

**BOOK REVIEW**  
of  
Louis Gaussen,  
*God-Breathed: The Divine Inspiration of the Bible,*  
The Trinity Foundation, 2001 [1840].

This book is in the Evangel Library,  
and this review is presented by Larry D. Paarmann.

Louis Gaussen was a Swiss Reformed pastor, born in 1790, had his principal ministry in Geneva, and died in 1863. The Scotch layman Robert Haldane was one of those who had significant influence on Gaussen. Gaussen's defense of the full and detailed inspiration of Scripture by God is one of the principal works on this subject. What seems to distinguish it from other works is that he writes primarily to those who consider themselves Christian, who in some sense consider the Bible to be inspired. He makes no attempt to prove the existence of God or the truthfulness of the Christian faith, only that the Bible is fully and in detail the inspired Word of God, not only in general thoughts or basic doctrine, but down to the individual words (plenary inspiration). On page 48 Gaussen writes, "We have not written these pages for the disciples of Porphyry, or of Voltaire, or of Rousseau; and it has not been our object to prove that the Scriptures are worthy of belief. Others have done this, and it is not our task. We address ourselves to men who respect the Scriptures, and who admit their veracity."

Well then, if this work is for Christians, just how important can the conclusions be, since there are differing opinions among Christians? Is it primarily a matter of academic interest, or does it impact our faith to the core? On page 25 Gaussen writes, "First of all, I do not think that after we have come to know that Christianity is divine, there can be presented to our mind any question bearing more essentially on the vitality of our faith than this: 'Does the Bible come from God? Is it altogether from God? Or may it not be true, as some have maintained, that there occur in it maxims purely human, statements not exactly true, exhibitions of vulgar ignorance and ill-sustained reasoning? – in a word, books, or portions of books, foreign to the interests of the faith, subject to the natural weakness of the writer's judgment, and alloyed with error?' Here we have a question that admits of no compromise, a fundamental question – a question of life. It is the first that confronts you on opening the Scriptures, and with it your religion ought to commence."

In Chapter 1, Gaussen defines what is meant by divine inspiration. In Chapter 2 a Scriptural proof of divine inspiration is given. Chapter 2 is probably the most important chapter in the book, at least to me. If you have in mind only a couple of verses that speak to divine inspiration, such as perhaps II Timothy 3:16 & 17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work", then you may be surprised, as I was, as to just how thoroughly and completely divine inspiration is taught throughout the Bible. Gaussen presents how thoroughly divine inspiration is taught in the Old Testament, as well as in the New. He stresses how the Apostles made use of the Old Testament, and especially what our Lord taught about the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. It is perhaps much more thoroughly developed and presented throughout the Bible than you may have thought.

In Chapter 3, Gaussen presents a catechism of instruction on divine inspiration. In Chapter 4, Gaussen examines objections to plenary inspiration. He deals with the standard objections (the "usual suspects") in this chapter, such as translations (most of us can't read the originals anyway), various readings (even if we could read them, we don't have the originals anyway), supposed contradictions of fact, etc. His presentation of how the Apostles use the Septuagint is quite helpful.

In Chapter 5, Gaussen examines evasions to plenary inspiration. He deals with the concept of inspiration applying only to the thoughts of the writers and not their words, the possibility that the historical books should be excluded from divine inspiration (he offers very useful insights here), and with what some think may be "insignificant details."

In Chapter 6 (the last chapter, other than the Conclusion), Gaussen considers the proper role of sacred criticism. Properly applied, it can significantly assist in a better understanding of the original intent.

Down through the ages the Biblical writers have claimed divine inspiration, God's Holy Apostolic Church has always maintained such to be the case, and all those who have opposed this fundamental doctrine have failed in their attempts to undermine it. Our ultimate authority is what God has revealed!