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**A Bombshell of a Book: Gausсен's  
*Theopneustia* and its Influence on  
Subsequent Evangelical Theology**

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**Key words:** Bible; inspiration; Gausсен.

When Louis Gausсен's *Theopneustia* came from the Paris printing presses in 1840, it was as though readers in the English-speaking world had been primed to expect it. For before a second French edition was called for in 1843, two competing English translations had entered the market at London and Edinburgh with the former of these also appearing promptly at New York.<sup>1</sup> Who then could have known that this book would remain almost constantly in print in English until 1971, have appeared in *four* separate editions, and *twenty-six* printings from *seventeen* publishing houses in cities as remote from one another as London and Grand Rapids, Edinburgh and Chicago,

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1 The original Paris edition *Théopneustie ou Pleine Inspiration des Saintes Écritures: par L. Gausсен* had been released by the publishing house, Delay, in 1840. The first English translation was the work of E. N. Kirk, a Boston Congregationalist pastor, appearing at London in 1841 from the presses of the firm Samuel Bagster. The same translation appeared at New York the following year, when published by John S. Taylor & Company. A distinct translation, the work of David Dundas Scott, appeared in Edinburgh in the same year.

Kilmarnock and Kansas City, New York and Cincinnati?<sup>2</sup> What *kind* of a man was its author? What *kind* of a book was this? The answering of these questions will provide a kind of trajectory through the history of Evangelicalism since 1840 and shed particular light on this movement's efforts to maintain Biblical authority during the whole of that period.

### Gaussen the man

François Samuel Robert *Louis* Gaussen (1790-1863) – and the English speaking world customarily knew him simply as Louis – was a native of Geneva, Switzerland.<sup>3</sup> That city was the sphere of all his activity between his birth in 1790 and his death in 1863. A graduate of Geneva's university Faculty of Theology, he was ordained to the ministry of the Reformed Church of the canton in 1814 and served in the parish of Satigny. The theological tenor of that Faculty and church at that time was extensively latitudinarian yet Gaussen, in spite of this, was oriented to the period of high orthodoxy represented by the theologians Francis Turretin (1623-87) and Benedict Pictet (1655-1724).<sup>4</sup> He demonstrated his love for the theology of the Reformation era by joining in the effort to republish the *Second Helvetic Confession* of 1566 in 1819. A Luther centennial had just been observed

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- 2 English editions or reprints were released in one or more of these cities in 1841, 1842, 1845, 1850, 1852, 1859, 1866, 1867, 1872, 1880, 1888, 1891, 1896, 1904, 1925, and 1949, with the final edition being that of Kregel, Grand Rapids in 1971. In the Francophone world, the volume was still being kept in print as late as 1985 by the Swiss evangelical publisher, *Éditions Emmaus* of St.Légier, Vaud. The author acknowledges with gratitude the bibliographic assistance rendered by his brother, David R. Stewart, Electronic Services librarian in Princeton Theological Seminary. The information cited is gleaned through the electronic OCLC catalogue. The author is certain that the listings of the British Library, London would expand these figures. He acknowledges also the review of a draft of this essay provided by Mr. Timothy C. F. Stunt of Newtown, CT, Dr. Ian S. Rennie of Vancouver, and his colleague, Dr. Kelly M. Kopic.
- 3 On Gaussen, see the helpful biographical sketch in Donald M. Lewis (ed.), *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography: 1730-1860* (Oxford, 1996) I, 431. The era of the awakening at Geneva is described in Timothy C. F. Stunt, *From Awakening to Secession: Radical Evangelicals in Switzerland and Britain 1815-1835* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 2000) and Kenneth J. Stewart, *Restoring the Reformation: British Evangelicalism and the Revival at Geneva: 1816-1849*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh: 1991. An older, but still valuable treatment is that of A. L. Drummond, *The Kirk and the Continent*, (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1956) chapters VIII and IX.
- 4 On whom see the entries in Donald McKim (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

in Europe and many thoughtful Christians were taking up the question of how the theology of the Reformation could best be re-appropriated. This was far from an idle question in a Geneva that had sunk, during the age of Enlightenment, to the point of having no written creed or confession.

But Gaussen, if he was a friend of the older orthodoxy, was just as much a friend of evangelical awakening. He showed sympathy to the Moravian-assisted study groups of laymen and students which met in Genevan homes in the period immediately following the Napoleonic wars. He responded cordially to the visit of the Scottish evangelist, Robert Haldane (1764-1842) who sojourned in Geneva during 1816-17. If he did not himself attend the Scot's renowned lectures on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, he certainly supported those – who when they did so, encountered opposition from the city's religious establishment.<sup>5</sup>

Gaussen was a man whose early evangelical strategy had been two-pronged. *First*, he intended to work towards the recovery of Reformation teaching in the decayed cantonal churches. This, he pursued through energetic preaching and publishing. Widowed as a young man, he never re-married and poured all his energies into his Christian labors. But *second*, he was an Evangelical ecumenist and made clear efforts to support pan-evangelical initiatives emerging in the city. He maintained friendly relations with the independent evangelical congregation which emerged in Geneva after Robert Haldane's departure; he supported the work of the Geneva Bible Society and he helped found the home mission agency called the Geneva Evangelical Society, involvement in which led to his ultimate dismissal as a minister by the Genevan Reformed Church in 1831-2. The religious authorities of the city did *not* approve of his consorting with independent Christians who worked in league with the wealthy evangelicals of Great Britain. Significantly, Gaussen was a man of independent wealth, and after his dismissal by the cantonal church, he served the various evangelical causes which concerned him, without salary.<sup>6</sup>

And it was this constituency, outside of Geneva as well as within it, which would provide Gaussen with his ultimate sphere of influence. For, from the time of his dismissal as minister of the cantonal church of Geneva, Gaussen worked to help mastermind the creation of an alternate faculty of theology- beginning in 1834 (connected to the newly-founded Geneva Evangelical Society) – a faculty he would

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5 Stewart, *Restoring the Reformation*, 200.

6 An interesting detail emerging from the review of his *Theopneustia* in the July, 1841 *American Biblical Repository*, 87.

serve as professor of dogmatics until his death.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, from this society would emerge, gradually, the *Église Libre Évangélique de Genève* (Evangelical Free Church of Geneva). Such initiatives were well-reported to and well-supported by the Evangelical constituencies of Britain and America. Gausson, in particular, benefited by the *aura* of being the evangelical theologian of a renewed Geneva and was broadly perceived to be a kind of John Calvin *redivivus*. Simultaneously, his colleague in the new faculty of theology at Geneva, the historian J.H. Merle D'Aubigné, enjoyed a similar *aura* as the living voice of Reformation history through publications such as *The History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (1835ff, E.T. 1846ff).<sup>8</sup> Now when Gausson would address the transatlantic evangelical community on the urgent question of the origin and the integrity of the Bible, what would he say?

