

Philosophy, the Bible and the Supernatural

A Public Testimonial and Defense of the Christian Faith

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At the end of 1962, a philosophy teacher at the University of British Columbia issued a public statement which attacked belief in God, and in the Bible as the Word of God. Several Christian ministers on the West Coast protested, and were then challenged to a public debate, under the auspices of the U.B.C. Philosophy Department. Subsequently, the challenge was withdrawn, but having accepted it, the ministers concerned were asked to make ten-minute statements to a university gathering, defending their belief in Christianity. Approximately six hundred students and faculty members were in attendance on January 25, 1963.

One of the speakers was Rev. Derek Prince, M.A., one-time philosophy Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. His statement at the University of British Columbia is given inside.

Derek Prince (1915 – 2003)

King's Scholar, Eton College

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When the Sadducees put forward a supposed objection to the Scriptures, Christ answered, “Do you not therefore err, because you know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God?” Christ states here two main reasons why people fail to understand Christianity. First, because they do not know accurately what the Bible actually teaches. Second, because they have no personal experience of God’s power. I therefore propose, first, to state objectively certain aspects of the Bible’s teaching with reference to philosophy; and secondly to relate a small part of my own experience of God’s power.

Bible and Philosophy

First, then, a number of propositions clearly stated by the Bible with reference to philosophy.

1. *The Bible states that it is not possible for any person by philosophic argument or speculation to come to know God in the way in which the Bible reveals Him.* Therefore, the fact that a philosopher himself comes to the same conclusion does not disprove the Bible, but actually confirms it. If philosophic speculation could give such knowledge, then the Bible would be both unnecessary and incorrect.
2. *The Bible states that God has given men sufficient general evidence of His existence and His power, and that false views in this respect are not the outcome of purely rational argument, but are affected by moral and spiritual factors in man’s nature.* Confirmation of this can be found in the fact that many different philosophers, who have set out to settle the question of God’s nature and existence by purely rational argument, have reached completely different conclusions. For example, Aristotle, Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, and so on. In studies such as arithmetic or geometry, which really are purely rational, no such divergence arises.
3. *The Bible states that in spite of the evidence provided by God, men will at times*

deny the existence of God. It indicates that such a denial is evidence of “foolishness,” and that it is likely to be associated especially with people who profess themselves to be “wise.”

4. *The Bible states that the denial of God’s existence, or degraded views as to His nature, will lead to conditions which are morally and spiritually and socially harmful.* History abounds with illustrations of this.

5. Beyond the general fact of God’s existence and power revealed apart from Scripture, the Bible offers a much fuller and more detailed revelation of God. *However, this fuller revelation is limited to those who meet certain conditions of character and spiritual experience.* For example, a person who seeks such a revelation must be meek, God-fearing, sincerely desirous of righteousness, willing to be transformed by the renewing of his mind, and willing to apply practically in his own life the truths which the Bible reveals. A person who does not meet these conditions can expect little or no benefit from the revelation of Scripture. God does not offer to scratch an itching intellect. But He does offer to satisfy a sincere and longing soul.

6. *The Bible explicitly states that it is not God’s purpose that faith in Christianity should be founded on philosophic argument.* Philosophy now has a more or less continuous history of 2,500 years. It is questionable whether philosophers have yet reached agreement as to the problems to be discussed, much less on any of the solutions to those problems. It is obvious therefore that any religious faith based on philosophy would be completely unstable and unsatisfactory.

7. *The Bible states that where God’s conditions are met, the preaching of the Gospel message of salvation through faith in Christ will be supernaturally confirmed by the demonstration of the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, and that in this way faith will be based, not on human philosophy, but on the experience of God’s power.*

Bible Confirmed

In confirmation of this last point, I will now briefly relate part of my own experience. I was educated in Britain as a scholar at Eton College and King's College, Cambridge. I studied philosophy for seven years, obtained B.A. and M.A. degrees, and was elected to a Fellowship (that is, virtually a Professorship) in philosophy at King's College, Cambridge, which I held for nine years.

My special field of study was methods of definition, both those of the Greek philosophers and those of modern philosophical systems such as logical positivism. At this time, I had turned away completely from Christianity, which I regarded as a more or less harmless occupation for old ladies, of both sexes.

In 1940 I thought it was my duty as a philosopher to study the Bible, which I regarded as a kind of system of philosophy. I rejected completely any theories of divine inspiration, and decided to study it in the same way as any other book—to read it through from beginning to end. However, I found it a strangely baffling book. I could not decide if it was philosophy, history, poetry, or mythology, and I could not find any clear message in it.

About a year later, in 1941, I experienced the new birth. This took place in the middle of the night in an Army barrack room. The power of God came upon me so forcefully that I was prostrated on the floor for two hours or more. I had no knowledge of anyone's ever having had a similar experience.

This experience produced several definite, immediate, and far-reaching changes in my life, of which I will specify five:

First, Christ revealed Himself to me so powerfully that I have never afterwards been able to doubt that He is alive.

Second, the Bible immediately became clear and intelligible to me, and I have never afterwards doubted its inspiration.

Third, I was immediately delivered, without any effort on my part, from a strong, habitual craving for whiskey and from the habitual use of blasphemous and unclean language.

Fourth, previously I never prayed, but prayer and communion with God immediately

became to me as natural as breathing.

Fifth, my main desires, motives, and purposes in life were immediately and radically changed, and as a result the whole course of my life was changed in ways that involved a number of important material and personal sacrifices on my part.

A month later, in the same barrack room, I first received the experience described in the Bible as speaking in “an unknown tongue.”

I can still recall the mixture of fear and surprise with which I realized that my tongue was being moved independently of my own will by some invisible agent inside me. Since then, the natural and the supernatural have been interwoven in my life in a pattern which accords with the Christian life as described in the New Testament.

In 1943, through faith in the Bible, without any medical means, I was completely healed of a long-standing sickness which had not yielded to one year’s continuous treatment in the hospital.

In about 1950, as a result of x-ray and cardiograph diagnosis, my wife was informed that certain organs of her heart were enlarged or misplaced, and that there was no medical cure for her. Later, a preacher (who, incidentally, had been a philosopher) prayed for her heart condition. Two subsequent, separate x-rays have revealed that her heart is normal.

In 1959 I preached every day for seven consecutive days to a congregation of Africans in Kenya. Each day, after my sermon, I asked any sick people who desired prayer to raise their hand. An old, blind African woman was led to the service each day by a boy. And each time she raised her hand for prayer. On the first six days, nothing happened to her.

On the seventh day, after I prayed, she came to the front unaided and showed all the people that her sight had been restored. She was well-known in that area and had been blind for a number of years.

From the age of 13 to 18 my daughter Elizabeth wore glasses at all times. Each year or so, she had to change them for stronger ones, and even so her eyes caused her increasing discomfort. In 1960 a preacher prayed for her eyes. She never put on her glasses again, and her sight without glasses is good for all purposes. She excels at needlework, and has since completed her training

as a registered nurse.

In each of the cases which I have related, faith was exercised in God, through Christ, according to the teaching of the Bible. If time permitted, I could relate numerous other similar examples. In face of experiences such as these, I echo the words of John Wesley in a similar situation: “Let men say what they will—I choose to say this is the power of God.”