



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

From Plato to Pentecostalism

Citation for published version:

Stanley, B 2022, 'From Plato to Pentecostalism: Sickness and deliverance in the theology of Derek Prince', *Studies in Church History*, vol. 58, pp. 394-414. <https://doi.org/10.1017/stc.2022.19>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1017/stc.2022.19](https://doi.org/10.1017/stc.2022.19)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Studies in Church History

Publisher Rights Statement:

This article has been published in a revised form in *Studies in Church History* [<https://doi.org/10.1017/stc.2022.19>]. This version is published under a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND. No commercial re-distribution or re-use allowed. Derivative works cannot be distributed. © Brian Stanley.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



FROM PLATO TO PENTECOSTALISM: SICKNESS AND DELIVERANCE IN THE
THEOLOGY OF DEREK PRINCE

Brian Stanley

*University of Edinburgh**

This article analyses the intellectual sources and global influence of the demonology of Derek Prince (1915–2003), a former philosophy fellow of King’s College, Cambridge, who, after his move to the United States in 1963, became a globally influential Pentecostal teacher and author. It argues that his academic expertise in the philosophy of Plato shaped his understanding of the invisible realm of spiritual powers and its impact on the health and material well-being of Christians. Prince’s teaching on ancestral curses and the vulnerability of Christians to demonization has been widely received in Africa and other parts of the non-Western world, appearing to provide answers to endemic problems of chronic sickness and impoverishment.

THE RAPPROCHEMENT OF HEALING AND SALVATION

As this article focuses on a figure who will be unfamiliar to many readers of *Studies in Church History*, it will be appropriate to begin by painting on a broader canvas.¹ Two general

* 13 Carlingnose View, North Queensferry, Inverkeithing, Fife, KY11 1EZ. E-mail: brian.stanley@ed.ac.uk.

¹ This article represents an expansion and development of material first published in my *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History* (Princeton, NJ, 2018), 296–304. I am grateful to the provost and fellows of King’s College, Cambridge, for granting me access to the minute books of the Cambridge Apostles and to the fellowship dissertation of Derek Prince, and to Peter Monteith, former assistant archivist of King’s College, for his assistance. I also express my gratitude to Allan Anderson, Paul Grant and the anonymous peer reviewers for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

and interrelated points need to be made that may be helpful in placing Derek Prince in the context of this volume's theme of the Church, sickness and healing.

The first is to suggest that the evidence points to a tenacious persistence in much of the globe of what many Westerners might describe as pre-Enlightenment cosmological understandings of disease and its remedies, notwithstanding the concurrent adoption of many aspects of technological modernity. Such persistence is as evident among populations that have become substantially Christian as among those that have not. It also co-exists with the dissemination throughout the globe of a professional ethos of healthcare, founded on biomedicine, scientific techniques of surgery and increasingly tight state regulation of medical practitioners. What began in Europe has been disseminated throughout the rest of the globe, a process in which Christian medical missions played a key role between the late nineteenth century and the post-independence era, when many, though not all mission hospitals, were handed over to the health services of the newly independent states. However, it is a fallacy to suppose that the global diffusion of Western scientific medicine has simply dissolved indigenous conceptions of sickness, healing and their relationship to spiritual power. Walima Kalusa has pointed out that in mid-twentieth-century Zambia – as indeed in Africa generally – the business of delivering medical treatment through mission hospitals and a host of clinics lay largely in the hands of African medical auxiliaries.² These African personnel faced the challenge of integrating the new biomedicine with traditional understandings of disease and healing. Moreover, possessing limited facility in English or other colonial languages themselves, they had to resort to indigenous linguistic terms to describe disease, diagnosis and medicine. The result was a form of inculturation of Western medical science which is, in many ways, analogous to the inculturation of Christianity in multiple indigenous forms. Missionary medicine, concludes Kalusa, 'thus came to be

² Walima T. Kalusa, 'Language, Medical Auxiliaries, and the Re-interpretation of Missionary Medicine in Colonial Mwinilunga, Zambia, 1922–51', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1 (2007), 57–78.

comprehended as if it was a variation of African medicine and not a superior system of healing'.³ Kalusa's conclusion reinforces an argument first made by Terence Ranger in his presidential address to the Ecclesiastical History Society in 1981, when he contended that conversion to Christianity in modern Africa did not move people out of a 'rural, magical, pre-scientific, archaic universe into an urban, rational, scientific and modern one'. Rather, Christianity effected a shift of balance within an African spiritual universe, while reinforcing the continuing reality of a cosmos permeated by unseen spiritual powers.⁴

The second, and closely associated, general observation is to suggest that, when viewed in a global perspective, the long, slow separation of the business of healing from the ecclesiastical sphere that was apparent between the Reformation and the nineteenth century now shows signs of going into reverse owing to the extraordinary global explosion of Pentecostal Christianities.⁵ If at least some varieties of sickness are once again to be understood as having their roots in malevolence or spiritual conflict, then Christianity, if accepted as the ultimate source of spiritual power, can be expected to bring its superior resources to bear on those afflictions of body and mind that appear to defy obvious explanation. As Ranger put it, what many African peoples describe as 'Diseases of God' – those everyday ailments that form an inevitable part of the human condition – can be dealt with by natural remedies, whether these are traditional herbal ones or modern drugs. The problem lies rather with the 'Diseases of Man', those more deeply rooted maladies that point

³ Ibid. 74.

⁴ Terence Ranger, 'Medical Science and Pentecost: the Dilemma of Anglicanism in Africa', in W. J. Sheils, ed., *The Church and Healing*, Studies in Church History 19 (Oxford, 1982), 333–65, at 336 and 337. For a more recent exposition of the balance between continuity and discontinuity in the relationship between African indigenous cosmologies and Pentecostal Christianity, see Allan Heaton Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism* (Cham, 2018).