### Gausson as theologian

Louis Gausson was a good, a *very* good theologian as to industry, wide reading, and intellectual vigor. He was as at home reading German or English theological works as he was his native French. A close reading of his *Theopneustia* demonstrates that he was at the time of writing thoroughly abreast of current German biblical criticism as well as British science and apologetics – having read these materials in their original dress<sup>9</sup>. Classical learning is at his finger tips. He moves easily through the Patristic writers, quoting them copiously from the Greek. As well, for his time, Gausson shows a quite remarkable familiarity with the major written works of the world's non-Christian religions and uses this familiarity for Christian apologetic purposes.<sup>10</sup> Gausson is not simply a man who has trod where other evangelical

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7 Gausson's dismissal from the ministry of the Genevan church had been reported in the evangelical Anglican *Christian Observer* (London, 1831), 123, 241, 508.

8 The contribution of D'Aubigné to 19th century historiography has recently been explored by John Roney in *The Inside of History: Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigne and Romantic Historiography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996). His, and Gausson's enjoyment of the *aura* of connection to the Geneva of legend is aptly summarized in the introductory remark of Robert Baird to D'Aubigné's *Discourses and Essays* (Glasgow: Collins, 1846), iii. Of the Swiss historian, Baird states: 'Of all men of this age, it may safely be said, Dr. Merle D'Aubigné is the most thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Reformers. In fact he hardly lives in the present era, though he does move bodily about among the men of our times. . . .'

9 Schleiermacher, Michaelis, Rudelbach, Strauss are widely referred to, as are Buckland, Chalmers, Dick, and Wilson.

10 See, for instance, the references to the Koran, the Vedas, and writings of Confucius in Gausson, 1971 edition, 294-5.

writers have already gone.<sup>11</sup>

Many readers found Louis Gaussen very persuasive. His second (and as it turned out, far more popular) English translator, David D. Scott, recorded an insightful tribute at the completion of his work. He remarked that Gaussen's volume was invaluable 'not only as a work of controversy' but 'was imbued throughout with a spirit of affectionate earnestness and glowing piety, which even when it makes the greatest demand on the intellect, never suffers the heart to remain cold'.<sup>12</sup> *Theopneustia* is nothing, if not an argument. One can almost hear the impassioned preacher/lecturer while one is reading. The passion is at times distracting, and one is made to think that, in places, Gaussen has substituted warmth for substance.<sup>13</sup> But one does not drowse with this book in hand.

### The argument of *Theopneustia*

If the Christian reading public in Britain and America had heard reports of evangelical developments at Geneva since Napoleon's defeat, had heard of the foundation of a Geneva home mission society and its related Theological Seminary,<sup>14</sup> what did Louis Gaussen, by now *the* theologian of the rising evangelical forces of Geneva, offer them? He offered them. . . .

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- 11 Although he makes one passing allusion to two British writers holding views similar to his own. My references are to the final known edition of Gaussen's *Theopneustia*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971). At page 311 and footnote 1, Gaussen acknowledges the worth of Robert Haldane's *The Verbal Inspiration of the Old and New Testament Maintained and Established* (Edinburgh, 1830) and Alexander Carson's *The Theories of Inspiration*, (Dublin, 1830). That this may have been a familiarity reflecting indebtedness is implied in 1840 correspondence between Gaussen and Haldane reprinted in A. Haldane, *Lives of the Haldanes*, 2nd edition (London, Hamilton & Adams, 1852), 553.
- 12 The David Scott translation rapidly proved most popular and the Kirk translation seems to have been short-lived. See footnote 1, above. Scott's preface is absent from the Kregel reprint edition of 1971. I cite it from a Moody Press edition, which though undated, seems to be circa 1920.
- 13 So, for instance when Gaussen considers the question of whether Paul's written request for his cloak (2 Tim. 4.13) is one which required divine inspiration, he – seemingly – clouds the question at issue by opening a warm discussion of whether the questioner would not also think that the bodily privations of Christ at his arrest and trial did not require inspiration to be recorded. If we will grant the significance of the latter in the inspired record, why not the former? *Theopneustia* (1971), 306,7. Yet this interesting aside, passionately explored, has not faced the original question squarely.
- 14 And this they certainly had, through regular reports in such periodicals as the *Christian Observer*, *Evangelical Magazine*, *Eclectic Review* and the annual reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Religious Tract Society and Continental Missionary Society. See Stewart, *Restoring the Reformation*, chap. 4; Stunt, chap. 5.

*A conception of inspiration which was monergistic*<sup>15</sup>

Like many other evangelicals of his generation, Louis Gaussen believed that the era of the Enlightenment had adversely affected Biblical Christianity.<sup>16</sup> He particularly distrusted efforts of evangelicals in the late Enlightenment era to understand the inspiration process in such a way as to *exalt* the element of human individuality and creativity and to correspondingly *contain* the supernatural element. Such ideas, which were at least as old as Philip Doddridge<sup>17</sup> (1702-51), were in fact not anti-supernatural, but aimed at the analysis of the composition process of the Bible with only a *measured* appeal to supernatural and miraculous action.<sup>18</sup>

With such an approach, Gaussen will have nothing to do. Inspiration, for him, has to do with the *writings*, not the *writers* of the Bible and the inspiration for which he contends is, expressed in his native French as *pleine* (full, copious, complete).<sup>19</sup> He admits that the question of the psychology of inspiration is a very interesting one, yet insists that the Scriptures tell us nothing on the question. He affirms that one kind of supernatural action of the Spirit of God was univer-

- 15 Under this heading are surveyed leading ideas in *Theopneustia*, chap. 1. Though the term utilized here, *monergistic*, is usually employed in discussions about divine and human agency in the impartation of Christian salvation (with the monergist being an advocate of an exclusive divine agency), I use the term here to indicate a conception of inspiration in which the divine agency utterly dominates any human agency.
- 16 It was the theory of Leon Maury, *Le Réveil Religieux à Geneve et en France* (Paris, 1892), II, 44 that Gaussen had been provoked to write *Theopneustia* by the echoing of the latest German biblical criticism within the local university faculty of theology.
- 17 On whom, see the helpful article in McKim (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*. Significantly, some translated theological writings of Doddridge had been circulating in Francophone Europe after 1807 through the work of London's Religious Tract Society. See Stewart, *Restoring the Reformation*, Chap. 2. Gaussen never deals with Doddridge by name, only with his successors.
- 18 In hindsight, it appears that the late Enlightenment evangelical theologians who employed these categories were in fact grasping after necessary distinctions as to how *revelation* occurred, rather than *inspiration*. See the discussion in Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, 155.
- 19 It would appear that Gaussen's English translators did us all a disservice by sometimes rendering this adjective *pleine* as meaning *plenary*. The French term was better translated as *entire*. It would seem that the English translations of Gaussen thus contributed to a confusion of two pre-existing inspiration theories—*plenary* and *verbal*. On the separate pedigree of *plenary* inspiration, consult the helpful article in Walter Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984). It is from the time of Gaussen's *Theopneustia* that we note the wide usage of the term *plenary-verbal* when in fact, this term confuses distinct theories. Note the popularization of this language in Alexander Haldane, *Lives of the Haldanes*, 2nd edition (London: Hamilton and Adams, 1852), 553-55.

