

# **Interacting with Evangelical Scholarship: Lessons from the Niagara Fundamentalists (1875-1900)**

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To what extent and in what ways can Fundamentalists learn from the broader world of evangelical scholarship? Most of us have numerous works of evangelical and even non-evangelical scholarship on our shelves, and we recommend many of these works to others. Presumably we do not intend such recommendations to be blanket endorsements; yet we would not engage with these books and authors unless we believed there was value to be found in their scholarship. Perhaps, guidelines in utilizing non-Fundamentalist sources would be helpful. I don't know that I am competent to give such advice, but I would like here to discuss a precedent for such interaction. James Brookes, the president of the Niagara Bible Conference for most of its history, had some interesting dealings with the scholarship of Princeton Seminary. This paper will introduce the reader to Brookes, consider his dealings with Princeton, and draw out some brief lessons for contemporary application.

## **James H. Brookes**

Pastor of a great church in St. Louis, active Presbyterian churchman at the local, state, and national levels, prolific author and editor, and long-time president of the Niagara Bible Conference, James H. Brookes was undoubtedly one of Fundamentalism's greatest leaders.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the year of Brookes's death, his son-in-law, David Riddle Williams, wrote Brookes's biography, *James H. Brookes: A Memoir* (St. Louis: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1897). Williams included many interesting anecdotes but left a great many questions unanswered. In 1995, nearly a century later, Carl Sanders wrote "The Premillennial Faith of James Hall Brookes" (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary). Showing a thorough knowledge of Brookes's writings, Sanders discusses his life and theology. Pettegrew's dissertation on the Niagara Bible Conference ("The Historical and Theological Contributions of the Niagara Bible Conference to American

Brookes captured perhaps more than any other single individual the genius of nineteenth century Fundamentalism.<sup>2</sup> He was a moderate Calvinist<sup>3</sup> and a zealous soulwinner; he was a staunch and loyal Presbyterian as well as a leader in numerous interdenominational efforts; he was a dispensationalist and a careful student of the Bible, but his theological study always had practical rather than strictly scholarly motivations. In all of these areas, Brookes illustrated the typical nineteenth century Fundamentalist.

After graduating from Miami College and spending one semester at Princeton Seminary, Brookes became the pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Dayton, Ohio, in 1854. The 24-year-old saw rapid growth in his church and soon asked the elders to expand the facilities. They promised to do so, but by 1858 they had taken no action. He therefore accepted a call from the Second Presbyterian Church in St. Louis. Again, Brookes's church grew rapidly. At his urging, the church launched an extension effort and helped establish the 16<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Street Presbyterian Church in the St. Louis suburbs.

When the Civil War broke out, Brookes took a clear but unpopular stand. He would not support either side in his preaching or public prayer. When he became aware that some members of his congregation were angered by his refusal to pray for the Southern war effort, he resigned the church.<sup>4</sup> God, however, moved in the hearts of the members of the new satellite church on

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Fundamentalism" [Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976]) includes a long chapter on Brookes. His work is careful and very helpful.

<sup>2</sup> Brookes is the first name in Beale's list of twelve men he considers "the most significant Fundamentalist leaders" (*In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* [Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986], 354), although the list is not intended to be a ranking.

<sup>3</sup> By "moderate Calvinist," I mean that he held to the major tenets of Calvinism but did not emphasize them in his preaching or writing.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 97. Williams explains that although Brookes was himself a Southerner (from Tennessee), he "thought their course of action ruinous" (97). Also, throughout his ministry Brookes denied that preachers of the

16<sup>th</sup> Street to call Brookes as their pastor. In 1864 he accepted the call, and a relationship of over thirty years began.

After sixteen fruitful years, Brookes led the 16<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Street Church to sell its property and relocate in western St. Louis. Again, he sought a wider field of ministry. The church erected a new building in 1880 and became the Washington and Compton Avenue Church. Brookes pastored there until his death in 1897 (the last few years as pastor *emeritus*).<sup>5</sup>

Brookes served as president of the Niagara Bible Conference from the late 1870s until his death. Although the secretary, W. J. Erdman, did most of the organizational work for the conferences, Brookes impressed his powerful personality on the conference almost from the very beginning.

In 1875, Brookes, D. W. Whittle, and P. P. Bliss gathered a small private meeting near Chicago. The next year, the brethren assembled at Swampscott, Massachusetts. For the first five days, the meetings were private; then the brethren opened the services to the public for the last three days. After migrations to Watkins Glen, New York; Clifton Springs, New York for three years; Old Orchard, Maine; and Mackinac Island, Michigan, the conference settled at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Each year from 1883 to 1897 (with the exception of 1884, when the conference did not meet), the Believers' Meeting for Bible Study met at Niagara. In 1890 the brethren incorporated the conference and named it "The Niagara Bible Conference." After the

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Gospel should involve themselves with the things of Caesar (see "Gentile Dominion Dan. 2-7," *The Truth* 6 [1880]: 533, for his general attitude toward a Christian's involvement in government).