⁵ On the long process of separation, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971), remains unsurpassed.

to the harmful irruption of the invisible realm into the life of the sufferer, as the result of behaviour of a fundamentally antisocial or malign character, whether by some ancestor in the past, or an enemy, or even oneself in the present.⁶ For many Christians in the non-Western world today, it is, paradoxically, such ‘Diseases of Man’ that call for the powerful salvific intervention of the divine, through the charismatic ministrations of the man, or occasionally the woman, of God. The realms of healing and salvation, which the course of European history and theology has forced asunder, are thus being drawn back into a closer relationship that mirrors the world of the gospels, in which a mere choice of how to translate the Greek word *sōzō* determines whether someone is described as having been either ‘healed’ or ‘saved’ by Christ.⁷ It is precisely this dimension of Christianity that the exploding Pentecostal Christianities of the southern hemisphere have rediscovered and accentuated to a degree that presents the world of scholarship, framed as it is by Enlightenment assumptions about the irrationality of beliefs in invisible spiritual forces, with something of a problem.

Joel Cabrita has published an important study of the Scottish émigré to Australia and then the United States, John Alexander Dowie (1847–1907), and the international Zionist movement of which he was the progenitor. Cabrita makes a persuasive case that the efflorescence of movements of divine healing in both American and African contexts in the early twentieth century should be interpreted as the product of a single transnational evangelical movement, coursing in various directions through the veins of an increasingly interconnected global Christian body politic. Such movements, she insists, cannot be adequately explained in monochromatic terms, *either* as the transmission of a distinctively American narrative to Africa, *or* by the converse claim that African prophet healing movements simply represent the absorption by a Westernized Christianity of typically African

⁶ Ranger, ‘Medical Science and Pentecost’, 339.

⁷ For example, Mark 5: 34; Luke 8: 48; 17: 19; 18: 42; see Paul Germond and Sepetla Molapo, ‘In Search of Bophelo in a Time of AIDS: Seeking a Coherence of Economies of Health and Economies of Salvation’, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 126 (2006), 27–47, at 42–3.

indigenous modes of religious expression.⁸ A parallel bifurcation in the scholarship between America-centric and Africa-centric perspectives is evident in discussion of the explosion of neo-Pentecostal Christianity in Africa since the 1980s. Should the rapid dissemination of the prosperity gospel and deliverance movements (sometimes loosely termed ‘faith healing’ movements) in this period be viewed as the product of the deepening dependence of African Christianity on American theological and financial resources, as Paul Gifford suggests, though he rightly stresses that this is not to deny African religious creativity?⁹ Or should they be given a more favourable endorsement as evidence of the Africanization of Western Christian traditions that failed to take bodily well-being seriously, as most African scholars argue?¹⁰ Both contentions have their merits, but are problematic if taken in isolation.

DEREK PRINCE, TRANSNATIONAL APOSTLE OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

This article examines a Western Pentecostal teacher, Derek Prince (1915–2003), who provides a more recent parallel to Dowie as a pivotal figure located at the hub of a transnational web of healing and deliverance ministry. Like Dowie, he was British, contrary to the characteristic assumption of some recent commentators that he must have been American.¹¹ Nevertheless, his most influential ministry, like Dowie’s, was exercised from the United States, even though its content was probably most extensively disseminated in Africa.

⁸ Joel Cabrita, *The People’s Zion: Southern Africa, the United States, and a Transatlantic Faith-Healing Movement* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), 4–5.

⁹ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London, 1998), 44–7, 308–25; idem, *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (London, 2004), 197–8.

¹⁰ For example, Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2008).

¹¹ For example, Claudia Währisch-Oblau, ‘Material Salvation: Healing, Deliverance, and “Breakthrough”, in African Migrant Churches in Germany’, in Candy Gunther Brown, ed., *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (Oxford, 2011), 61–80, at 66.

Yet, as with Dowie again, his distinctive teaching cannot be dismissed as merely representative of the eccentric margins of popular American Protestantism; it owed a profound debt to his own intellectual formation in the classical Western philosophical tradition in Cambridge, although a further debt to exposure to African varieties of spiritual experience cannot be ruled out. His teaching, like Dowie's, circulated internationally, but in Prince's case the media of transmission were not merely printed, but also reflected the enhanced possibilities of global interconnection afforded by the modern world.

Neo-Pentecostal deliverance and healing ministry in modern Africa, like its close partner the prosperity gospel, coheres with indigenous understandings of the reality of the spirit world, while also being dependent on external influences. Its rapid diffusion was assisted by technological innovation, air travel, television and video communication, and, above all, by the invention in 1962 of the compact audio cassette tape, a medium that enabled the global circulation, at very low cost, of recorded messages by popular charismatic preachers. Prince's biographer, Stephen Mansfield, aptly observes that 'the cassette tape defined Charismatic culture. The faithful took tapes the way their secular counterparts took medicine.'¹²

Whereas most of the Pentecostal preachers whose messages circulated on audio cassettes in Africa from the 1980s were American, Derek Prince, perhaps the most influential of all, was British, though he had resided in the United States since 1963. Prince was not simply British, he hailed from the upper echelons of English society. Born in Bangalore in 1915 to a British army family, he was baptized in St John's Church, Bangalore, at that time largely an expatriate Anglican congregation. Educated at Eton College and King's College, Cambridge, he was elected a fellow of King's in philosophy in March 1940. At this point, Prince was very far from being a practising Christian. However, one of his best friends from his undergraduate days was John Earle Raven, later the author of an influential introduction to

¹² Stephen Mansfield, *Derek Prince: A Biography* (Baldock, 2005), 203–4. Although a popular, rather than an academic, biography, it is a very perceptive study.