sal to all the writers of Scripture and comprehensive of all parts. Though he will be at pains for years after publishing *Theopneustia* to deny that he endorses any idea of a mechanical inspiration,<sup>20</sup> Gausson regularly employs the language of *dictation* to communicate the idea of an inspiration process consistently extending to the choice of words.<sup>21</sup> He is a *maximizer* of the divine agency in inspiration.

Gausson wants his readers to know that not only a rising generation of German critics (he names Schleiermacher, De Wette, and Michaelis), but some trusted names in the British evangelical world (the by-then Bishop Daniel Wilson, Congregational theologian Dr. John Pye Smith, and Scottish theologian John Dick) had not handled these themes reliably. The latter group, though decidedly evangelical and much to be preferred to the former, had instead of affirming a uniform and pervasive inspiration, followed Enlightenment motifs in affirming only a universal but unequal inspiration. This had sometimes involved *superintendence*, at other times *elevation*, at still other times mere *direction*, and on still other occasions only *suggestion*. Painting with a rather broad brush, Gausson implied that such a conception opened the way for *errors* in Scripture.

Such a naming of names took Gausson onto thin ice. Two of the three Britishers he had named, in addition to being well-known evangelicals, were men who had used their pens to draw attention to the great spiritual needs of France and Switzerland. Both Wilson and Smith had traveled there and both had also given funds in support of evangelization agencies such as the very Geneva Evangelical Society with which Gausson himself was involved.<sup>22</sup> As for John Dick, the

20 René Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (1969; reprinted 1992), 69 fn. 13 points out that Gausson devoted a whole separate pamphlet to the denial of his intending any mechanical theory of inspiration. This was *La Véritable Doctrine de M. Gausson sur l'inspiration des Écritures : Trois Lettres*. Pache, as we will have reason to consider, has been the greatest continuator of Gausson's stance in the late 20th century.

21 I have found the language of dictation used in Gausson (1971 edition) at pages.45, 47, 49, 56, 71, 103, and 160.

22 Daniel Wilson (1778-1858) had been vice-principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford and subsequently served St. Mary's Church, Islington, and St. John's Chapel, Bedford Row, London. In 1832 he was made missionary bishop of Calcutta, India. His interesting reflections on the state of the Continent after Napoleon, had been published as *Letters of an Absent Brother* (London, 1823). John Pye Smith, (1774-1851) tutor of Homerton Academy, had written favorably of evangelical developments at Geneva in the 1817 period in London's *Eclectic Review*. Both individuals were fee-paying members of the *Continental Society* (London) which worked in alliance with the Geneva Evangelical Society Gausson had helped to found. See Stunt, Chap. 5; Stewart, *Restoring the Reformation* Chap. 4. On Smith, one may consult Lewis (ed.), *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, II.

Scottish Secession theologian, his views on Scripture and other themes were so circumspect that his *Lectures on Theology* (1834) had gained the approval of Princeton's Archibald Alexander.<sup>23</sup> Gausson was nothing, if not courageous. He definitely wanted Enlightenment-era ideas of inspiration uprooted!

*A conception of inspiration which was oracular*<sup>24</sup>

Gausson had disclaimed all interest in the *psychology* of inspiration. But if this process had been so universal among biblical writers and so utterly comprehensive of their writings, wasn't it possible to say *something* about the operation of inspiration? This the author does by introducing the conception of prophecy as comprehending all inspired writing. His motive in doing this is plainly that of *preempting* the claims of destructive Biblical criticism. For if it is the case that all portions of the Bible have proceeded from the mouth of God in a highly identical manner (i.e. as oracle), then the attempts of critics to infer details about the composition and development of the writings will be superfluous and irreverent. To his credit, Gausson makes an interesting exegetical case for this oracular view. He argues that the NT passages which speak comprehensively of the OT writings (most notably 2 Tim. 3.16, Romans 3.2 and Hebrews 1.1,2) use the language of prophetic *oracle* to speak of the character of these writings.

But having embarked on such a task, the author is driven to – we would say – tortuous lengths in an attempt to make good such a claim. Beyond the obviously prophetic role played by Moses and the OT prophets, he must grasp at straws to contend that Wisdom writings and historical books also qualify as prophetic in character. For the New Testament writings, he must not only argue that the apostles functioned as prophets, but that non-apostolic writers (such as Mark, Luke, James and the author of Hebrews) did also. This rather *procrustean* strategy of inspiration-defense, once popularized by Gausson, would live on for more than a hundred years.<sup>25</sup>

*A conception of inspiration which was rationalist in tendency*<sup>26</sup>

Every conception of biblical inspiration in order to be compelling, must demonstrate itself capable of deflecting or addressing perennial

23 On Dick, see Nigel M. Cameron (ed.). *The Scottish Dictionary of Church History and Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), and Lewis (ed.), *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, II.

24 A discussion of *Theopneustia*, Chap. 2.

25 The detailed criticism of this, and other ideas circulated by Gausson, will follow below.

26 A discussion of *Theopneustia*, Chap. 4. Chapters 1, 2 & 4 have been selected for comment as most central to the book's outlook.



questions. Among these are the questions posed by variant manuscripts, Septuagint quotation, and the incorporation of merely local or transient custom into the Scripture narrative. Gaussen acquits himself very well here and demonstrates an amazing breadth of knowledge of text criticism, intra-biblical quotation, and the manners and customs of the biblical world. He makes commendable attempts to show that many alleged contradictions within the Scripture (e.g. the Resurrection narratives) are capable of resolution through a reasonable harmonization of the accounts.

