

**Three Cambridge Evangelicals and Their Significance for World
Christianity: Henry Martyn, Joe Church, and Derek Prince**

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AUTHOR

It would not be unreasonable to claim that the University of Cambridge has contributed more to the global Protestant missionary movement and hence to the complex texture of contemporary world Christianity than any other university. Its closest rival in that respect is probably my adopted university, Edinburgh, though my judgment would be that my alma mater wins by a short head. I could have selected other notable graduates of the University who went overseas with missionary intent to make this general point, but the trio I have chosen exemplify some wider themes that are of contemporary interest to scholars of mission and world Christianity. They may seem an odd company. The first and the third were Fellows of Cambridge colleges, while by no stretch of the imagination could the second be described as an intellectual. The first was a mathematician, the second a medic, and the third a philosopher. Martyn has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention, though he still awaits a proper academic biography. Church was for long ignored, but he and the East African Revival movement that he helped to ignite are now attracting increasing scholarly interest, not least because his fascinating papers are now available in the archives of the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide. Prince has a biographer, but his significance for world Christianity today is only just beginning to be recognised. I had the privilege as a student of meeting Joe

Church more than once, though I did not know him well. For the other two, I have to rely on what sources survive.

Henry Martyn [1], of course, is widely regarded as the fountainhead of the Cambridge evangelical missionary tradition. In October 1887, in a sermon preached in Holy Trinity Church to mark the opening of the Henry Martyn Memorial Hall, the Master of Trinity, Henry Montagu Butler, claimed that Martyn was ‘not the greatest Clerical Missionary of the Church of England, but he was the first’.¹ As I have pointed out in an earlier published paper, Martyn was *not* in fact the first Anglican clerical missionary; he was, approximately, the 411th.² In the course of the eighteenth century, 410 ordained missionaries served the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, mostly in North America and the Caribbean, all of them missionaries of the Church of England.³ It is true that most of them had the primary responsibility of ministering to British persons in the colonies; their evangelistic duties towards the indigenous inhabitants were secondary to their role as colonial chaplains. However, the same was formally true of Henry Martyn, whose official duties as a chaplain of the Honourable East India Company were confined to ministry to the Company’s officials, British soldiers, and their families. Martyn was not *strictly* a missionary at all. Yet viewed from the vantage point of Cambridge in the high imperial era, he appeared in retrospect to be the pioneer, the one whose self-immolation on the altar had ignited the flame of the evangelical Anglican missionary devotion which the Henry Martyn Hall had been erected to nourish at its original Cambridge source.

¹ H. M. Butler, *Henry Martyn: a sermon preached in Trinity Church, Cambridge, October 17th, 1887* (Cambridge, 1887), p. 4.

² Brian Stanley, “‘An ardour of devotion’: the spiritual legacy of Henry Martyn” in Richard Fox Young (ed.), *India and the Indianness of Christianity: Essays on Understanding – Historical, Theological, and Bibliographical in Honor of Robert Eric Frykenberg* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 110.

³ D. O’Connor and others, *Three Centuries of Mission: the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 1701-2000* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), pp. 27-8.

Martyn's significance is partly symbolic, but also substantial in terms of actual achievement. That achievement is to be reckoned, not in numbers of converts – which were low – but above all in terms of his translation legacy, and it is this aspect of his work that I shall concentrate on in this first section of the talk.

Martyn's notable intensity of spiritual devotion – what both Butler and James Stephen termed his 'ardour'⁴ – was evident above all in the almost manic industry with which Martyn applied himself to the translation of the New Testament into 'Hindustani' (Urdu), Persian, and Arabic (this last being a collaborative enterprise that he supervised), in addition to the Psalms and Book of Common Prayer into Urdu. Language learning was, of course, the necessary precondition for this work. Even after he had concluded work on his draft Urdu New Testament in April 1808, this included the learning of Hebrew, which Martyn appears not to have learned while in Cambridge. Martyn's journals and letters, as recorded in Samuel Wilberforce's 1837 edition and John Sargent's celebrated biography, reveal the intensity with which Martyn, resident in Kanpur in 1809, applied himself to the learning of languages, especially of Hebrew, and give some hint of the deeper reflection on the nature of language itself in which he engaged.

[2] 'It is my belief', Martyn affirmed to his fellow East India Company chaplain Daniel Corrie on 30 January 1809, 'that language is from God; and therefore, as in his other works, so in this, the principles must be extremely simple.'⁵ To study language was to study the works of the Creator. It was a form of natural theology, but an admittedly perplexing form. 'Of all the things in the world', he observed in writing to Corrie on 11 September 1809,

⁴ Stanley, "An ardour of devotion", 108-9, 111.