Plato's thought, as well as a keen amateur botanist.¹³ Raven was the only son of Charles Raven, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge from 1932, a leading liberal evangelical and notable writer on science and religion. Prince regularly visited the Raven home, and in 1939 accompanied the family on a botanical summer holiday to Galway. Charles Raven's influence was probably responsible for turning Prince into a pacifist. Whether he also subconsciously imbibed elements of Raven's firm theological conviction that what the Church needed more than anything else was to rediscover the experiential power of the Holy Spirit is an intriguing question; Prince's biographer suggests that Raven was the predominant influence on Prince's religious views in the 1930s, but associates the influence more with a rationalistic modernism.¹⁴ Prince was certainly deemed sufficiently *ungodly* to merit election in October 1938 as a member of the secret, and rather seedy, debating society, the Cambridge Apostles; his fellow members included those who would later become notorious for their communist allegiance, Guy Burgess and Anthony Blunt.¹⁵

Prince refused to serve in a combat role during the Second World War, appealing to none other than Plato for support when he appeared before the tribunal for conscientious objectors.¹⁶ He entered the Royal Army Medical Corps in a non-combat capacity. In April 1941, while undergoing training with the Corps near Scarborough, Prince came into contact with Pentecostals. Following attendance at an Assemblies of God meeting, he was converted to evangelical Christianity and shortly afterwards was 'baptized in the Spirit' and began to

¹³ J. E. Raven, *Plato's Thought in the Making: A Study of the Development of His Metaphysics* (Cambridge, 1965).

¹⁴ Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 60. On Raven's enthusiasm for the Spirit, see Ian M. Randall, 'Evangelical Spirituality, Science and Mission: A Study of Charles Raven (1885–1964), Regius Professor of Divinity, Cambridge University', *Anglican and Episcopal History* 84 (2015), 20–48.

¹⁵ Cambridge, King's College Archives, Minute Books of the Cambridge Apostles, volume 17, 1928–47, minutes for 16 October, 23 October and 13 November 1938.

¹⁶ Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 77.

speak in tongues.¹⁷ Although he remained a fellow of King's until 1949, his life was now set in a new direction. In 1974 Prince would inform an academic researcher, 'I know what it costs to be a pentecostal; the pentecostal movement was the child of poverty and rejection'.¹⁸ Prince was far from being a child of poverty himself, but his remark may suggest that his new-found religious allegiance earned this Cambridge philosopher the cold shoulder from many of his former friends and academic associates.

During his war service in Egypt and the Sudan, Prince spent two periods of leave in Palestine. On his first visit in 1942 he was baptized as an adult in the river Jordan – there is remarkably good precedent – by an Assemblies of God missionary. On his second visit, in 1946, he married Lydia Christensen, a Danish Pentecostal missionary nearly twice his age.¹⁹ He witnessed first-hand the birth of the state of Israel. Prince remained a fervent and influential Christian Zionist until his death in 2003. In fact, he spent long periods during his final years living in Jerusalem, worshipping in the Old City at Christ Church, the church established in 1842 by Michael Solomon Alexander, former Jewish rabbi and the first holder of the Anglican-Lutheran Jerusalem bishopric.²⁰ In 1948 the Princes left Israel and settled in West London, where, from 1949, Derek began to assemble a Pentecostal fellowship meeting in his own home at Westbourne Grove; most of the attendees were Jamaicans.²¹

In January 1957 Derek and Lydia were sent as Assemblies of God missionaries to Kisumu in western Kenya, where Prince became principal of the Assemblies of God's Nyang'ori Teacher Training Centre. Arriving in the colony in the aftermath of the Mau Mau anticolonial movement, he became convinced that 'powerful satanic agents and influences'

¹⁷ Ibid. 83–94.

¹⁸ David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington, IN, 1975), 237; see also 245.

¹⁹ Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 110, 125–141.

²⁰ Ibid. 273.

²¹ Ibid. 174.

were at work in Kenya, seeking to bring ‘hatred, disorder, and bloodshed’.²² This evaluation of Mau Mau as an explicitly diabolical eruption of ‘savagery’ and ‘pagan witchcraft’ directed against Christianity was not some peculiar Pentecostal eccentricity. It was shared by many, perhaps most, of the Anglican missionaries of the Church Missionary Society working in central Kenya.²³ From his location in western Kenya, Prince would have had no first-hand contact with the final stages of Mau Mau, which was a Gikuyu movement that was absent from western Kenya. Nevertheless, it seems likely that Prince’s missionary experience in Kenya gave him a newly vivid awareness of the tangible reality of evil forces, though this can be no more than a conjecture. At Kisumu he became involved in healing and deliverance ministry, but mainly in the context of pioneer evangelism. It should be noted that his distinctive teaching that even Spirit-filled Christians might need deliverance from demonic infestation came later, in a North American rather than an African context. It was consequent upon his relocation, first to Vancouver in 1962, where he taught at Western Pentecostal Bible College, then to Minneapolis, where he conducted a teaching ministry in a Pentecostal church pastored by a friend, and finally, in September 1963, to Seattle.

As pastor of Broadway Tabernacle in Seattle in 1963–4 Prince reached the conclusion that some of the most disturbing problems in the congregation’s life were the result of ‘demonization’ of bona fide church members. He reached the conclusion that ‘while the Spirit of God might live in the spirit of a born-again man, the man’s body and soul could still be a haunt of demons’.²⁴ As a Greek scholar, Prince adhered strictly to New Testament usage in preferring the term ‘demonization’ to ‘possession’. Nevertheless, like many Pentecostals,

²² Ibid. 191.