Yet Gaussen is not finished when he has done his best in response to these obstacles to belief in inspiration. Because he is pre-committed to the conviction that inspiration has always and uniformly extended to the very words of the Bible, he cannot leave unanswered any suggestion that the Bible has been inexact in reporting on phenomena in the natural world. He is deeply suspicious of writers who approach these difficulties with the proposal that 'In inspiring his apostles and prophets, God desired to make us, not scientific but holy persons' and that God could 'without danger, allow the writers he employed to speak in ignorance of the phenomena of the material world'.<sup>27</sup>

The position Gaussen is determined to defend is very different:

'We most fully admit that were there some physical errors, duly ascertained, in the book of Scriptures, it would not be entirely from God; but we proceed to put it beyond a doubt that there are no such errors; and we will venture to defy our adversaries to produce a single such error in the whole of the Bible.'<sup>28</sup>

And so there follows a seven-page digression on the difficulty posed for belief in inspiration by the report of the sun standing still in Joshua, chap. 10. We find no fault in Gaussen's recognition that the passage poses a difficulty; but we may feel amusement at his precocious certainty that he has plumbed the depths of this difficulty. For Gaussen, the difficulty is *not* insuperable. He is aware of the Calvinist tradition's reliance on the idea of Scripture's *accommodation* of its high matter to our feeble abilities.<sup>29</sup> He also knows 19th century physics and astronomy! Gaussen's difficulty here is that he is too prepared to allow belief in inspiration to hang on his own best efforts to defend the biblical record. For him, there seems to be no such thing as an as-yet unresolved difficulty or mystery. To admit to such would seem to leave inspiration-belief tentative at best.

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27 *Theopneustia*, 244.

28 *Ibid.*, 245.

29 *Ibid.*, 252.

*Summation*

Gausson's much-anticipated book was a staunch advocacy of a very high doctrine of inspiration. This doctrine tended to the magnification of divine action, asserted that all writers had functioned in a prophetic capacity, and defended an inspiration always extending to the words. His theory had also downplayed the magnitude of some major biblical difficulties.

**Reactions to the publication of *Theopneustia***

From the forgoing, it will not be difficult to anticipate that Gausson's book, when published, received a mixed response. What would the evangelical critics say of this new Genevan *colossus*?

*From America – enthusiastic praise*

In America, initial reactions to *Theopneustia* were rapturous. The anonymous reviewer for the New York *American Biblical Repository* ended his 36 page essay on Gausson and his volume by exclaiming:

'We think it decidedly the best work on the subject that we have ever read. There is nothing in the English language which is comparable to it. . . . We think he nobly maintains the true doctrine on the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures. . . .'<sup>30</sup>

In Princeton, New Jersey, the following year there appeared a much shorter – yet equally appreciative review. This reader was sure that *Theopneustia* 'established and vindicated the thorough-going, old-school doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.' And then, as if to give away the basis for this warm endorsement, the reviewer confided:

'It will be read, understood and felt by those who would throw aside with a sneer the productions of a Scottish or an American author. It is boldly argumentative, in a high and uncommon degree. . . .'<sup>31</sup>

As far away as Princeton, N.J., the *aura* of Geneva was keenly felt. Was it felt similarly in England?

*From England: praise tempered by concern*

The reviewer for the pan-evangelical journal *The Evangelical Magazine* spread his analysis of *Theopneustia* over two issues. Plainly, the book had driven him to deep reflection. He now accepted as valid the criticisms made by Gausson against the long-established Doddridge

30 *American Biblical Repository*, 2nd series, 6 (1841), 113.

31 *Princeton Review* XIV (1842), 525.

view<sup>32</sup> that the Bible had been composed through varying *degrees* of inspiration. He urged his readers to follow suit and closed his review with these words of fulsome praise:

'It is a work that will repay the reader. It is the work of a man of considerable ability, extensive scholarship, and deep piety. . . . It is written in a clear, forcible, and elegant style, containing passages of much beauty and eloquence, in which there are "thoughts that breathe and words that burn", and above all, an unction from above. . . .'<sup>33</sup>

But the reviewer for the *Eclectic Review* (also London-based) was not so kind.<sup>34</sup> While the volume was described as 'able' 'admirable' and 'successful', the reviewer went on to make pointed criticisms. The reviewer lamented the 'dogmatic harshness . . . which could have been eliminated without at all obscuring the clearness of the doctrine.' He pinpointed Gaussen's mistaken tendency to 'condemn all attempts at showing wherein inspiration consists [the Doddridge scheme again], while the greater part of the essay is an exhibition of what *he* considers it to be.' Two especially heavy criticisms were leveled. *First*

'If the doctrine of inspiration is to be intelligently held, our belief must result from a serious examination of what the Scriptures teach respecting their own origin, and as part of this examination, a judicious comparison of cases that are clearly analogous to each other. But the examination would be vitiated if we entered on it with a pre-conceived opinion of what inspiration is; for that is the *point to be ascertained*'

The protest is against Gaussen's deductive rather than inductive method. The phenomena of Scripture have been practically disregarded as Gaussen has pursued a framework built from certain key passages.

*Second* the reviewer faulted Gaussen for exaggerating the practical difference between his own scheme and that of the 'English theologians' he had seen fit to criticize.

'If by verbal inspiration we are to understand that the words are in all cases those which the writers of the Scriptures were supernaturally guided to employ, this is fully maintained by those English theologians who find no favour in the eyes of M. Gaussen. . . . Of our own writers we will say . . . that they have taught an inspiration of the Scriptures as plenary as that for

32 Note the earlier discussion of this point at page 6, above.

33 *The Evangelical Magazine*. Vol. 20 n.s. (1842), 17-121 and 172-177. Significantly, the reviewer recognized clear continuities between the thought of Gaussen and that of Robert Haldane. The latter's book on the subject had been first published in 1816 and Gaussen (*Theopneustia*, 311) knew it in an 1830 reprint.

34 Whereas the *Evangelical Magazine* catered to a readership which was pan-evangelical (including Baptist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Independent), the *Eclectic Review* was self-consciously the journal of Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

which he contends, and that in teaching it they display a calmness of thought, a sagacity of discrimination, and a strength of argument, which we are tempted to claim as the national characteristics of English theology on this as on every other question.<sup>35</sup>

In this reviewer's mind, Gaussen was not so much evangelical hero but evangelical alarmist!

