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# The EVANGELICAL STUDENT

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WILLIAM J. JONES, *Editor*

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## Editorial

**I**N a sketch of Samuel Rutherford, Andrew A. Bonar writes something which bears heavily upon virile Christianity among students, as well as among lay believers. He says: "It might be instructive to enquire why it is that wherever godliness is healthy and progressive, we almost invariably find learning in the Church of Christ attendant on it; while on the other hand neglect of study is attended sooner or later by decay of vital godliness."

The averting of genuine study of the Word of God is a danger into which modern college and theological seminary students too easily fall. But a similar danger, and one just as perilous is the error of thinking that true learning and true piety are incompatible. How facile it is to divorce the knowledge of the universe—natural revelation from the knowledge of the Word—divine revelation, and assume that they are two different kinds of knowledge! The student, whether evangelical or not, finds it a sore temptation to forget truths of apparently remote subjects when he focuses his attention on what he regards as religious truth. In succumbing to this snare he errs greatly; he fails to consider that every truth has its ultimate significance only in its proper relation to God.

Arduous study of the world, or of God, or of man must ever be for the Christian student a reverent and a devotional study. But it should be *study*, the bending of the whole mind and soul on the object. And every devotional act of the Christian student, whether alone or with other Christians should be intelligent. Too often piety is severed from learning; too often students are inclined to pray or sing without the understanding!

If we as evangelical students are to make any deep and lasting impress upon the Church in our generation, we must not take our studies lightly nor our devotionals carelessly. Both have a place and both must be cultivated. It is not enough that we have fervor; there must be fuel of truth for the fervor to consume! God as a god of truth must ever be worshipped in spirit and in truth. And there is no more exacting and demanding task than that enjoined upon all believers by the Apostle, "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ". It is not knowledge which is to be cast down, but that—whether it be called knowledge or imagining—which exalts itself against the "knowledge of God". Religious mystics abound in student circles. They would have one believe that the more the intellect is submerged, the more godly one is likely to be. That is not the Apostle Paul's view, nor is it the view of saintly souls of the Church in all ages, whose hymns of praise, for instance, are redolent with devotional charm. They are rich in worship because they are rooted in the knowledge of God and not in man and his ephemeral emotional states.

## *The Doubter's Dialogue*

CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY

*"The Bible"*

Doubter: It is full of mistakes.

Believer: The Word of God is tried.

**“W**HAT a bleak and barren island, to have been the place where John saw a door open in heaven; and how small, too, and yet forever memorable. I will ascend to yonder highest point, where the ruins of the temple of Neptune stand. When the Greeks put up these beautiful temples, I suppose that in their ignorance they were feeling after God, and ignorantly, as Paul said, worshipping Him. Now I can look out over the sea. I will rest in this grotto protected from wind and sun. And was it here that Saint John, banished to this isle by the Emperor Domitian, and a prisoner in the lead mines heard the voice like the sound of many waters? How beautiful, now is yonder sea in the rising sun. There is the sea of glass, mingled with fire, just as John saw it.

‘The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece,  
Where burning Sappho loved and sung.  
Eternal summer gilds them yet,  
But all except their sun has set.’

“Another must be coming up the path. I am not the only one, then, who seeks this sacred spot.”

“A common interest evidently draws us here—yonder temple of Neptune.”

“It is indeed beautiful, and the ruin of a beautiful building is even more beautiful than the perfect building itself, because in the ruin there is sentiment and personality which the finished building, unmarred and unbroken, could never have. But it is not yonder temple of Neptune which has brought me here.”

“Perhaps, then, thou hast come to view the sunrise on the Ægean? Nowhere in the world is there a sunrise like it.”

“The sunrise is truly glorious. But what brings me here is neither the ruins of the temple, nor the beauty of the sunrise. I have come to sit where John sat when he saw the heavens opened. It was here on this island, and, according to a very ancient tradition, when he was resting in this very grotto, that he saw Christ standing amid the Seven Golden Candlesticks with the Seven Stars in His right hand.”

“And that, rather than the glories of the sunrise, or the beauty of the temple, hath brought thee here?”

“Yes; here I think of the city John saw, a city without a temple, and sitting here, I reflect upon that which has made yonder temple of Neptune, and temples all over this Eastern world, only an abandoned ruin. Men come today to view the ruins, but not to worship.”