²³ See T. F. C. Bewes, *Kikuyu Conflict: Mau Mau and Christian Witness* (London, 1953), 8–9, 43, 52, 54; John Casson, ‘Missionaries, Mau Mau and the Christian Frontier’, in Pieter N. Holtrop and Hugh McLeod, eds, *Missions and Missionaries*, Studies in Church History Subsidia 13 (Woodbridge, 2000), 200–15, at 203.

²⁴ Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 209.

Prince adhered to a trichotomous anthropology, drawing a sharp distinction between the human spirit (*pneuma*) and soul (*psyche*). He held that while the *pneuma* of a Spirit-filled Christian was inviolable by demonic forces, the *psyche* was not.

Prince's emphasis that even Spirit-filled Christians might be demonized marked a subtle but significant departure from classical Pentecostal teaching. J. A. Dowie had taught that sickness was fundamentally the 'foul offspring of its father, Satan, and its mother Sin.' It followed that the atoning work of Christ included delivering the sinner from sickness as the work of the devil.²⁵ For the early Zionists and the Pentecostals who followed in their wake, the work of healing in the power of the Spirit necessarily involved contestation with evil forces. However, the majority of Pentecostals throughout the first half of the twentieth century taught that, although truly 'born-again' and Spirit-baptized Christians may still be liable to external torment by demonic forces, they could not become indwelt by demons, for their bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit and hence, in principle, inviolable. In what may seem a fine and exegetically dubious distinction, they were deemed to be still subject to *oppression*, but not *possession*. The largest white American Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God, formed in 1914, was consistent in teaching that born-again believers cannot be demon possessed.²⁶ Similarly in West Africa, the appeal of such prophet figures as William Wadé Harris in the Ivory and Gold Coast, or Joseph Babalola in Nigeria, was that they promised those who came to faith in Christ could rest secure in the knowledge that

²⁵ Gordon Lindsay, *The Life of John Alexander Dowie whose Trials-Tragedies-and Triumphs are the Most Fascinating Object Lesson of Christian History* (n.p., 1951), 22–5; Philip L. Cook, *Zion City, Illinois: Twentieth-Century Utopia* (Syracuse, NY, 1996), 8.

²⁶ L. G. McClung, Jr., 'Exorcism', in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2002), 624–8, at 626. For accounts of early American Pentecostals being tormented by demons, see Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 91–2. See also James Robinson, *Divine Healing: The Years of Expansion, 1906–1930* (Eugene, OR, 2014), 146.

thenceforth they would be protected from the power of evil forces. Jesus the healer was also the victor and protector. Thus, converts could with confidence burn their traditional objects of spiritual power ('fetishes') and entrust themselves to the all-surpassing power of God, who would surely protect them from the manifold illnesses and other misfortunes believed to be caused by malign powers.²⁷

In Seattle Prince began to question the permanence of the spiritual protection afforded by submission to the lordship of Christ, and commenced his distinctive ministry that employed detailed questionnaires to identify which Christians were indwelt by which demons, or laboured under which specific curses, as a prelude to their deliverance and bodily or inner healing.²⁸ Subsequently he moved the base of his ministry to Chicago, and then to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where he became one of a group of charismatic teachers known internationally as 'the Fort Lauderdale Five'.²⁹ Prince's demonology, then, took its fully developed and distinctive shape in North America, rather than in Africa. The next section will examine the reach of his influence, which, by contrast, extended far beyond the Western world.

THE CHANNELS OF PRINCE'S INFLUENCE

Unlike so many later advocates of deliverance ministry, Prince did not wield his influence primarily through large public crusades or mass healing meetings; David Harrell comments that he was 'never a revivalist', but rather a lecturer and teacher whose refined Cambridge accent, 'education and studious manner always set him somewhat apart' from the Pentecostal

²⁷ I have argued this case in *Christianity in the Twentieth Century*, 297–8.

²⁸ Harrell, *All Things are Possible*, 185.

²⁹ The 'Fort Lauderdale Five' comprised Prince, Don Basham, Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson and Ern Baxter. The group gave particular emphasis to structures of 'shepherding' believers, which aroused controversy on account of their authoritarian tendencies.

mainstream.³⁰ A prolific popular writer, Prince had published more than forty books by 1984; by his death, the total had reached over eighty.³¹ From 1979 he broadcast an American daily radio programme, *Today with Derek Prince*, which was eventually aired internationally in thirteen languages. Nonetheless, his global influence appears to have been most extensively mediated through the international cassette and book ministry he established in late 1983.³² It led to a visit to Ghana in 1987, when he was instrumental in securing widespread acceptance for deliverance ministry at a time when it was still controversial, even within Pentecostal circles there.³³ Opoku Onyinah describes Prince as ‘the “mentor” of this kind of ministry in Ghana’.³⁴ He was particularly influential on both Owusu Tabiri, who played a prominent role in developing Ghana’s ‘prayer camps’ (specialising in spiritual warfare) in the early 1990s, and Aaron Vuha of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.³⁵

Prince’s influence extended beyond Protestant circles in the United States and reached a broad spectrum of Christians in all continents.³⁶ Several prominent Roman Catholics acknowledge a specific debt to his teaching. They include Emmanuel Milingo, the

³⁰ Harrell, *All Things Are Possible*, 182, 184–5.

³¹ Derek Prince, *Life’s Bitter Pool* (Harpenden, 1984), 43; ‘About Derek Prince’, online at: <https://www.derekprince.org/Groups/1000103610/DPM_USA/About/About_Derek_Prince/About_Derek_Prince.aspx>, accessed 18 January 2021.

³² Prince’s obituary in *King’s College Cambridge Annual Report* (Cambridge, 2004), 50, notes the particular significance of audio cassettes for the dissemination of his teaching.