#### *In Francophone Europe: caution*

Having noted the existence of this spectrum of opinion among English-language reviewers, it is worth noting that there were similar reserved judgements among those who stood culturally and linguistically closer to Gaussen. From Montauban, France came the opinion of Adolphe Monod (1802-56) himself a friend and convert of the evangelical awakening at Geneva and subsequently pastor and professor of the French Reformed Church. Of *Theopneustia*, he told Gaussen:

'this absolute doctrine of inspiration has been formed, I believe, 'a priori', to meet the needs of theology more than on the teachings of the Bible. I myself need to conceive of inspiration more broadly.'<sup>36</sup>

And if one were to discount Monod as a lonely and somewhat erratic voice, one might consider the opinion of the church historian, D'Aubigné, colleague to Gaussen at Geneva. His daughter and biographer, Blanche Biéler wrote that her father saw in Gaussen's volume 'the fatal law of spiritual tides' – i.e. a display of excessive reaction to earlier opposite excesses.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Summation*

Gaussen's tome, while a stalwart defense of a particular view of inspiration, had met with rapturous acceptance *and* grave concern in the transatlantic evangelical world. It was as much bombshell as panacea.

#### *Theopneustia in the period 1850-1900*

The meaning of this diversity of reaction to *Theopneustia* would only become clear with the passage of time. In the first three decades fol-

35 *Eclectic Review* Vol. XI n.s. (1842), 373ff. This determination to vindicate British theology against the aspersions cast by Gaussen was still in evidence in 1849. The Calvin Translation Society translator of John Calvin's *Commentary on Ezekiel and Daniel*, Thomas Myers, defended Doddridge, Dick, and Pye Smith against Gaussen's charges in his preface, p.xxii. I am indebted to Dr. A. C. Clifford of Norwich for this helpful piece of information.

36 Quoted in Leon Maury, *Le Réveil Religieux* II, 85.

37 Blanche Biéler, *Une Famille de Refuge* (Paris, 1930), 112.

lowing its initial release, the volume had a very steady readership – as evidenced by the number of times it was reprinted. No less than ten printings of *Theopneustia* occurred between 1850 and 1872. But the book appears to have become popular only at the grassroots. One does not observe scholarly use being made of Gaussen. Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (1872) does not mention the man or his book. His son, Archibald Alexander Hodge, also sent out his *Outlines of Theology* (1860, revised and enlarged 1879) without a trace of it.

In the 1880's, B. B. Warfield makes several allusions to Gaussen's book in his various writings on inspiration.<sup>38</sup> Warfield's references to Gaussen are always favorable, though he is careful to point out that 'that admirable volume had as its mission not to develop a well-rounded and carefully guarded doctrine of inspiration, but to prove the existence of an everywhere-present divine element in the Scriptures.' He grants that where this narrow purpose is not properly recognized, Gaussen will frequently be taken to be the advocate of a mechanical inspiration.<sup>39</sup>

It is significant that thoughtful evangelicals were learning to commend Gaussen *only with qualification* as the 19th century faded. The Scottish theologian, John Cairns (1818-1892), when asked, late in life, to recommend a book on inspiration, mentioned the volume of Gaussen:

'You ask about inspiration. I do not know a perfectly satisfactory work on the subject. Gaussen is a little too rigid for me, but contains many fine things'<sup>40</sup>

Within Switzerland, evangelical opinion was reaching the same judgement. Summing up the half-century of developments in evangelical theology in France and Switzerland in 1891, August Grétillet of Lausanne remarked, regarding the evangelical faculty of theology founded at Geneva in 1834 (scene of the labors of Gaussen and D'Aubigné), that its whole tendency was to suppose:

38 I have located references in Warfield's 'The Inspiration of the Scriptures: Facing the Issue' in *The Presbyterian* 30 (July, 1881), 10 col. 1, as reprinted in Roger Nicole (ed.), A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, *Inspiration*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 84, and in Warfield's 'A Review of Three Books on Inspiration' in *The Presbyterian Review*, October, 1888, as reprinted in John E. Meeter (ed.), *Selected Shorter Writings of Warfield* Vol. 2, 604-13. References are also found to Gaussen in Warfield's 1879 address, 'Inspiration and Criticism' delivered upon the occasion of his installation as Professor of New Testament in Western Seminary, Allegheny, PA, and his 1915 article, 'Inspiration' submitted for inclusion in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. I refer to these as reprinted in Warfield's *Works* Vol. I (1929; reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 397 and 112, respectively.

39 Warfield, 'A Review of Three Books', 604-5.

40 A.R. MacEwen, *Life of John Cairns* (London, 1895), 485.

'that the reigning Pelagianism (of Geneva's decayed theology) could not more effectually be resisted than by reducing or even suppressing the part played by human nature in the apprehension of salvation and of Christian truth. It was in this that the Evangelical School of Geneva might be distinguished, in that the two doctrines of absolute predestination and of inspiration . . . found their most determined and most authoritative representatives . . . in Gausson the venerable author of the famous book entitled *Theopneustie* (1840), (and) D'Aubigné. . . . (These) were the champions of the dogma of the plenary inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures.'<sup>41</sup>

By the turn of the century, American Baptist theologian A.H. Strong was citing Gausson as a typical exponent of the mechanical dictation view, the weakness of which he believed was obvious.<sup>42</sup> And in 1909, Scottish theologian James Orr (1843-1913) wrote his still-valuable *Revelation and Inspiration* without so much as an allusion to Gausson or his book.

### *Theopneustia*: down but not out 1888-1925

Yet appearances were deceiving. No one could have predicted it, but Gausson's half-century old book was in process of being rediscovered and turned into a piece of evangelical weaponry in the battle against growing Biblical criticism. The change was indicated when, in 1888 the London publisher Passmore & Alabaster released a fresh edition of *Theopneustia* with an endorsement by the Baptist preacher, C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). The timing was significant, for the years 1887-89 marked the peak period of what came to be known as the "Down-grade Controversy" in which Spurgeon seceded from the Baptist Union of England and Wales, alleging doctrinal waywardness.<sup>43</sup> *Theopneustia* had lived just long enough to be re-discovered by a new generation, which felt the dangers of irreverent biblical criticism in a way akin to the anxieties of the long-deceased author. Passmore &

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41 That this stern indictment appeared, of all places, in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* (connected with Princeton Seminary) was all the more telling! See Gretillat's article 'Movements of Theological Thought Among French-Speaking Protestants From the Revival of 1820 to the end of 1891' in *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* III (1892), 424ff.

42 A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1904), 208-9.

43 See J. D. Douglas, (ed.), *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974). Spurgeon's endorsement of Gausson's book appeared also in the early Moody Press editions. It reads, in part '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 as clear as a bell.' On Spurgeon's role, see also Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 75.