<sup>5</sup> The church is still standing and is called Memorial Presbyterian Church. Pettegrew, 124-26.

death of Brookes in 1897, the conference declined rapidly in vitality and finally ceased after the meeting in 1900.<sup>6</sup>

Brookes used his periodical *The Truth* to publicize the conferences and later to publish many of the conference addresses.<sup>7</sup> To describe the character of the conference participants, Brookes usually emphasized their doctrine of Scripture. He often affirmed that “every one of these leaders is a firm believer in the verbal inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures.”<sup>8</sup> Belief in verbal inspiration was clearly a *sine qua non* of participation in the Niagara conferences.

In 1878 the Niagara Bible Conference adopted an official creed of fourteen points, which it reaffirmed during its incorporation in 1890. Brookes is probably the author of the creed.<sup>9</sup> The first and ninth points deal with the doctrine of Scripture. They read as follows:

We believe “that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” by which we understand the whole of the book called the Bible; nor do we take the statement in the sense in which it is sometimes foolishly said that works of human genius are inspired, but in the sense that the Holy Ghost gave the very words of the sacred writings to holy men of old; and that His Divine inspiration is not in different degrees, but extends equally and fully to all

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 162-84. Pettegrew discusses the decline of the conference and is no doubt correct in attributing it primarily to the death of Brookes and the ensuing rancorous debate over the timing of the rapture of the Church.

<sup>7</sup> Brookes devoted a portion of *The Truth* to publishing sermons from the Niagara Bible Conference every year from 1883 until his death (with the exception of 1884).

<sup>8</sup> “Meetings for Bible Study,” *The Truth* 7 (1881): 481. A similar statement is found in his article entitled “Believers’ Meeting at Mackinaw,” [sic] *The Truth* 8 (1882): 385, in which he links belief in verbal inspiration with premillennialism, another important trait of the Niagara men. “As soon as one heartily receives the doctrine of verbal inspiration, and believes the Bible means what it says, he is bound to be a premillennialist.” Interestingly, Brookes does acknowledge “brethren” at the conference who were not premillennialists. See also “Bible Study at Niagara,” *The Truth* 9 (1883): 253, in which Brookes characterizes “all” of the speakers as proponents of verbal inspiration and says their “single aim” is to declare the “mind of the Spirit.”

<sup>9</sup> This is Pettegrew’s conclusion, 139-40. He mentions that Brookes included the creed in his contribution to *Suggestive Outline Bible Studies and Bible Readings*, ed. John Elliott, 23-26. Much of the language of the creed is certainly reminiscent of Brookes’s writing. See for example point V, in which the powerful succession of prepositional phrases is typical of Brookes’s prose, and point XI, in which the Holy Spirit is said to seek “to occupy us with [Christ], and not with ourselves nor with our experiences,” a thought quite common in Brookes’s books and articles.

parts of these writings, historical, poetical, doctrinal and prophetic, and to the smallest word, and inflection of a word, provided such word is found in the original manuscripts: 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:13; Mark 12:26, 36; 13:11; Acts 1:16; 2:4.

We believe that all the Scriptures from first to last center about our Lord Jesus Christ, in His person and work, in His first and second coming; and hence that no chapter even of the Old Testament is properly read or understood until it leads to Him; and moreover that all the Scriptures from first to last, including every chapter even of the Old Testament, were designed for our practical instruction: Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 17:2, 3; 18:28; 26:22, 23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11.

Thus, not only does inspiration stand at the head of the Niagara theology as the first thing to be affirmed, but man knows Christ Himself only through the Scriptures, “including every chapter even of the Old Testament.” One’s view of the Bible, according to Brookes and the Niagara men, is not only primary but central to one’s theology and view of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

### **Princeton and the Early Fundamentalists**

American Presbyterians founded Princeton Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1812. The school became a bastion of Reformed orthodoxy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and boasted an almost unparalleled succession of outstanding theology professors: Archibald Alexander (1812-40), Charles Hodge (1841-78), Archibald Alexander Hodge (1879-86), and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1887-1920). Mark Noll delineates the “grand motifs of the Princeton Theology” as follows: “devotion to the Bible, concern for religious experience, sensitivity to the American experience, and full employment of Presbyterian confessions, seventeenth-century Reformed systematians, and the Scottish philosophy of Common Sense.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Hall, evaluating Brookes’s role at Niagara, says, “Foundational to the Niagara doctrinal statement is the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture.” Joseph H. Hall, “James Hall Brookes—New School, Old School, or No School,” *Presbyterian: Covenant Seminary Review* 14 (1988): 48.

<sup>11</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1983), 13.

The Niagara Fundamentalists had a great deal in common with the Princetonians. They shared the Princeton devotion to Scripture and concern for religious experience, and, in their apologetics, they were probably equally indebted to Common Sense Realism.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the premillennialism of the Niagara men was extremely distasteful to the Princetonians, who were committed to Reformed Theology with its amillenarian or postmillenarian perspectives. The Niagara men also eagerly embraced the revival preaching and strategies of Moody and other late-nineteenth-century evangelists. Princeton remained cool to what it regarded as Arminian-inclined revivalism. The divide between the two groups was significant, and only extreme pressure from burgeoning modernism forced the two into an uneasy alliance in the early twentieth century.<sup>13</sup>

This paper will consider interaction between the two camps regarding only their doctrine of scripture. Niagara and Princeton shared the same basic stance on scripture. Interaction requires some level of commonality, and the similarity between the two positions means that the few differences will be notable and interesting. This interaction involves a specific collision of the two views in 1882, and a more general influence exerted from one view to the other during the decades of the 1880s and 90s.