“And what power think you has done that?”

"The power of divine revelation and inspired truth, what God hath said."

"But *hath* God said?"

"That is an old question, as old as Eden. That was what the tempter asked the woman in the—"

"Yes, it was I who asked it."

"Thou? Thou art not yet fifty years old!"

"I am older than I look. Since ever God created man and gave Him His laws, I have lived in the world; and my one question has been, Hath God said?"

"Then thou comest to the islands also?"

"Wherever faith goes, I go; as the shadow follows the sun, on sea or land, mainland or island."

"Each time I parted with thee, it seemed I could never forget thee nor fail to recognize thee when I should meet thee. Yet, in the ecstasy of the sacred places, all thought of thee departs from me. But now again thou dost appear, and even on Patmos Isle, where I would be in the Spirit on the Lord's day, I must contend with thee, thou Spirit of Universal Doubt."

"On yonder sea of glass, mingled with fire, thou readest the words 'And God said'. But what I see and read there is different; what I see there is this: 'Hath God said?'"

"But God *could* say—"

"Could?"

"Yes. I mean that if you grant a God, an infinite being, he certainly *could* reveal Himself to creatures made in His image."

"I do not grant a God. Nevertheless, I admit that if there were a God, He could, if He desired, reveal His will to man."

"You admit, then, that a revelation is possible. Is it not also desirable?"

"Desirable?"

"Yes. I mean that a man needs counsel to guide him and direct him through life, and he needs hopes to sustain him in death. Certainly an infallible guide would be a good thing."

"But the real question is whether there has been a revelation, not whether it is possible or desirable. The question is, Hath God said?"

"Yes. I am coming to that in a moment. We agree that a revelation is possible, and that it is desirable. Now what is the alternative of a revelation?"

"The alternative?"

"Yes."

"Why, no revelation."

"And that means—"

"That man has just his own reason and experience for a guide."

"And what is man's unaided reason, but a torch on a dark night, blown by the winds of passion or ignorance?"

"And you believe that there is something else than man's wisdom and experience?"

"Yes. I believe in a divine revelation."

"And if your God has given a revelation of His will, where are the records of it?"

"In the Bible. The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."

"Now we stand on our battlefield. You believe that the Bible contains what God said. But what makes you think that the Bible contains what God said and is of divine origin?"

"The Bible claims it."

"Where?"

"Everywhere. From its opening verses, 'And God said', clear down to the end of John's great book, we hear the echo of those words 'And God said'."

"But to claim that a thing is so, does not prove it to be so, does it?"

"No."

"The Book of Mormon claims to be a revelation given to Joseph Smith. But you do not believe that?"

"No."

"And the Koran claims to be a revelation given to Mohammed, but you do not believe that?"

"No."

"Why, then, do you believe the Bible contains a revelation?"

"Because everything about the Bible is in harmony with such a claim."

"What, for example?"

"The history of the Bible."

"Its history?"

"Yes. Not merely the history that it relates but the history of the making and the growth of the Bible. Today it is the one universal book printed in the language of every people on the face of the earth. Yet look at its history. For centuries the greater part of the Bible, the Old Testament, was the book of a despised people. Nothing could have seemed more unlikely than that the sacred book of the Jews should become the book of the world. But when the smaller part of the Bible, the New Testament was added to the Old, then the Bible was carried throughout the world and became the book of the people. It was like a river which, suddenly swollen by the rains, overflows its banks and pours itself over the earth. It is difficult to explain this remarkable history of the Bible on any theory of a purely human origin."

"But why do you call it a book, the Bible, when it is really a collection of books, sixty-six of them, thirty or more authors, and written at different periods of time through long ages?"

"And that again speaks of a divine origin. So many books by so many different authors belonging to different ages, some of them highly-trained minds like Moses and Paul, others rustics like Amos the herdsman,

or the fishermen of Galilee; and every kind of composition, too; history, predictions, biographies, soliloquies, odes, dramas, hymns, maxims, and laws. Yet through it all there runs an unity. It begins at the beginning, the creation of the world, and ends at the end, the new heaven and the new earth. The one grand theme is redemption from sin, and the one grand personality is the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you think of any other sixty-six books so written and at so many different periods of history, which, if collected together between two covers, would have the slightest semblance of unity?—”

“No.”