Alabaster, Spurgeon's publishing house, issued two more impressions in 1891 and 1896. And from Passmore and Alabaster, the torch was passed to two more London publishers, Farncombe and C.J. Thynne – both of which produced editions in 1912. Again, associations meant something, for the Farncombe edition carried an endorsement from A.H. Sayce (1845-1933) fellow of Queen's College, Oxford and, from 1891 England's first professor of Assyriology.<sup>44</sup> The parallel (Thynne) edition had connections through its editor, J.P. Wiles, with the Sovereign Grace Union, a determinedly Calvinistic association of Baptists, Independents and evangelical Anglicans persevering in that persuasion in a day when Calvinism had become distasteful to many of its former friends.<sup>45</sup>

Yet *what must be grasped* is that the causes now turning to *Theopneustia* for weaponry in the battle with destructive criticism were causes which had neither time nor patience for the cautious endorsements formerly given out by a Warfield or a Cairns. Gausson was, as originally, stressing an inspiration view which was monergistic, oracular, and tending to rationalism. Yet for his new generation of followers, it was by now a case of 'any port in a storm'.

### *Theopneustia* from Kansas City to Chicago

The London, 1912 editions were published in conjunction with a plan to re-release Gausson in America. That same year, the 'Gospel Union' of Kansas City released an edition of *Theopneustia* which cor-

44 On Sayce, see Douglas (ed.), *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, and Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism* (2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 76. The publisher, Farncombe, was the publisher for the conservative Gospel Standard Baptist Association.

45 This continued early 20th century British interest in Gausson is significant for at least two reasons. First, Gausson's key themes seem to have been replicated in the work of the Christian Brethren writer William Kelly, whose volume *The Inspiration of the Scriptures* (2nd edition, 1907) is helpfully summarized in H. D. MacDonald, *Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study 1860-1960* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), 279. Second, the late 19th and early 20th century British reprintings of *Theopneustia* tend to confirm the existence of some kind of British proto-fundamentalism in this era, and the seminal role of Charles Spurgeon in launching it. Yet, it has been contended by George Marsden, 'Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison With English Evangelicalism', *Church History* 46:2 (1977), 215-232 that we ought to conceive of British fundamentalism as scarcely existing in this period. The contrary position has been effectively stated by Ian S. Rennie in his 'Fundamentalism and the Varieties of North Atlantic Evangelicalism' in Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington and George A. Rawlyk (eds.), *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond 1700-1990* (New York: OUP, 1994), 333-50.

responded in all details to those just released at London. The plain implication is that the usefulness of Gausson which was so apparent to Spurgeon in 1888, was becoming similarly apparent to foes of higher criticism in America. It is in this context that we best see the approximate half-century of involvement of Moody Press (Chicago) with Gausson's volume.<sup>46</sup> The earliest available Moody edition (undated) carries with it the endorsement both of Mr. Spurgeon, who had passed away in 1892, and of James M. Gray (1851-1935) who became dean of the Bible Institute in 1904 and president in 1925.<sup>47</sup> Suggestively, Gray's comments allude to Moody Press's 'having purchased the plates and brought out a new edition.'<sup>48</sup> The last, and only dated edition produced by Moody (1949) is precisely that edition reprinted by Kregel, Grand Rapids, in 1971.

### **The momentous significance of *Theopneustia's* new lease on life**

This just-documented rediscovery of Gausson's book after 1888 as a weapon in the battle against higher criticism is fraught with tremendous consequences for the history of 20th century American evangelicalism – consequences so great that we have not yet outlived them.

Several illustrations will demonstrate my point. When, after 1909 there was organized the publishing project we now know as *The Fundamentals*, the assignment of writing the section on the "Inspiration of the Bible" fell to none other than James M. Gray, dean of Moody Bible Institute. The expectation that Gray might be found making use of Gausson's volume and arguments is entirely vindicated. Gausson is quoted by name explicitly in the array of authors Gray ranges in his own support.<sup>49</sup> Gray's personal opinion of the book was

46 The Online Catalogue of Library Collections (OCLC) indicates at least three editions of *Theopneustia* issued by the Moody Press between (approx.) 1894 and 1949. Only the last edition carried a year of publication.

47 See the article in Douglas, *New International Dictionary*. Sadly, the Moody Press has not maintained records of its publishing program in the first half of the twentieth century.

48 The second (circa 1920) printing of *Theopneustia* by Moody Press, seems to have had its counterpart in a Scottish edition produced at Kilmarnock by the Brethren publishing house, John Ritchie & Co.

49 For the purposes of this article, I refer to the Baker Books reprint (1996) of the 1917 edition of *The Fundamentals* published by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. Gray's dependence on Gausson is evident and explicit. See volume II, pages 11 & 23. One of the mysteries of *The Fundamentals* is that theologians such as B. B. Warfield and James Orr, while contributors to the series, were *not* assigned the task of writing this particularly sensitive chapter.



that his first having been introduced to it as a young minister was 'a milestone on his spiritual pathway . . . one that stands out more than any other.'<sup>50</sup>

Thirty-five years later, Westminster Seminary theologian John Murray was happy to draw on the resources of *Theopneustia*, when penning his contribution to the volume *The Infallible Word*.<sup>51</sup> Wheaton College theologian, H.C. Thiessen drew on the resources available in Gausson in his *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* in 1949.<sup>52</sup> Conservative Presbyterian theologian (and former Wheaton president) J. Oliver Buswell was still warmly recommending Gausson's volume to his students at the 1962 publication of his *Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*.<sup>53</sup> Similar evangelical appeals to Gausson in this era can be found in the writings of E.J. Young, Stewart Custer and the British evangelical Alan Stubbs.<sup>54</sup> It is deeply significant that when the Moody Press allowed Gausson to go out of print they brought on stream the translated work of a 20th century Swiss evangelical writer, René Pache, who was by all appearances a Gausson enthusiast.<sup>55</sup> Such appeals were still being made in the 1970's in the series of volumes connected to the emergence of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy.<sup>56</sup>

Someone surely is eager to ask, 'And what could be so wrong with appealing to a standard evangelical defense of the Bible from the last century?' Really nothing, I will answer, *provided that we would also note and discuss the clear limitations of this book* – things amply

50 See Gray's endorsement in the 1920s era Moody Press reprint. I have found Gray quoting Gausson with approval as late as the 1919 Philadelphia 'World Christian Conference on the Fundamentals'. See his address 'The Bible's Testimony to Its Own Inspiration' in *God Hath Spoken* (1919), 90.

51 See John Murray's 'The Self-Attestation of Scripture' in Ned B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley (eds.), *The Infallible Word* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 79.

52 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949).

53 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 193). Buswell's endorsement reads 'Among the older works on Inspiration, of outstanding value is Gausson...'. He explicitly names Moody Press as the current publisher.

54 E.J. Young, *The Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 137. Alan M. Stubbs, 'The Witness of Scripture to Its Inspiration' in Carl F. H. Henry (ed.), *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1959), 112. Stewart Custer, *Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy?* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1968).