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<sup>12</sup> For an evaluation of the extent to which Scottish Realism impacted the Niagara Fundamentalists, see “Fundamentalist Bibliology,” pages 93-114. I argue there that Scottish Realism clearly impacted the methodology of both the Niagara and Princeton apologists (especially, A. T. Pierson and B. B. Warfield, respectively), but it does not account for the theological conclusions these evangelicals reached. The modern tendency to attribute belief in inerrancy and/or dispensationalism to the naïve philosophical outlook inculcated by Scottish Realism is itself unsophisticated and inaccurate.

<sup>13</sup> See Paul C. Kemeny, “Princeton and the Premillennialists: The Roots of the *mariage de convenance*” in *American Presbyterians* 71 (1993): 17-30.

## Initial Interaction between Brookes and the Princeton Theologians

In 1881 A. A. Hodge of Princeton and B. B. Warfield<sup>14</sup> of Western Theological Seminary in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, collaborated on an article for *The Presbyterian Review* entitled “Inspiration.”<sup>15</sup> The article is a masterpiece, concisely and precisely defining the concursive view of the mode of inspiration, i.e., that the Spirit superintended the process of inspiration in such a way that the resultant writings are fully human in their composition and form and yet exactly what God desired to give as revelation. Hodge had expressed this view in a nutshell in the second edition of *Outlines of Theology* in 1879, and Warfield spent the next forty years explicating the doctrine in a series of weighty articles.<sup>16</sup>

Warfield explained that the sovereign control of free moral agents in the production of Scripture is perfectly analogous to God’s sovereign control of free moral agents in other spheres. As Warfield expresses it, “If God wished to give His people a series of letters like Paul’s, He prepared a Paul to write them, and the Paul He brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield was not yet officially a Princetonian when he collaborated on this article. He taught New Testament Literature and Language at Western Theological Seminary in Allegheny, Pa., from 1878 to 1886. From 1887 until his death in 1921, Warfield taught theology at Princeton. See Noll, *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1983), 15-16; and W. Andrew Hoffercker, “Benjamin B. Warfield,” *The Princeton Theology*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 63-91.

<sup>15</sup> A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, “Inspiration” (*The Presbyterian Review* 6 [Apr. 1881]: 225-60).

<sup>16</sup> A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology: Rewritten and Enlarged* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 65-81. Later editors collected several of Warfield’s articles and published them as *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Puritan & Reformed, 1948).

<sup>17</sup> Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 155.

For Warfield and the other Princetonians, therefore, the proper view of inspiration fit snugly into their Calvinistic conception of theology in general.<sup>18</sup> No more violence is done to the will of a David whom the Spirit bears along as he writes divinely-inspired poems than is done to the will of a Saul of Tarsus whom the Spirit irresistibly draws to salvation on the Damascus Road. Furthermore, once Providence has provided the man and the circumstances required to produce the Scriptures, inspiration guarantees that what is written will be absolutely trustworthy. *How* inspiration can guarantee this inerrant quality is a mystery beyond human comprehension, but the fact remains that Scripture, which is fully human, is rendered inerrant because it is also fully divine.<sup>19</sup> The nearest Warfield and A. A. Hodge will come to explaining the fact of inspiration is to say that its “essence was superintendence,”<sup>20</sup> although they define superintendence in very active terms. The Spirit actively guided the process of revelation and inscripturation to an inerrant and fully trustworthy final form. The genius of the Princetonian definition—and the apparent motivation of the Princetonians—is to do equal justice to the obviously human character of the Scriptures and their divine trustworthiness.

The genius of the approach of the Niagara Fundamentalists, on the other hand, was to safeguard the divine trustworthiness of Scripture against the inroads of modern thought. They paid occasional lip service to the human side of Scripture, but their overarching concern was to

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<sup>18</sup> Hodge and Warfield recognized this fact clearly. They stated, “Our conception of revelation and its methods must be conditioned upon our general views of God’s relation to the world, and His methods of influencing the souls of men. The only really dangerous opposition to the Church doctrine of Inspiration comes either directly or indirectly, but always ultimately, from some false view of God’s relation to the world, of His methods of working, and of the possibility of a supernatural agency penetrating and altering the course of a natural process” (“Inspiration,” *The Presbyterian Review* 1, no. 6 [1881]: 227). In his earlier work, *Outlines of Theology*, Hodge is even clearer. “However it may be with the Arminian, the Calvinist has no special difficulty here. We cannot understand how the Infinite Spirit acts upon the finite spirit, in providence or in grace. The case of inspiration is so far forth precisely analogous” (*Outlines of Theology* [London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1864], 78-79).

<sup>19</sup> Hodge and Warfield, “Inspiration.” See especially “The Genesis of Scripture,” 228-31.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

defend the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture. Therefore, both Princeton and Niagara were determined to defend the supernatural character of the Scriptures against theological liberalism, but they went about the task in different ways because of their different concerns.