“But that is just what you find here in the Bible. It’s like one of the great cathedrals. One generation of workmen laid the foundations, another built the nave; another toiled on the chapels or the windows; another the choir; yet the cathedral is an unity. So it is with the Bible. We are conscious of the fact that different parts belong to different ages. Moses wrought in his age, David in his, Isaiah and Jeremiah in theirs, Matthew and Luke and Peter and John and Paul in their day and generation. Yet the Bible, like the cathedral, is one nave, transept, choir, chapels, soaring arches, glorious windows and aspiring pinnacles and towers.”

“But surely, for a book which claims to have a divine origin, there must be something more to be said than just the fact of its unity, or the history of its making and growth. More important, is the question of what is in the book.”

“That is a fair question, and I am willing to submit the Bible to that test. The heavens declare the glory of God. If there is a God, the heavens are certainly worthy of Him; the sun in all its glory—such a sunrise as we saw this morning, for example. So I agree with you that if the Bible has a divine origin, its contents ought to show it.”

“How do they show it?”

“By the very nature and character of its contents.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that what is in the Bible, whether it is true or not is just what you should have expected.”

“Expected?”

“Yes; if there is a revelation from God to man, what would you think would be the subject matter of such a revelation?”

“Why, I suppose, the origin of man in the world, the origin of sin and death, laws to guide him in the way of duty, and hopes to console him for the future.”

“And that is just what we find in the Bible. It claims to be a divine revelation, and when we look into it, we find that the subject matter is just what we should have expected in a divine revelation.”

“Yes, I grant that, but back of that is this—Is what is said true? Do the contents support the claim of a divine origin?”

“Take, first of all, the predictions, the prophecies, of the Bible. As Pascal said, ‘They are the greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ.’ To say that a thing will come to pass, and then bring it to pass thousands of

years or hundreds of years, or even a few years afterwards, that or nothing is the power of God. The utterance and the fulfillment of prophecy are enough to show the Bible has a divine origin."

"But if God gave predictions and prophecies, they ought to be so clear that you could understand them. You came here because you wanted to sit where John had the vision of the Apocalypse, with its alleged predictions as to the future of the Church and the world. But do you pretend to understand some of those predictions and strange figures? Can you say just who the beast is with two horns and which spake like a dragon? Do you know who the scarlet woman, seated upon the dragon, is? or the woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet? or the locusts who had hair like a woman and whose teeth were the teeth of lions?"

"No."

"Then what use is such a prophecy?"

"Even the obscure things in the Bible may be a part of our discipline and probation. But even in some of those passages which you have cited, it is not hard to see great moral and spiritual truth."

"What, for instance?"

"You spoke of the beast, and also of how the dragon persecuted the child born to the woman clothed with the sun. It is not difficult to see that we have there the history of the conflict between good and evil, between truth and error, between the Church and the world."

"And everything else in the Bible—are you able to understand it? Ezekiel's flaming wheel? Christ preaching to the spirits in prison? and the great prophecies uttered just before His death—can you always tell whether He's talking about the destruction of Jerusalem or the end of the world?"

"No."

"Well, what then have you got to say about those passages, for if the Bible is a book of divine origin, it ought to be clear and lucid."

"I remember what I saw once on the wall of Canterbury Cathedral."

"What was that?"

"It was a tablet with part of the conversation between Matthew and Prudence in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Prudence says to Matthew: 'What do you think of the Bible?'"

'It is the holy Word of God.'

'Is there nothing written therein but what you understand?'"

'Yes, a great deal.'

'What do you do when you meet with such places therein that you do not understand?'"

'I think God is wiser than I. I pray also that He will please to let me know all therein that He knows will be for my good.'"

"But what of doctrines of the Bible which contradict one another?"

"Which?"

"Why, the doctrine of God's sovereignty and predestination, and yet the doctrine of man's free will and responsibility. I can show them to

you in the same books, chapters, and even in the same verses of the Bible."

"The very fact that such doctrines are thus taught points to a divine origin."

"How?"

"Why if they were merely human documents you wouldn't find the two doctrines such as the divine sovereignty and the freedom of man's will taught side by side. Truths which have tasked the faith of believers in every age could hardly have suggested themselves to a merely human speculator as true."