³³ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 100, 346–7.

³⁴ Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana* (Blandford Forum, 2012), 172.

³⁵ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 89; see also Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra, 2001), 393.

³⁶ Thomas J. Csordas, *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), 41, notes that Prince was one of those primarily responsible for introducing deliverance ministry to American Catholics.

controversial archbishop of Lusaka from 1969 to 1983, who was removed from his post by the Vatican because of his alleged encouragement of ‘credulity which explains all psychophysical ills as due to the influence of the devil’;³⁷ later, in 2006, Milingo was excommunicated after his consecration of bishops without papal approval. Other Catholics deeply influenced by Prince include the Nigerian priest and popular author, Stephen Uche Njoku,³⁸ and the American Dominican pioneer of Catholic charismatic renewal, Francis MacNutt (1925–2020).³⁹ Prince’s relationship with Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens of Belgium, the leading European Catholic advocate of charismatic renewal, and one of the moderators of the Second Vatican Council, was more ambiguous. On Pentecost Sunday 1977, Prince, along with the other members of the ‘Fort Lauderdale Five’, was invited to accompany Suenens on a pilgrimage from Mechelen [Malines] to Jerusalem, via Rome and Assisi, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Suenens’s ordination. Prince and the other pilgrims presented Suenens with a water goblet as a mark of the friendship formed in the course of the pilgrimage.⁴⁰ However, this did not prevent Suenens in a later publication from criticising Prince – though without actually naming him – as a ‘Master of Demonology’ who was guilty of ‘flagrant’ exaggerations in attributing ‘most, if not all, physical and psychiatric illnesses to demonic influences’.⁴¹ Suenens’s accusation had considerable validity. Section IV of this article will demonstrate that Prince was prepared to view demonic infestation as the potential cause of a long list of physical and mental afflictions.

³⁷ *The Tablet*, 20 April 1996, 525, cited in Gifford, *African Christianity*, 330; see also 227.

³⁸ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London, 2015), 118–19.

³⁹ James M. Collins, *Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry in the Twentieth Century: An Analysis of the Practice and Theology of Exorcism in Modern Western Christianity* (Milton Keynes, 2009), 57, 61, 63.

⁴⁰ Léon-Joseph Suenens, *Memories and Hopes* (Dublin, 1992), 313–15. The Protestant charismatics appear to have asked Suenens for permission to join his pilgrimage, and he agreed. See also Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 238.

⁴¹ Léon-Joseph Suenens, *Renewal and the Powers of Darkness* (London, 1983), 62.

Some of the most globally popular charismatic Protestant authors on deliverance ministry trace their understanding of demonization and its remedy in greater or lesser measure to Prince. They include the New Zealand Anglican Bill Subritzky, the British founder of Ellel Ministries, Peter Horrobin, and the Southern Baptists Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, authors of the intriguingly titled pastoral handbook, *Pigs in the Parlor: A Practical Guide to Deliverance*, which claims over one million copies sold worldwide.⁴² In contrast, Prince himself never produced a full practical guide to techniques of deliverance. The Hammonds' handbook was written at his suggestion, and followed his teaching closely, reproducing verbatim the prayer that Prince recommended for use when conducting an exorcism.⁴³ It coached deliverance practitioners on how to purge the afflicted of indwelling demons by vomiting them up, a practice that bears close parallels with some accounts of exorcism in early modern Europe.⁴⁴

⁴² Collins, *Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry in the Twentieth Century*, 64–5, 87–90; Frank Hammond and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor: A Practical Guide to Deliverance* (Kirkwood, MO, 1973).

⁴³ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 154–5. Csordas, *The Sacred Self*, 181–4, reproduces in full the Hammonds' table of types of demonic infestation from *Pigs in the Parlor*, which he terms 'the most comprehensive demonology formulated by practitioners of deliverance (ibid. 181), but does not trace the classification to its source in Prince.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 222. For an account of the use of *Pigs in the Parlor* as a deliverance manual in an African American storefront church in Durham, NC, with use of purging by vomiting, see Catherine Bowler, 'Blessed Bodies: Healing within the African American Faith Movement', in Brown, ed., *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, 81–105, at 90. For vomiting as a sign of dispossession in early modern exorcisms, see Philip C. Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and Their Cultural Contexts* (Cambridge, 2004), 151, 268; and Jane P. Davidson, *Early Modern Supernatural: The Dark Side of European Culture, 1400–1700* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2012), 112.

Where did Prince's distinctive demonology come from? His experience in Kenya was clearly important in causing him to adopt a spiritualized interpretation of Africa's political problems, but it did not lead him to the conclusion that *Christians* typically needed deliverance ministry. At least part of the answer lies in Prince's early intellectual formation. At Cambridge he became fascinated with Plato's philosophy, and especially Socrates's insistence in the *Phaedo* that all material things were transitory.⁴⁵ Under the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who taught him, Prince also developed an interest in the philosophy of language. As a research student he gave a paper to the Moral Science Club on 16 February 1939 on 'The Use of a Word', part of which Wittgenstein, who had been elected to the Cambridge chair of philosophy a few days previously, 'attacked vigorously'.⁴⁶ Prince's paper appears to have stimulated Wittgenstein to pursue the topic further a week later when he himself gave a paper on 'Philosophy' to the Club; the minutes record Prince as questioning Wittgenstein's argument. It appears that Wittgenstein and Prince disagreed quite fundamentally on whether Plato's endeavour to anchor the meaning of ideas in ultimate timeless definitions or 'forms' could be reconciled with Wittgenstein's insistence that language could never yield a coherent or stable account of meaning.⁴⁷ While self-confessedly influenced by Wittgenstein, Prince remained a more convinced Platonist than his teacher could ever be. Stephen Mansfield rightly notes that, 'Once he became a Christian, [Prince] brought both the scholar's skill and the Platonist's mysticism, perhaps even dualism, to his understanding of Scripture. Thus, he

⁴⁵ Prince's popular biographer, Stephen Mansfield, is the only commentator who has noted the marked Platonic influence on Prince's cosmology; see his *Derek Prince*, 272.