In an 1875 article that groups superintendence with elevation, direction, and suggestion,<sup>21</sup> Brookes had explicitly denied that inspiration consists of superintendence. His evident purpose was to rule out indirect influences of the Spirit in the production of Scripture. For Brookes, inspiration requires the immediate presence of the Spirit. Brookes discovered the Hodge/Warfield article in 1882, about a year after it was published. He did not cross swords with the Princetonians over the word *superintendence*, however. Evidently, they explained superintendence in sufficiently active terms that Brookes was satisfied.<sup>22</sup>

Brookes did criticize the Hodge/Warfield article at two points. The first of these was the relationship between inspiration and revelation. Second, Brookes objected to the way the Princetonians described the human elements in the production of scripture.

First, though as staunch defenders of inspiration as have ever lived, the Princetonians carefully separated the truth of Christian revelation from the doctrine of inspiration.<sup>23</sup> Warfield

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<sup>21</sup> "Inspiration," *The Truth* 1 (1875): 339-40. Brookes has borrowed these categories directly from Gausson's *Theopneustia*. Gausson says that certain English divines distinguished these four degrees of inspiration in the Scriptures. He repudiates these distinctions as unnecessary and unbiblical. His own definition of inspiration, however, essentially views the Spirit's action as superintendence just as Warfield and Hodge will forty years later. The early Fundamentalists seem to have been more dependent on Gausson's *Theopneustia* than on any other single work on inspiration.

<sup>22</sup> "Inspiration," *The Truth* 8 (1882): 490-95.

<sup>23</sup> A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, "Inspiration" (*The Presbyterian Review* 6 [Apr. 1881]: 225-60). They discuss the point on pages 226-27, the conclusion of which is the following: "Nor should we ever allow it to be believed that the truth of Christianity depends upon any doctrine of Inspiration whatever. Revelation came in large part before the record of it, and the Christian Church before the New Testament Scriptures. Inspiration can have no meaning if Christianity is not true, but Christianity would still be true and divine, and being so, would stand, even if God had not been pleased to give us, in addition to His revelation of saving truth, an infallible record of that revelation absolutely errorless, by means of Inspiration" (227).

often repeated the claim that if there “were no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true,”<sup>24</sup> and this position became the standard at Princeton for many years.<sup>25</sup> The Princeton approach was to make inspiration merely one of the facts of Christianity. Once one establishes the “general trustworthiness” of Christian revelation, they reasoned, he is in a position to argue from the record of that revelation for the doctrine of inspiration. Indeed, inspiration becomes the last fact of the Scriptures to be proved.<sup>26</sup>

Brookes’ awareness of the Hodge/Warfield article of 1881 resulted from someone writing an article that attempted to defend the critical views of Charles Briggs and Henry Preserved Smith.<sup>27</sup> This author quoted Hodge and Warfield and claimed that their views supported those of Briggs and Smith. After Brookes read this claim, he obtained a copy of the Hodge/Warfield article in order to verify the citation. In his words, “Alas! it was found that the language was correctly quoted.”<sup>28</sup>

Brookes devoted five pages to reviewing the Princetonians’ article (a fairly long article by his standards), and lodged several complaints against it. Happily, however, Warfield corresponded with Brookes and satisfactorily settled all but one of these complaints. The one

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<sup>24</sup> Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), 210. See also pages 121-22 and 441-42.

<sup>25</sup> For example, as Professor John D. Davis embarked on a career of opposing the higher critics, he asserted that Princeton “has nothing that it regards as indispensable staked on the issue” (that is, on the outcome of the battle over inspiration). John D. Davis, *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 13 (Apr. 1902): 188-89, quoted in Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986), 52.

<sup>26</sup> Hodge and Warfield, “Inspiration,” 226. See also Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 210.

<sup>27</sup> Brookes identified neither the author nor the periodical in which this article appeared.

<sup>28</sup> “Inspiration,” *The Truth* 8 (1882): 491.

unresolved issue concerned the necessity of inspiration for the existence of the Christian religion. Brookes quoted a passage from the 1881 article that asserts quite clearly that Christian truth is not dependent on any doctrine of inspiration; in fact, the revelation of God's saving truth is independent of the record of that revelation and is, therefore, in no way compromised if that record is not infallible.<sup>29</sup> Brookes called this reasoning "nonsense" and asserted the following: "It is not possible for Christianity to have any existence at all apart from inspiration, and unless founded upon inspiration."<sup>30</sup>

Warfield wrote to Brookes in order to explain his position, and Brookes published the professor's letter in *The Truth* with a brief editorial introduction. Warfield asserts that Brookes's objection was "due to an unfortunate confusion" between inspiration and revelation.<sup>31</sup> In his introduction to Warfield's response, Brookes apologizes for calling the professors' position "nonsense," but he denies any confusion on his part. He even goes further and states the following: "Not only is Christianity dependent upon inspiration, and therefore can not exist without it, but in its true sense it is dependent upon verbal inspiration."<sup>32</sup>

For Brookes, inspiration was not simply a fact of revelation that one believes because experts have shown that the biblical writers are trustworthy authors. He and most of his Niagara associates regarded inspiration as essential in evaluating the trustworthiness of the biblical writers. The biblical writers wrote truth precisely because they wrote under the inspiration of the

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<sup>29</sup> In addition to the passage quoted in footnote 37, Hodge and Warfield state the following: "While the Inspiration of the Scriptures is true, and being true is a principle fundamental to the adequate interpretation of Scripture, it nevertheless is not in the first instance a principle fundamental to the truth of the Christian religion" (227).