55 René Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969). See the copious references to Gausson in Pache's subject index at 308-9.

56 A mere sampling of these will include John Warwick Montgomery (ed.), *God's Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1973), 20, 40, 140, 198. James M. Boice ed. *The Foundation of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 90,91, 152.

noted prior to Spurgeon's discovery of *Theopneustia* in 1888:<sup>57</sup>

- Inspiration conceived of as an overwhelmingly divine action,
- Exercised through individuals who uniformly functioned like prophets,
- And consistently extending to the very choice of words with
- An unfortunate blending together, under the name plenary-verbal, of a conception which is in fact *not* plenary in the historic sense, but only verbal

Failure to take note of these limitations has meant that they have been visited again and again on fresh generations of evangelical students and ministers who have been referred to its pages over the last century. Oddly enough, 20th century evangelicals have been less discerning in their use of this book than were our 19th century forbears!

I speak this way *not* to demonize Gausson *or* the Moody Press, but only to caution against the perils of republishing controversial theological works from another age without the inclusion of critical introductions. Gausson's constant republication over the last century has contributed, I fear, to the mistaken conception that the state of the question has been just what Gausson conceived it to be in the 1830s – when in fact nothing could farther from the truth. In this sense, we can consider the way in which *Theopneustia* has been a bombshell of a book in the twentieth century – though in a different way than in the nineteenth. *Then* it served to polarize Evangelical theology by its exaggerated alarmism. *Since* it has diverted conservative Evangelicalism from a proper consideration of the phenomena of Scripture, the actual operation of inspiration in those writers who were *neither* prophets or apostles, and the progressively-unfolding nature of the Biblical revelation.

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57 Four written critiques of Gausson's usefulness have emerged since 1950. Two brief critiques are that of R. Laird Harris in his 1957 volume, *The Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), the conclusion of which points out that Gausson's insistence that all Scripture writers functioned as prophets clouds rather than clarifies questions of canonicity and Bernard Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 198. More recently, Gausson has received extended and critical treatment from William J. Abraham in his *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (Oxford, 1991), 18-35. Abraham badly misunderstands the setting in which Gausson wrote (concluding his work had only been translated in 1888 when C.H. Spurgeon endorsed it) – yet quite correctly observes that the Gausson position on inspiration is earlier than and distinguishable from that of Warfield. The fourth and most recent critique of Gausson is that of Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), 18. Bloesch has followed Abraham in misunderstanding the history and setting of the book.

### Our present situation

I maintain that Evangelical thinking about the Bible has, without our realizing it, been in process of necessary *recovery* from the one-sided emphases of *Theopneustia* since 1950. Progressive evangelicals may take a very different view, i.e. that this same era is one in which Evangelical thinking about inspiration has begun a recovery from the dominant influence of B.B. Warfield.<sup>58</sup> Yet this latter view is built on two mistaken assumptions, the *first* of which is that Warfield's writings were widely available, and widely influential, prior to mid-century; this they were not.<sup>59</sup> Apart from Warfield's important article on "Inspiration" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1915), his writings on inspiration were largely unobtainable outside major libraries. His ten-volume "Collected Works", released posthumously in 1929 by Oxford University Press, were never again reprinted until the 1980s. A kind of Warfield revival *did* take place after 1948 when the small publisher, Presbyterian and Reformed, began to release segments of the 1929 edition. Yet Gaussen's volume on inspiration was *never* out of print in the first six decades of the twentieth century.

The *second* such assumption is that Warfield's writings have been steadily less influential for evangelical thinking in the past half-century. Again, the facts do not seem to support such a reading of the situation. I would argue that the re-circulation of Warfield since 1948 was part of a larger *recovery* of evangelical thinking about the Bible after a half-century of ossification. Warfield remember, was a New Testament exegete before he turned his hand to dogmatic theology – and in consequence, his treatment of inspiration had been marked by great exegetical care. While it is true that he followed Gaussen's deductive method in thinking about the framework of inspiration, he

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58 This is the general drift of the argument of such writers as Clark Pinnock, 'Three Views of the Bible in Contemporary Theology' in Jack Rogers (ed.), *Biblical Authority* (Waco, TX: Word, 1977), 63; Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 1994), 118; Alister McGrath *A Passion For Truth* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 1996), 58, 168-71.

59 It seems to me that the eagerness with which progressive evangelicals currently designate Warfield as the originator of an evangelical *sclerosis* in thinking about inspiration shows a neglect of historical theology second only to that of fundamentalism – which continued to look to Gaussen as the enunciator of the classic evangelical statement. The great mystery is truly that of why evangelical theology, which showed fertility in grappling with biblical criticism in the 1880s and 1890s (and Warfield was part of this fertility), thereafter largely drew back from the task. Consult the masterful summary of this period in H. D. Macdonald, *Theories of Revelation: 1860-1960* (London, 1963), chap. 7, 'The Discussion of Biblical Inspiration', and Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *Biblical Higher Criticism and the Defense of Biblical Infallibility in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1987).

was much less prone to build tendentious arguments on slender foundations.<sup>60</sup> His essay, "The Oracles of God"<sup>61</sup> for instance, does *not* argue as Gausson had in 1840 that every statement of Scripture is, as it were, prophetic oracle. His 1915 I.S.B.E. article, "Inspiration" had explicitly distanced itself from conceptions of inspiration by dictation, through a creative exploration of God's providential superintendence of the whole prior life of the Scripture writers, such that they wrote in a way utterly unique.<sup>62</sup>

Such a nuanced approach made the again-available Warfield an assist to, rather than a brake upon the post-war renaissance in evangelical biblical scholarship across the English-speaking world.<sup>63</sup> This was the biblical-theological alliance which, in the 1950's, produced the *New Bible Dictionary* and *New Bible Commentary*. It is highly unlikely that Gausson's theologizing could have sustained such a coalition effort. The 1946 Westminster Seminary symposium *The Infallible Word* had perhaps marked a first step in this direction. How many of us have read and savored R.V.G. Tasker's little book of the same year, *The Old Testament in the New Testament?* Here was an evangelical appraisal of how the Bible functioned internally. A seminal book first published in 1953 by the South African, Norval Geldenhuys, entitled *Supreme Authority*<sup>64</sup> considered questions bearing on Biblical authority in relation to the authority of Christ and the apostles. In 1957, the conservative O.T. scholar, E.J. Young, turned temporarily to a dogmatic theme and gave us the volume, *Thy Word is Truth*.<sup>65</sup> I believe that that volume's chapter, "The Human Writers of the Scriptures" marked a new effort – after a half-century hiatus, by an evangelical to

60 The deductive method of defining inspiration as practiced both by Gausson and Warfield is singled out for special criticism by William Abraham, op. cit., 18-35.