⁴⁶ Brian McGuinness, ed., *Wittgenstein in Cambridge: Letters and Documents 1911–1951* (Oxford, 2008), 294; Theodore Redpath, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Student's Memoir* (London, 1990), 80, 82.

⁴⁷ McGuinness, ed., *Wittgenstein in Cambridge*, 295; Redpath, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 82–3; Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 74.

loved language but kept his eye on its spiritual power.⁴⁸ As a Pentecostal practitioner of deliverance in later years, Prince would rely on the capacity of words, invoking the power of the name of Jesus to do precisely what they promised: there was an exact correspondence between the human words and the eternal divine reality that they represented.

In spite of his variance from his teacher on the question of the meaning of words, Prince's fellowship dissertation submitted to King's College in 1940 on 'The Evolution of Plato's Philosophical Method' acknowledged his debt to Wittgenstein three times.⁴⁹ It was an attempt to apply the philosophy of language to Plato's analysis and use of Socrates's philosophical method. The dissertation argued for a comprehensive application to all reality of Plato's theory of forms. He cited the judgement of the idealist philosopher A. E. Taylor that, according to Plato's Socrates, philosophy was concerned with those matters that are 'invisible, not merely because our eyes are defective or the bodies we see always composite, but because their nature is spiritual and can only be spiritually discerned'. He reproduced Taylor's judgement that 'The great and imperishable thought of the *Phaedo* is that there are "reals", and those are the most important of all, which are *immaterial*.'⁵⁰ However, Prince argued that it was not sufficient to apply the theory, as Taylor did, only to moral qualities such as the beautiful; rather, since 'all words are on the same footing', we should not flinch from applying the principle to 'all Forms without exception.'⁵¹

What has all this to do with African neo-Pentecostalism? What has Athens to do with Accra? The answer is that Prince's later teaching on deliverance reproduces the language of Plato's *Phaedo* almost verbatim. The *Phaedo* proclaimed a disjunction between two spheres

⁴⁸ Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 274.

⁴⁹ Cambridge, King's College Archives, KCAC/4/11/1, P. D. V. Prince, 'The Evolution of Plato's Philosophical Method' (Fellowship dissertation, n.d. [1940]), 7, 12 and 130.

⁵⁰ Prince, 'The Evolution of Plato's Philosophical Method', 60; citing A. E. Taylor, *Varia Socratica*, first series (Oxford, 1911), 244 [Taylor's italics].

⁵¹ Prince, 'The Evolution of Plato's Philosophical Method', 60–1.

of existence, the changing world of the visible and ‘the unchanging things you can only perceive with the mind’.⁵² Similarly, Prince, in one of his most substantial books, *Blessing or Curse: You Can Choose*, taught that ‘The things that belong to the visible realm are transitory and impermanent. It is only in the invisible realm that we can find true and abiding reality. It is in this realm, too, that we discover the forces which will ultimately shape our destiny, even in the visible realm’.⁵³ Or again:

A lot of people imagine that what we see, touch, hear and taste are the only truly real items. Down through the ages, however, philosophers have come to the conclusion that what we see, touch, hear and taste are not truly real; they are temporary, and they are very often deceptive. These philosophers have warned us that you cannot rely on your senses.

And the Bible agrees! Paul said that the things that are seen are fleeting; the things that are not seen are eternal. In other words, our sensory world is passing away, and therefore only partly real because it does not endure.⁵⁴

The message that Prince’s African hearers found so attractive was that the invisible world of contesting spiritual powers was not only to be taken far more seriously than the mission churches had done, but was in fact the only enduring reality, infinitely *more* real than the transitory world of physical or material suffering and poverty. His decisive departure from the tradition of both the Assemblies of God and the prophet movements of the earlier twentieth century in teaching that even Spirit-filled Christians could be not simply afflicted by external demonic attack, but ontologically ‘demonized’, appeared to eliminate the ambiguity created

⁵² Plato, *Phaedo*, transl. David Gallop (Oxford, 1975), 27.

⁵³ Derek Prince, *Blessing or Curse: You Can Choose*, 3rd edn (Baldock, 2007), 36.

⁵⁴ Derek Prince, *Lucifer Exposed: The Devil’s Plan to Destroy Your Life*, new edn (Baldock, 2007),

by older traditions of Pentecostal Christianity.⁵⁵ If the West African prophets had been fundamentally mistaken in their assumption that ‘once protected, always protected’, then might that not explain why even fervent Christians still fell prey to sickness and the curse of endemic poverty?

According to Prince, from the invisible realm of spiritual reality both blessings and curses flowed down the bloodline from up to four generations back, conveying good (evidenced in health and prosperity) or ill (manifested in hereditary sickness or poverty), a claim that built upon, yet significantly modified, beliefs about the continuing presence and agency of the ancestors that are widely found in Africa, as elsewhere in the non-European world. Prince readily acknowledged that the Bible had more to say about blessings than it did about curses, and taught a moderate version of the prosperity gospel: the blessing of abundance was defined as having all one needed to do the will of God.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the mediating role of ancestors in his teaching on divine blessings was left undefined. In contrast, curses could be traced to errant or malevolent ancestors, and by ultimate derivation to demonic influence. Most African societies venerate ancestors as an essentially beneficent but somewhat unpredictable presence who need to be honoured and conciliated if their descendants and communities are to continue to flourish. In Prince’s writings, on the other hand, it is bad rather than good ancestors who need to be brought to the forefront of the memory, and dealt with accordingly. In this respect he conforms to a long-established Protestant missionary tradition, as expounded most notably by Birgit Meyer in her study of nineteenth-century German Pietist missionaries to the Ewe of Ghana and their twentieth-century Pentecostal or charismatic Presbyterian Ghanaian successors.⁵⁷ Prince was by no

⁵⁵ For precedents in the early Hellenistic Church for Prince’s belief in the possibility of the demonization of Christians, see Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 248–51.