<sup>30</sup> "Inspiration," *The Truth* 8 (1882): 492.

<sup>31</sup> "The Truth on Inspiration," *The Truth* 9 (1883): 129.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

Holy Spirit. Without this divine record, one could have no certain knowledge of either the great redemptive events or their true significance. The Scriptures, therefore, had absolute primacy in their theological constructions.

This episode from 1882-83 illustrates the willingness of a pastor with relatively little formal training to criticize the theology of the most notable scholars of his day if he thought their learning was leading them in the wrong direction. While neither Brookes nor any other Niagara men had worked out the full implications of presuppositions for the apologetic task, when Brookes saw the stance assumed toward inspiration by the Princetonians as a result of their classical apologetic, he bristled. If believers did not have inspired Scriptures, then their only recourse in interpreting divine revelation would be human rationality. For the Princetonians, this appeared adequate. Indeed, they employed human rationality in the analysis of historical data in order to determine the trustworthiness of the Scriptures in the first place. Only then did they commit themselves to it as divinely inspired. But if one regards depravity as affecting the ability of man to reason properly, as Brookes was inclined to do, he realizes the hopelessness of ever interpreting God or His works adequately without a divinely inspired lens through which to see reality. On this key point, then, Brookes was not prepared to concede any ground to the Princetonians, regardless of their depth of scholarship.

A second point of alarm for Brookes was based on a misreading of Hodge and Warfield in their 1881 article, quoted as follows:

[The Scriptures] were not designed to furnish an infallible system of speculative theology. They are written in human languages, whose words, inflections, constructions, and idioms bear everywhere indelible traces of human error. The record itself furnishes evidence that the writers were in large measure dependent for their knowledge upon

sources and methods in themselves fallible; and that their personal knowledge and judgments were in many matters hesitating and defective, or even wrong.<sup>33</sup>

Brookes could not conceive of how Warfield and Hodge could reconcile these statements with their clear affirmations of the Bible's inerrancy in other sections of the article. His criticism focused on three matters: the article's implication that human language necessarily implies human error; the article's assertion that the human authors depended on fallible resources; and the article's import that the writers made defective and wrong judgments.<sup>34</sup> Brookes published these criticisms in *The Truth* in the fall of 1882.

Warfield responded rather indignantly. Brookes published this response during the spring of 1883. Warfield begins by pointing out the context of the remarks Brookes quoted. Yes, human language bears "indelible traces of human error," but not the particular language used in the writing of Scripture. Yes, the authors of Scripture used fallible sources of information, but their use of this information was infallible. Yes, the writers of Scripture were mere men and thus had defective and even wrong judgment in some matters (for example, Peter compromising with the Judaizers in Antioch), but when they wrote Scripture, the Spirit guaranteed the trustworthiness of what they wrote.<sup>35</sup>

To his credit, Brookes prefaced the article that contained this response with an apology. In his large-hearted way, he states, "The critic is delighted to find that his objections, so freely

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted in "Inspiration," *The Truth* 8 (1882): 490. The quotation is from A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield's "Inspiration," *The Presbyterian Review* 1 (1881): 237-38. Warfield attributes this section to Hodge.

<sup>34</sup> "Inspiration," *The Truth* 8 (1882): 491-93.

<sup>35</sup> "The Truth on Inspiration," *The Truth* 9 (1883): 124-29.

expressed, were due to his blundering ignorance, rather than to their error.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, Brookes accepted that he had misunderstood the Hodge/Warfield explanation of inspiration.

The reason for Brookes’ misunderstanding, however, was probably the general tenor of Brookes’s explanations compared to those of the Princetonians. He emphasized the miraculous in the production of Scripture; they emphasized the providential process. For Brookes, the Spirit *intervenes* in history to produce a supernatural product impossible without His intervention. The Princetonians argued that the Spirit bore men in the direction God had sovereignly prepared them to go; the Niagara Fundamentalists emphasized the fact that the Spirit bore men where they otherwise could not go.

Initially, this different emphasis of the Niagara men resulted in a somewhat out-of-balance understanding of the mode of inspiration. In the 1870s, Brookes, the Boston Baptist pastor A. J. Gordon, and others freely used the language of dictation in their attempts to explain the mode of inspiration. Over the next two decades, their language changed so that they eventually expressed the concursive view most notably associated with the scholars at Princeton. One can trace this change particularly in the writings of Brookes, who devoted many articles to the doctrine of Scripture. Although it is impossible to demonstrate with certainty the catalysts in this change, it seems very likely—given his interaction with the Princeton article of 1881—that the Princetonian scholarship was a key factor in guiding Brookes to a more mature, evangelical position on inspiration.