61 Written in 1900 and reprinted in the *Works of Warfield*, Vol. 1.

62 Reprinted in *Works of Warfield*, Vol. 1.

63 In a stimulating article, 'Soundings in the Doctrine of Scripture in British Evangelicalism in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 (1980), 87-106, David F. Wright has suggested that strenuous advocacy of inerrancy was lacking within evangelicalism in the United Kingdom in that half-century and that the re-circulation of Warfield's writings there since 1950 has had a very different consequence than what I propose here, for North America. Wright's article, however, shows no awareness of the at-least three printings of Gausson within Britain in that half-century. The British reprinting of Warfield under the influence of D. Martin Lloyd Jones (1899-1981) by the Tyndale Press, London may therefore have served the constructive purpose there suggested for his republication in America. For the interesting story of Lloyd-Jones' first encounter with Warfield's writings and their influence upon him, see I. H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd Jones: The First Forty Years: 1899-1939* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1982), 286.

64 (London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1953).

65 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

pursue this important subject. J. I. Packer, who gave fresh articulation to the views of B.B. Warfield in his *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (1958), had, by the time of his *God Speaks to Man* (1965), largely reinstated the old "degrees" of inspiration view (traceable to Doddridge) which Gausson had labored so hard to abolish. It was attention to the phenomena of Scripture which brought Packer to recognize the types of inspiration which he called *dualistic*, *lyric* and *organic*.<sup>66</sup> A 1959 symposium on Scripture, edited by Carl Henry, *Revelation and the Bible*<sup>67</sup> was another important step on this road to recovery. Here the most important essays may have been those of the late Everett F. Harrison, a New Testament scholar, entitled "The Phenomena of Scripture" and of Geoffrey Bromiley, "The Church Doctrine of Inspiration". Harrison boldly maintained that an adequate doctrine of inspiration would need to pay as much attention to the internal functioning of the parts of Scripture as to the well-known claims Scripture made for itself. Bromiley was bold enough to subject the history of the evangelical doctrine of inspiration since the Reformation to some criticisms – an almost unheard of theme in the 20th century!<sup>68</sup> There was also the quite unprecedented volume of R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*<sup>69</sup> in 1971. Until the early 1980's, the resurgence of interest in the inspiration views of Warfield and the advance of evangelical biblical theology seemed to be travelling together.<sup>70</sup> Admittedly, more recently, the two trends have developed

66 J. I. Packer, *God Speaks to Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 70. See also his reflections on the varied forms in which the divine word comes to us in Scripture in his *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1973; 1993), 112, 113.

67 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959).

68 Bromiley's essay, available also in Bromiley (ed.), *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), as 'Inspiration, History of the Doctrine of', was not the first major post-war evangelical exercise in the use of historical theology to survey doctrines of revelation and inspiration. This had been provided in John W. Walvoord (ed.), *Inspiration and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) – a volume featuring investigations of the views on inspiration of persons from Augustine to Reinhold Niebuhr. Shortly thereafter were available the valuable volumes of H. D. MacDonald, *Theories of Revelation: 1700-1860* (London, 1959) and *Theories of Revelation: 1860-1960* (London, 1963).

69 (London: Tyndale, 1971).

70 Proof of this could be seen in various formats. Clark Pinnock had restated an essentially Warfieldian position in his 1966 Tyndale Fellowship Biblical Theology lecture, published as *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967). The same could be said of his more comprehensive *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971). The revision of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1982) edited by Geoffrey Bromiley reprinted the 1915 ISBE article by Warfield verbatim. It has been interesting to note that John Stott's initial encounter with the writings of Warfield did not take place until 1967. Cf. Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry* (Leicester: IVP, 2001), 124.

independently.

Nevertheless, it is my judgement that the most constructive evangelical writings on Biblical inspiration in the last half-century have been produced by individuals who have consciously participated in this renewal of evangelical biblical theology underway since World War II - a movement initially bolstered by Warfield's republication.<sup>71</sup> These writings involve correctives to mistaken ideas which, if they did not originate with Gausson, were at very least given extended life by him. Thus, Howard Marshall's *Biblical Inspiration*<sup>72</sup> and Clark Pinnock's *The Scripture Principle*<sup>73</sup> were both working in the early 1980s to lay to rest the too-long unquestioned notion that the normal mode of the operation of inspiration was that of prophecy.<sup>74</sup> They were also both concerned to establish that inspiration had been operational over the whole process by which the units of Scripture had reached their final form. The 'ghosts' which they and others were striving to lay to rest are 19th not 20th century 'ghosts'. And the reason for the longevity of these 'ghosts' is quite simply this - that in the first half of the twentieth century, evangelical Christianity and its theology were justifiably pre-occupied with their own survival and had little time or energy for more than manning *old* fortifications with *old* weapons. Seen in this light, North American evangelicalism's over-extended relationship with Louis Gausson tells us unflattering things about a whole half-century in which our theologizing was too reiterative, and because reiterative - shopworn. Surely, at the outset of this twenty-first century, Evangelical theology can aim higher.

### Abstract

Louis Gausson (1790-1863), Reformed pastor at Geneva, was a cultured upholder of Protestant orthodoxy in an age of decline and a supporter of the evangelical awakening in Geneva after the Napoleonic wars. From 1834, he taught in a shadow faculty of evangelical theology in the Swiss city. No work of Gausson's has had a wider influence than *Theopneustia: The Bible Its Divine Origin and Entire Inspiration* (Paris, 1840; Edinburgh and London 1841). This work was continuously in print for at least 130 years, with the latest American edition being issued in 1971. Yet this work rankled some reviewers

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71 The planting of the seeds of this renaissance in evangelical biblical theology in pre-war Britain are described in Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 83.

72 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

73 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

74 This notion was explicitly promoted by Gausson, though he as source of it goes unacknowledged. See Marshall, *Inspiration*, 31; Pinnock, *Scripture Principle*, 34.

from the start. Francophone reviewers questioned its theological method. Those in the United Kingdom resented his criticisms of three native evangelical theologians: Daniel Wilson, John Dick, and J. Pye Smith, who argued that only varying degrees of a plenary inspiration had been required to produce the Bible. Impatient with this (it seemed to him concessive view), Gausson contended that inspiration had been uniformly oracular – i.e. prophetic in manner. USA reviews lionized the volume by judging it to represent historic orthodoxy. By the turn of the century, Gausson and portions of his argument had entered the evangelical mainstream and *Theopneustia* had become the handbook of a rising Fundamentalist movement. But was it perhaps a Trojan horse? And has recent evangelical theology eliminated some questionable emphases it introduced?

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