⁵⁶ Prince, *Blessing or Curse*, 14, 41–2.

⁵⁷ Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh, 1999).

means the first effectively to transfer ancestors from the realm of blessing to the malevolent realm of Satan. His distinctive appeal to many African Christians appears to have consisted in the singular prominence that he gave to the notion of ancestral curses as the primary mechanism by which spiritual malevolence extended from the past to the present. ‘A curse’, he wrote, could be ‘likened to a long, evil arm stretched out from the past’, resting on a person with ‘a dark, oppressive force’ inhibiting the full expression of one’s personality; it was a vehicle of ‘supernatural, spiritual power’.⁵⁸

Prince appealed for biblical support to the long list of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28; the repeated pentateuchal warnings about the iniquity of the fathers being visited on the children to the third and fourth generations were to be taken with absolute seriousness.⁵⁹ In *Blessing or Curse: You Can Choose*, he listed seven common indications of being under a curse, four of which related to sickness of one kind or another: mental and/or emotional breakdown; repeated or chronic sickness; barrenness, a tendency to miscarry or related female problems; and a history within a family of suicides and unnatural or untimely deaths. If only one or two of these problems was evident, that would not in itself be conclusive evidence of being under a curse, but the concurrence of several suggested that a curse was most likely in operation. Specifically, ‘repeated miscarriages or female problems’ he regarded as ‘automatically’ signs of the presence of a curse.⁶⁰ Furthermore, Prince insisted that hereditary sickness is ‘one of the commonest and most typical marks of a curse at work.’⁶¹ He also taught that an astonishing range of common mental or physical conditions were ‘sometimes’ caused by demons: ‘insanity, insomnia, epilepsy, fits, cramps, migraines, sinus infections, tumors, ulcers, heart disease, arthritis, paralysis, dumbness, deafness,

⁵⁸ Prince, *Blessing or Curse*, 19, 36.

⁵⁹ Deut. 28; also 5: 9 and Ex. 20: 5.

⁶⁰ Derek Prince, *God’s Word Heals* (Baldock, 2010), 177.

⁶¹ Prince, *Blessing or Curse*, 53–5.

blindness'.⁶² It was this depressing catalogue of potential signs of demonic possession that Cardinal Suenens found particularly objectionable.⁶³ For Prince, the boundary between Ranger's 'Diseases of Man' and the everyday 'Diseases of God' was remarkably porous.

The other three typical indications of being under a demonic curse were marriage breakdown or 'alienation'; 'continuing financial insufficiency'; and being 'accident prone'.⁶⁴ Indeed, when struggling to make ends meet, Prince reached the conclusion that he himself was under a Chinese curse as a result of having in his living room a set of four embroidered dragons brought from China by his maternal grandfather, Major-General Robert Edward Vaughan of the Indian Army, who had been involved in the British suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900.⁶⁵ When Prince finally got rid of the dragons, which he described as 'images of a false god', his income more than doubled and 'a long-delayed legacy' came through.⁶⁶

Such teaching may well strike us as simply bizarre, but it has closer connections with Prince's Platonic studies than is immediately apparent. Plato shared with much Greek thought a belief in the existence and polluting capacity of ancestral curses. In his *Phaedrus* he refers in passing to 'grievous maladies and afflictions', which 'beset certain families by reason of some ancient sin'. For Plato such inherited guilt has its redeeming features, for it can become a source of one type of 'divine madness', expressed in prophesying, prayer and worship,

⁶² Derek Prince, *Expelling Demons*, new edn (Baldock, 2015), 9.

⁶³ Suenens, *Renewal and the Powers of Darkness*, 62, reproduces this list with only slight amendment.

⁶⁴ Prince, *Blessing or Curse*, 53.

⁶⁵ For biographical details of Vaughan (1866–1966), see Dix Noonan Webb, 'A Great War C.B. Group of Eight Awarded to Major-General Robert Edward Vaughan, Indian Army', auctioneer's catalogue entry, 31 March 2010, online at: <https://www.dnw.co.uk/auction-archive/past-catalogues/lot.php?auction_id=185&lot_uid=182180>, accessed 7 December 2020.

⁶⁶ Prince, *Blessing or Curse*, 27–9, 41.

which leads to the purification or ‘deliverance’ of the possessed sufferer.⁶⁷ This paradoxical passage in the *Phaedrus* may have been particularly significant for Prince, but in Plato the link between ancestral curses and demon (which is so central in Prince’s Pentecostal theology) appears to be entirely missing. For Plato, as for the early Pythagorean philosophers from whom he borrowed, the ‘daemons’ are not the villains of the piece, but rather intermediary spiritual beings who usefully protect the gods from polluting contact with matter. They do not represent an absolute cosmological dualism, but rather bridge the chasm between the divine and the human.⁶⁸ Prince, by contrast, followed Tertullian in assimilating the whole assembly of ancestral and other spirits into the Pauline concept of evil principalities and powers – cosmological dualism has become absolute.⁶⁹

DEMONOLOGY AND DELIVERANCE

Prince’s demonology promised many Christians in Africa and other parts of the non-Western world a total explanation for their continuing predicament in the final years of the twentieth century. Whether in reality it offered them a lasting solution is another question. In practice, an approach that encouraged Christians to be constantly on the hunt for inherited malevolent influences that might account for their physical and material problems inculcated, not trust in the power of Christ, but enduring fear and mutual suspicion. It is noteworthy that even the Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal churches that formerly derided the so-called *Sunsum sorè* (Spirit-

⁶⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus*, ed. R. Hackforth (Cambridge, 1952), 244d–e, p. 57; cf. Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1983), 191–206.