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

## The Maturation of Brookes's Thought on Inspiration

In the 1870s and 80s, Brookes occasionally stated that the Spirit “dictated” the Scriptures. Usually, he was attempting to emphasize the divine authority and character of the written Word. For example, in 1880 he wrote “Hyperbolic Language,” in which he denied that the Bible contains any examples of hyperbole. An hyperbole, Brookes reasoned, is a statement that conveys more than the exact truth, and therefore, strictly speaking, it conveys falsehood. But no one dare assert “that writings which God dictated contain hyperbolic language, that is, language not strictly true.”<sup>37</sup> Brookes not only says that God’s authorship requires the writing to be absolutely true, but he also implies that God’s authorship excludes human literary categories such as hyperbole.<sup>38</sup>

In 1881, the year the Hodge/Warfield article on inspiration appeared, Brookes also used dictation to fortify his argument that Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews, he says, “was written at the dictation of the Holy Ghost by the apostle Paul.”<sup>39</sup> He amassed many of the usual arguments to establish this contention, but his crowning argument came from 2 Peter 3:15-16. Peter was writing to the Hebrews (he cites 1 Peter 1:1), and he says that Paul wrote to these people concerning “the longsuffering of our Lord.” Where else in Paul’s writings, Brookes asks, could this be true except in the book of Hebrews? “Hence it is strange that so many still discuss

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<sup>37</sup> “Hyperbolic Language,” *The Truth* 6 (1880): 347.

<sup>38</sup> In 1877 he had reasoned in a similar vein in the article “God’s Word Not Poetry” (*The Truth* 3 [1877]: 15). To argue that God’s Word contains no poetry would require an astonishing naiveté; however, Brookes is apparently ruling out poetry only “in the common acceptance of the term,” that is, as including rhetorical and imaginative excess.

<sup>39</sup> “Books of the Bible: Hebrews,” *The Truth* 7 (1881): 361.

the question whether Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, when the Holy Ghost by the pen of Peter declares that he was the author.”<sup>40</sup>

Brookes indicated at times his view of the relationship between the Spirit and the human writer of Scripture. Brookes’s 1885 discussion of 1 Samuel 17 is enlightening. He mentions the fact that David chose five smooth stones out of the brook as he sallied out to meet Goliath. The word translated “five,” Brookes says, is a word that also means “brave” or “ready for battle.” Thus, this number is not haphazard but was chosen for our admonition. Brookes foresees that some will demure at such an interpretation. He anticipates their objection by asserting, “Whether David thought of this is not the question: the Holy Spirit thought of it and has mentioned it for our instruction.”<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, he denies that David thought of this symbolism as he scooped stones out of the stream, but he ignores the human author of 1 Samuel altogether. For Brookes, the intention of the author is strictly the intention of the Author, the Holy Spirit.

Confirmation of this tendency in Brookes is his habit of attributing passages to the Spirit. He regularly cites Scripture passages as the product of the Spirit without any mention of the human author. In the footnote below are three articles from 1883 and one from 1886 in which he uses this language.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “Epistle to the Hebrews,” *The Truth* 15 (1889): 111. He repeated this argument twice more in the next three years in *The Truth*: “Three Jewish Epistles,” *The Truth* 15 (1889): 305-7, and “Answers to Correspondents,” *The Truth* 18 (1892): 107.

<sup>41</sup> “David and Goliath,” *The Truth* 11 (1885): 248.

<sup>42</sup> For example, see “Set Thine House in Order,” *The Truth* 9 (1883): 50-51, in which Brookes says “As the Holy Ghost writes to Timothy.” For similar examples, see “Faith Triumphant,” *The Truth* 9 (1883): 53; “Jesus Looking Upon Men,” *The Truth* 9 (1883): 149; and “The Faith Cure, or Healing by Prayer,” *The Truth* 12 (1886): 214-228.

One of the incidental points of contention between Brookes and Warfield/Hodge in the exchange mentioned above was the Princeton assertion that the biblical writers used fallible sources. In Brookes's response to the Princeton article, he does not choose to address this issue. Brookes, however, wrote articles both before and after the exchange that show how far he initially diverged from Princeton on this point.

In 1880 he discussed the preface to Luke's Gospel. An analysis of this passage by the noted British commentator Henry Alford occasioned an article by Brookes in *The Truth*.<sup>43</sup> Alford made the rather innocuous remarks that the preface is in purer Greek than the rest of the Gospel and that this is attributable partly to the fact that Luke wrote it himself rather than translated it from Hebrew sources. Brookes's response is fascinating:

This distinguished expositor, with all of his personal love for the Saviour, and all of his general soundness in the faith, was sadly in error with regard to the inspiration of the Scriptures. There is not the slightest evidence that Luke translated his gospel from Hebrew sources; and if the preface "is purer Greek than the contents of the Gospel, and also more laboured and formal," it is because the Holy Ghost so willed.<sup>44</sup>

Brookes's subsequent discussion is perhaps even more illuminating. He addresses the key phrase in the preface and argues that the Greek word translated *from the very first* actually means "from above." He attempts to prove this assertion by tracing the word through the Scriptures and demonstrating that the word means "from above" everywhere else that it is used.<sup>45</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>43</sup> Brookes often referred to Alford and virtually always in a positive light. He used Alford's translation and his commentaries and turned to him as an authority in textual matters.

