moses was born at a given date, placed in the water to save him from an early death, found by Pharaoh's daughter, given the best Egyptian education possible, driven into the wilderness to learn patience, and in every detail so prepared by heredity and environment that when the time came Moses' mentality and literary style were instruments precisely fitted to speak God's words.... Verbal inspiration therefore must be understood in connection with the complete system of Christian doctrine. It may not be detached therefrom, and *a fortiori* it may not be framed in an alien view of God. Verbal inspiration is integral with the doctrines of providence and predestination. When the liberals surreptitiously deny predestination in picturing God as dictating to stenographers, they so misrepresent verbal inspiration that their objections do not apply to the God of the Bible. The trouble is not, as the liberals think, that the boss controls the stenographer too completely; on the contrary, the analogy misses the mark because the boss hardly controls the stenographer at all.

One reason the republication of Gausson's book is necessary in the twenty-first century is the widespread ignorance of the doctrine of divine inspiration of Scripture even among those who profess to be Christians. As Gordon Clark wrote: "No discussion of inspiration can contribute much of value without taking into account the elementary Scriptural data. These data must be kept in mind. Yet, unfortunately, a number of these details may have faded from our aging memories. More unfortunately, the younger generation—owing to the low standards of many seminaries—may never have learned the Scriptural data." Of course, it is not only the seminaries that are to blame; the churches are also culpable. Indeed, if there has been any resurgence of interest in and availability of Christian doctrine in the last 50 years, it is largely through the instrumentality of ordinary Christians, not seminaries and denominations.

In his recommendation of Gausson's book, Charles Spurgeon wrote:

The turning-point of the battle between those who hold 'the faith once delivered to the saints' and their opponents lies in the true and real inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. This is the Thermopylae of Christendom.... In this work the author proves himself a master of holy argument. Gausson charms us as he proclaims the Divine veracity of Scripture. His testimony is clear as a bell.

It is such clarity, boldness, and fidelity to the Word of God that God desires in all his people.

God-Breathed is composed of seven chapters treating such topics as the definition of inspiration, the Scriptural proof of the inspiration, a detailed examination of objections and evasions, and the proper role of criticism. It is fully indexed and the 19th century English text has been updated, with no change of meaning or omissions.