⁶⁸ Søren Skovgaard Jensen, *Dualism and Demonology: The Function of Demonology in Pythagorean and Platonic Thought* (Copenhagen, 1966), 60–1, 90–2.

⁶⁹ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (Oxford, 1992), 108–9, 144–5; see also Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 272, on Prince’s incipient dualism.

worshipping) churches for their use of herbal medicines are increasingly resorting to herbal remedies themselves, some of which are held to possess exceptional powers of protection against evil forces.⁷⁰ A sacramental reliance on certain material objects as weapons of spiritual contestation may be a necessary corrective to Prince's devaluation of the material.

Derek Prince was clearly not the sole source of the teaching on demonology and deliverance that became so popular in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, as also of Latin America, from the 1980s onwards. Argentina has witnessed a remarkable spread of ministries of deliverance since the 1980s, but the pioneer of such ministry, Carlos Annacondia (b.1944) appears to have no connection to Prince, and traces his distinctive style of deliverance ministry to the Panamanian evangelist, Manuel Ruiz, under whom he was converted.⁷¹ Deliverance ministry is a ubiquitous feature of contemporary global neo-Pentecostalism, and no single theological lineage can be identified as common to its manifold occurrences. David Maxwell's study of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God indicates the growing salience, from the 1980s onwards, of a similar preoccupation with deliverance and of analogous ideas of ancestral curses as the likely explanation of the intractable poverty of individuals, but without attempting to construct a genealogy of such ideas.⁷² It would require extensive field research to trace more precisely the chronology and geography of Prince's impact in a variety of contexts in Africa, where some local cosmologies were more closely attuned to his stark aetiology of illness than others. It would be necessary to form a judgement of his relative significance alongside other leading teachers of demonology, such as the Nigerian Emmanuel

⁷⁰ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Therapeutic Strategies in African Religions: Health, Herbal Medicines and Indigenous Christian Spirituality', *Studies in World Christianity* 20 (2014), 70–90, at 86–8.

⁷¹ Norberto Saracco, 'Argentine Pentecostalism: Its History and Theology' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1989), 243–52.

⁷² David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement* (Oxford, 2006), 184–211.

Eni. Paul Gifford, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Opuku Onyinah and Naomi Richman have all identified Prince as being of unusual importance for the growth of deliverance ministry in Pentecostalism in West Africa.⁷³ Jörg Haustein has similarly identified Prince's teaching that even believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit may be demonized as responsible for a major theological debate among Pentecostals in Ethiopia.⁷⁴ However, none of these scholars has formulated any theory of what in particular might account for his enthusiastic reception. My suggestion in this paper is that Prince's unusual synthesis of Platonism and Pentecostalism provides at least part of the answer.

It is frequently asserted that one of the more regrettable legacies of Greek philosophy to the Church from patristic times onwards has been to make Christianity into an immaterial religion preoccupied only with the eternal soul, and notably deficient in the Hebraic emphasis on the body as the object of God's care and even salvation. The emphasis of Pentecostalism on healing the body can then be presented as a necessary corrective to the centuries of Platonization of an originally Jewish faith. Thus, Amanda Porterfield's survey of healing in the history of Christianity cites the early Brazilian Protestant theologian of liberation, Rubem Alves, to the effect that 'the language of the community of faith definitely opposes the platonic negation of the body', but then criticizes Alves for drawing the extreme inference that 'one does not find in this language, consequently, any place or transcendence beyond the

⁷³ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 102, 346–7; idem, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 89; idem, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 31, 69, 118–19; Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 170; Naomi Richman, 'Machine Gun Prayer: The Politics of Embodied Desire in Pentecostal Worship', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35 (2020), 469–83, at 472, 474, 480; Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 172–3, 183.

⁷⁴ Jörg Haustein, 'Embodying the Spirit(s): Pentecostal Demonology and Deliverance Discourse in Ethiopia', *Ethnos* 76 (2011), 534–52.

world or beyond the body'. Alves, Porterfield plausibly complains, has overlooked 'the demons and spiritual powers that filled the world of Jesus'.⁷⁵

Derek Prince's career points, not to a supposedly typical African understanding of the spirit world radiating outwards to influence global Pentecostalism, but rather to the potential of a neglected aspect of the Western philosophical tradition, when mediated through Prince's popular Christian Platonism, to strike a chord among many who received it in Africa. The irony of the Derek Prince story is that it was precisely the cosmology of Plato that supplied Prince with a lens which enabled him to view the most acute or frequently recurring material ailments of the mind and body as signs of a more fundamental disorder in the realm of the spirit. Crucially, for many of those in Africa and elsewhere who received Prince's message, these material ailments included the curse of chronic poverty. Plato, for all of his intellectualist preoccupation with the immortality of the soul, inhabited an enchanted universe populated by diverse spiritual beings, which was the arena for the outworking of ancestral curses. Contemporary Christianity in Africa, many other parts of the developing world, and arguably in some Western contexts as well, locates itself in a similar universe, in a way that much of the Western academy struggles to comprehend.

⁷⁵ Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (Oxford, 2005), 124, citing Rubem A. Alves, *A Theology of Hope* (Washington, DC, 1969), 149.