<sup>44</sup> "Preface to Luke's Gospel," *The Truth* 6 (1880): 551.

<sup>45</sup> The word does mean "from above" in John 3:31, 19:11, James 1:17, 3:15,17; it refers to the top of the veil of the temple in Matthew 27:31 and Mark 15:38 and to the top of Jesus' garment in John 19:23; most scholars translate it "again" in John 3:3,7 and Galatians 4:9 (though in these passages, Brookes argues, and perhaps rightly,

rather than saying that Luke thoroughly understood everything from the chronological beginning of the story, verse three teaches that Luke understood by divine inspiration all he needed to know. Furthermore, Luke's reference to others who had undertaken to write about Christ does not indicate that he used them as sources; on the contrary, he is writing precisely because they have done so apart from inspiration, and an inspired record is needed.<sup>46</sup>

Brookes does not cite any sources for this interpretation, but, as in other matters, he is probably dependent on Gaussen, who argues for this translation in his great work *Theopneustia*.<sup>47</sup> Few commentators either before, during, or since Brookes's time have adopted this view. It certainly seems tortuous. However, Scofield, Brookes's student and friend, cautiously included the interpretation in the notes of his famous Reference Bible.<sup>48</sup> Clearly, Brookes was concerned to protect the divine source of Luke's Gospel. He was uncomfortable with the notion that earlier written records contributed anything to inspired Scripture.

Brookes took a similar position with regard to the content of Mark's Gospel. Here he objected to the ancient tradition that Mark wrote as Peter's amanuensis.<sup>49</sup> Brookes's comments on this point will serve as a summary of his view of the importance of the human writers in the production of Scripture. He says,

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for "from above"). In Acts 26:5 the word clearly means "from the beginning," and the vast majority of commentators and translators take that to be the meaning in Luke 1:3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 551-54.

<sup>47</sup> Gaussen, *Theopneustia*, 87. Gaussen is endeavoring to prove that Mark and Luke though not apostles were nevertheless inspired in their writing. After devoting a paragraph to defending this translation of *anōthen*, he adds, however, that his argument does not depend on this view of the passage. He was evidently aware that his view had scant support among the commentators.

<sup>48</sup> Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, 1070.

<sup>49</sup> Edward Panosian, professor of church history at Bob Jones University, lists Justin Martyr, Papias, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus of Lyons, Origen, Epiphanius, Eusebius, and Jerome as authorities for this tradition. "The Gospel of Christ the Servant," *Focus on Mark (Biblical Viewpoint 11, no. 2 [1977]: 99)*.

The habit of Sunday School “Helps,” and other so-called “Helps,” of saying that “Mark must have had this account from Peter himself,” and that “Mark was Peter’s penman,” is wretched nonsense. Mark had his account from the Holy Ghost, and he was the penman of the Holy Ghost. There is a vast amount of trash in modern religious books and periodicals about Pauline style and Petrine style, which you would do well to blow away as the chaff of the summer threshing floor.<sup>50</sup>

For the majority of Brookes’s public ministry, he clearly advanced a dictation theory of inspiration. His primary concern was to safeguard the divine authority of the Scriptures. This concern is laudable and was the hallmark of early Fundamentalism in general. He seems, however, to have subordinated the human side of Scripture to an unhealthy degree.

In three later passages in *The Truth*, written during the last few years of his life, he specifically addressed this matter of dictation. These passages reflect a shift in how Brookes expressed himself and probably indicate an adjustment in his thinking.

In 1889 Brookes wrote a significant article entitled “Verbal Inspiration,” in which he addressed the issue of dictation.<sup>51</sup> He attacks the notion that God inspired the thoughts of the Bible but not the words by asking rhetorically which inspiration would require greater control of the writer. If inspiring the words makes man a machine, would not inspiring the thoughts do the same? Then he asks a very significant rhetorical question: “Does not God’s Spirit dwell in the believer, governing and guiding him, without changing his natural gifts and style, constraining him by the love of Christ, and yet leaving him a free agent?”<sup>52</sup> That is, of course, the question. Brookes had previously given few hints in his writings that the biblical authors were free agents.

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<sup>50</sup> “Answers to Correspondents,” *The Truth* 15 (1889): 209.

<sup>51</sup> “Verbal Inspiration,” *The Truth* 15 (1889): 13-16.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Three years later, Brookes wrote “The Inerrant Bible—Is It God’s Word, or Does It Merely Contain It?”<sup>53</sup> In the later stages of the article, Brookes produces a long list of nineteenth-century defenders of verbal inspiration. One of the defenders he lists is professor Auberlen, whom he quotes to the effect that the human authors were not authors at all but were rather merely hands or pens.<sup>54</sup> Brookes responds, “Perhaps such a view pushes the truth to an extreme, but it is unspeakably better than the carping and critical spirit which leads so many to speak of the great Book with undisguised contempt.”<sup>55</sup> Of course, Brookes had often himself referred to the biblical writers as the pens of the Holy Spirit. Now, at least, he acknowledged that this view is a bit extreme.