"Well, now, we'll pass from things that you *can't* understand to things that you *can* understand."

"You mean—"

"The moral and ethical teachings of the Bible. Almost every sentiment in the New Testament can be discovered in some form in the Old Testament, and much that is in the Old Testament you can find in the ancient literatures or sacred books of other peoples and other ages. So that must mean, either that the Bible is not inspired, or that other literatures are inspired just as much as the Bible."

"No."

"Why not?"

"God has never left Himself without a witness, and these ethical and moral teachings are fragments and echoes of the original revelation given to man. But in the Bible, the main thing is redemption from sin, and all these teachings are to be taken in connection with that redemption. Jesus may have said things which sound like what Plato or Zoroaster or Confucius said; but that in no way invalidates the claim of Christ as a Redeemer or as a Saviour."

"But there are so many things the Bible does not tell. There are so many things I would like to know, and it seems to me that an inspired book ought to be able to tell me."

"But these very omissions point to a divine origin."

"Its omissions?"

"Yes. What the Bible does not tell you. The silence of the Bible is as eloquent as its speech. Take the silence of the Gospels about the child life of Jesus; not a word from the time He is twelve years of age until He is thirty; and not a word from the time He was brought back as an infant to Nazareth till He was twelve years of age. Then there is the silence of the Bible as to great world movements. Save where these touch the fortunes of God's people and the plan of revelation, the Bible looks down upon them as silently as the stars upon a battlefield. Then there is the strange silence of the books of Moses on the subject of the future life. It looks as if a man brought up as Moses was among the Egyptians, where such emphasis was given to the future life, must have been divinely inspired when he wrote a code of laws in which the rewards and punishments of the future state are not mentioned. We are curious, too, to know a great deal about heaven. But the New Testament, save for a few great principles of that life, is silent."

“How can I argue with a man who says that even what the Bible leaves out points to its divine origin! But now we’ll come to something different. You say the contents declare the book divine. But I discover in the Bible inaccuracies, contradictions and false and immoral teaching.”

“Where are the inaccuracies?”

“At the very start. The Bible says, God made the world in six days.”

“How many did it take to make the world?”

“Take? I don’t know. But not six days certainly.”

“Sixty? or six hundred? six thousand? or six millions, billions? trillions?”

“I don’t know.”

“Yet, you *do* know it was not made in six days. But how do you know? You were not there.”

“No. Neither were you.”

“And yet you say you know that the world was not made in six days. What we *do* know is, that there has been a long period of change and growth and development in the physical world. Just how long that is, is a guess; and one man’s guess is as good as another’s. How long it took to bring into existence the original matter which since then has been shifted and changed and altered, neither you nor I nor the wisest scientist or theologian knows or can know. The Bible says it was done in six days. God could do it, for God is infinite, yet those days may be used in the sense of long periods and epochs of time. A millennial day is spoken of and many places in the Bible where a solar day, as we understand it, is not meant.”

“Then you think there is much in the Bible, in the Book of Genesis, as well as much in science, that we do not understand?”

“Much indeed; and until we do, let us be careful about saying that one contradicts the other.”

“But there are inaccurate statements and mistakes.”

“Where?”

“In many places. But I mention this one. The Gospel of Matthew, in telling of how Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver says this was in fulfillment of a prophecy in Jeremiah; whereas, the only prophecy like it at all is in Zechariah, and not Jeremiah.”

“Jeremiah might have used such a statement also. There is no reason to think that everything Jeremiah said is in his one book. Some think that the name Zechariah, instead of Jeremiah, got in through the mistake of a careless scribe who was copying the records; and some, I suppose, would be willing to say that Matthew quotes the main thing correctly, but made a slip as to remembering the author, and yet that would not affect their idea of the inspiration of the Bible.”

“But what about the wrong teachings in the Bible?”

“Which do you mean?”

“It praises bad men.”

“Whom?”

“David. It calls him a man after God’s heart, and yet he was cruel,



sensual, a murderer, an adulterer of the worst sort. Yet both Old Testament and the New Testament speak of him as a man after God's own heart."

"That is said of David *before* his fall, and not afterward; and it is said of David in contrasting him with King Saul who set his will against the will of God. David with all his faults, too, was a man of wonderful magnanimity, generosity, full of thankfulness, and although he did sin deeply, he repented greatly. Then there is one thing about David you forget."