Finally, in 1895 Brookes wrote “Extent of Inspiration,” a brief summary of his standard defense of verbal inspiration.<sup>56</sup> He again mentions Auberlen and gives a longer section of the same passage he had quoted in 1892. Brookes comments, “If it had been added that the Holy Spirit used not only the hand or pen, but also the heart and mind of the writer, the definition would have been strictly correct.”<sup>57</sup> He was attempting to mitigate the obviously mechanical tendency in Auberlen’s passage.

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<sup>53</sup> *The Truth* 18 (1892): 405-20.

<sup>54</sup> The work that Brookes quotes is *The Divine Revelation*. However, Brookes may have simply quoted it from another source. If he had Auberlen’s work in hand, he badly misconstrued Auberlen’s meaning. The German theologian gives the statement quoted by Brookes as the substance of the “old Protestant doctrine of inspiration,” which position he then attacks as unhistorical and unscientific. See Auberlen, *The Divine Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867), 233-48 (Brookes quotes from page 234). Auberlen was certainly not a defender of verbal inspiration.

<sup>55</sup> “The Inerrant Bible—Is It God’s Word, or Does It Merely Contain It?” *The Truth* 18 (1892): 418.

<sup>56</sup> *The Truth* 21 (1895): 250-52.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

We noted earlier that Brookes often spoke of the Spirit speaking in Scripture with little or no notice of the human author. In the 1890s, he varied this expression somewhat. He typically spoke of the Spirit speaking through the human writer in the production of Scripture.<sup>58</sup> He could never bring himself to speak of a human author of Scripture without some comment on the Spirit's superintending presence.

Perhaps behind these brief comments on the nature of dictation lurks the proper view of the matter. Brookes certainly became uncomfortable with the bald declaration that Paul was the Holy Spirit's pen in the production of Scripture. Had he arrived at the concursive view which the Princetonians had been heralding for fifteen years? Like many evangelicals before and since, he was probably somewhere between the developed view of Princeton and the undeveloped view of a mechanical dictation.

What led him in this direction? During the 1890s, Brookes had occasion to interact with fellow Presbyterians on a national level. Before that time, his national activities had focused on his interdenominational work at Niagara. As a Presbyterian churchman, he was influential in his home state of Missouri but rarely participated in national politics. The trial of Charles A. Briggs, whom he had attacked in *The Truth* for years, brought him onto the national stage. He attended the General Assembly of 1893 and served on the committee that recommended suspension of Briggs from the Presbyterian ministry because of his denial of inspiration and other key doctrines. An historian of the trial, Max Rogers, believes that "a vigorous ultra-conservative force which had oriented itself about the Princeton doctrine of inspiration" had taken control of

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<sup>58</sup> See examples of this latter mode of speaking in "The Last Days," *The Truth* 16 (1890): 63; and in "Answers to Correspondents," *The Truth* 19 (1893): 351.

the Church's leadership during the months leading up to the Assembly in May.<sup>59</sup> Brookes's connection with these advocates of the "Princeton doctrine of inspiration" probably contributed to his re-thinking the one-sided position he had been advocating.

While this paper has not addressed the views of A. J. Gordon, A. T. Pierson, L. W. Munhall and other notable Niagara Fundamentalists, the gradual diminishing of dictation language is also discernible in some of their writings. Gordon, in particular, utilized dictation language throughout his ministry but when pressed for precision acknowledged the human role.<sup>60</sup>

The triumph of the Princetonian view—which, after all, simply embodied in precise form the historic doctrine of inspiration—is evident in the articles on inspiration found in *The Fundamentals* (1910-15). The contributors of these articles were all Bible conference men: James Gray, Munhall, William Moorehead, George Bishop, and Pierson. In fact, the articles by Munhall and Pierson had been written in the 1890s and then later included in *The Fundamentals* as prime examples of the conservative view of Scripture.

It could be that a more supernatural explanation for the origin of Scripture—dictation—was more naturally conducive to the Niagara men. But they were willing to interact with and learn from a more erudite scholarship and gradually adjust their views and verbal expressions accordingly.

While doing so, they remained committed to their own theological core. They did not waver in their dispensational hermeneutic, for instance, because of their exposure to the Reformed Theology at Princeton. There is no evidence that Brookes ever accepted the

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<sup>59</sup> Max GrayRogers, "Charles Augustus Briggs: Heresy at Union," *American Religious Heretics*, ed. George Shriver (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 122-23.

<sup>60</sup> See discussion in "Fundamentalist Bibliology," pages 77-78.

Princetonian insistence on a classical apologetic that relegated inspiration to the caboose of the train of thought relative to revelation. His final articles on inspiration continued to affirm it as a *sine qua non* of Christianity, a position that is part of our heritage as Fundamentalists.

This willingness to recognize in current evangelical scholarship points of contact and potential grounds for advance in their own understanding while maintaining strict adherence to the non-negotiables of their identity is a good example, I believe, for all subsequent Fundamentalists to follow.