"What?"

"How terribly he was punished for his sin. The sword was never to depart from his house. Certainly, no one would ever get the idea from what the Bible tells us about David that God overlooks sin."

"But what about the indecent passages?"

"Indecent?"

"Yes. The passages that you would not read aloud in any company."

"There are things which one might not think it appropriate to read aloud, and yet which, being read, would do no harm, but rather good. Of the passages to which you refer, it may be said that the Bible deals with human nature just as it is; and human nature is a very terrible thing. The Bible doesn't hide that fact."

"Then you think these passages are to be justified, as you justify the passages in the realistic sex novels of the day?"

"No. I do not justify those passages in the fiction of the day. No one can read them without having his imagination tainted, but no one ever read the passages which describe sin, and especially the sins of the flesh, in the Bible, and was tempted to experiment with that kind of sin."

"But still would you read them aloud?"

"As I remember they were all read aloud at family worship as we went through the Bible. Whenever I heard them all that it suggested to me was that sin was a terrible thing."

"How does a man feel when he is inspired?"

"I don't know. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The fact is related, but not the manner and the mystery."

"Mystery again!"

"Yes. Great is the mystery of godliness. Here John heard the voice and saw Christ standing amid the Seven Golden Candlesticks, and here he heard—But see!—While we have been discussing this subject, the storm has been gathering. How quickly that placid sea, when first we came here, like a sea of glass, has changed to a sea of rage and confusion. Look at those black clouds driving past us in the heavens; and everywhere you can see the white teeth of the waves; and here these waves hurling themselves against the rocky cliff below us and reaching almost to our lofty seat, as if they would tear the island down, and now the flash of the lightning, the crash of thunder, the scream of the wind and the sweep of

the rain. How glorious, and yet how terrible. But look!—there at the mouth of this grotto—”

“Yes—It is one of the gods come down to his temple again—Neptune or Zeus or—”

“No. There never were such gods. There is but one God only, the living and the true God—thou who hast come on the wings of the tempest, thou with that great eagle upon thy shoulder, Who art thou?”

“The Prisoner of Patmos!”

“Patmos. Thou, to whom a door was opened in heaven; who saw the sea of glass, and the Lamb upon His throne?”

“The same.”

“Holy seer! Thy books I love. Yet there is much there that I do not understand, nor expect to understand, until I stand where thou standest. But John, thou with the eagle’s gaze, one word from thee, here on Patmos’s isle, which shall tell the purpose and end of thy writings and all the writings of Holy Scripture.”

“These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.”

“Ah, yes; life! life! life!—”

“Now the storm is over. Again the sea is calm; and look! Spirit of Doubt, spanning the heavens is the rainbow. So God’s Word spans the stormy sky of man’s history and speaks to us of the divine peace and joy and life. Spirit of Doubt, hitherto thou hast read only to find fault. But now, wilt thou read to find peace and life and Christ? Here is this book, the Bible which I brought with me to read in this grotto. This island could not buy it from me. Yet will I gladly give it thee. Better hands than mine have smoothed its pages; the tongue that once I used to hear reading these verses now praises the Lamb that was slain; and the eyes that once scanned these pages now behold Him of Whom they testify. Here, Spirit of Doubt, wilt thou take it, and read it in humility and reverence? We have discussed the history of the Bible, and spoken of its contents, its difficulties, its omissions; but most important of all, Spirit of Doubt, is its influence. It has saved men from sin, and has brought them to Christ. No? Art thou gone? Hast thou fallen over this cliff? Thou wouldst not take the Book. Didst thou fear this Book which had lighted others the way to heaven?”

“O Holy Spirit, Fountain of Inspiration, Thou who didst move holy men of old to write the divine oracles, and who in all ages hast kept burning through the world’s darkness the lamp of revelation; Thou who art the inspirer of the Scriptures, create faith in them so that they who read shall find Eternal Life. O Word of God; O wisdom from on high, O lamp divine, when dark the night and hard and lonely the way, when rains of sorrow fall, shine Thou, Eternal Lamp, and guide my pilgrim feet until at last to heaven I come, and there, in that better country where they need no candle neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, behold the Living Word Himself.”