⁵ John Sargent, *Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B.D.*, 4th edn. (London, 1820), 312.

language is that which submits itself most obsequiously to our examination, and may therefore be understood better than anything else. For we can summon it before us without any trouble, and make it assume any form we please, and turn it upside down and inside out, and yet I must confess the more I look at it, the more I am puzzled. I seem to be gazing with stupid wonder at the legerdemain of a conjuror.⁶

Despite the lack of perspicacity of language as a form of natural theology, Martyn reached the conclusion in the course of 1809 that if only the construction of biblical Hebrew were fully understood, scholars would turn to it with avidity as a model of language in ‘its simplest and purest state’, the key that unlocked all ancient languages, thus enabling the word of God to be understood universally and bring about the promised day when all nations would know the one true God.⁷ His quest to master the deeper philological principles of Hebrew now became obsessive. In two letters to Corrie written in June and July 1809, he referred to the ‘philological mania’ that was afflicting him, as he dwelt on the power of each of the Hebrew letters to such an extent that sleep forsook him.⁸

On 30 August 1809 Martyn confided in a letter to another evangelical East India Company chaplain David Brown that his preoccupation with the forms of Hebrew was leading him to speculate on the nature of language, asking the question ‘How or by what magic is it, that we convey our thoughts to one another with such ease and accuracy?’⁹ Martyn was, we should remember, a brilliant mathematician, being judged First Wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos in 1801. There is some evidence that he approached language study in the same way as he approached mathematical problems. To revert to Greek and Arabic from his current immersion in Hebrew, he confessed to Brown, would be like it

⁶ Samuel Wilberforce, ed., *Journals and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B.D.*, 2 vols (London, 1837), II, 254.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 246-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 244-5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

used to be in Cambridge trying to ‘cram a proposition I did not understand’.¹⁰ Like many mathematicians who turn their hands to language study, he found the principles of analysis not dissimilar. Martyn, however, was insistent that ‘I have no wish to be a linguist.’ His thirst for linguistic knowledge was purely for the sake of ‘making known the gospel by translation and preaching’.¹¹ He was called to be a preacher of the gospel through the medium of Bible translation. Biblical translation was a form of interpretation of the Word of God, one that required the aid of the same Spirit who shaped the writing of the Word and who would equally facilitate the hearing of the Word. When Martyn finished his Persian New Testament in February 1812, he exclaimed in his journal:

I have many mercies in bringing it to a termination, for which to thank the Lord, and this is not the least. Now may that Spirit who gave the word, and called me, I trust, to be an interpreter of it, graciously and powerfully apply it to the hearts of sinners, even to the gathering an elect people from the long estranged Persians!¹²

The role of biblical translation in the transformation of Christianity into a culturally plural global religion has been one of the most prominent themes of scholarship in world Christianity over the last three decades. Lamin Sanneh, whose sudden death on 6th January we mourn, made a lasting impact with the publication in 1987 of *Translating the Message*, a book that made the subversive claim that, for all the weight of the underpinning colonial apparatus, ‘in the religious and theological sphere, missionaries became ultimately helpless in the face of the overwhelming contextual repercussions of translation’.¹³ A decade later Adrian Hastings built upon Sanneh’s thesis by suggesting that the commitment of Christianity, and especially Protestant Christianity, to translate

¹⁰ Ibid, II., 251.

¹¹ Ibid., II., 262.

¹² Sargent, *Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B.D.*, 432-3.

¹³ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (Maryknoll, NT: Orbis Books, 1987), 158.

its Scriptures into vernacular languages, has proved highly conducive to nation formation in a way that Islam, with its insistence on the untranslatability of the Qu'ran, was not.¹⁴ Then in 2000, the late John Peel published his *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, using both Sanneh and Hastings to chart the very different pathways of political formation and religious reform taken by Christianity and Islam in Yorubaland.¹⁵

It would be foolish to suggest any sort of direct equivalence between Martyn's agonised pondering on the principles of divine order underlying Hebrew philological forms and these reflections of modern scholars on the cultural implications of the vernacular translation of the Christian message. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that Martyn's fascination with the plurality of human languages as an integral part of the order of divine creation marked the beginning of a scholarly road that would lead ultimately to the insights of Sanneh, Hastings, and Peel. Martyn appears never to have made the crucial step of noticing that biblical translation was not simply about the translator's attempt to 'convey thoughts with ease and accuracy', but also about the reader or hearer clothing those thoughts with the associations that the host culture and cosmology attached to the terms selected by the translator to convey biblical concepts. Yet we should take note of Martyn's perception that translation was integral to the realisation of the Christian eschatological hope of all *ethne* coming to know the Lord, as also of his implicit recognition that scriptural translation was an act of interpretation, not a mechanistic enterprise, but one that required the superintending hand of the Holy Spirit.

[6] Our second missionary, Joe Church (1899-1989), was also a fervent believer in the superintending hand of the Holy Spirit. My own copy of his *Every Man a Bible Student*, which he gave me on 3 December 1976, is inscribed

¹⁴ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ John D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000).

with the words, ‘With my prayers that the Holy Spirit may *inspire* [underlined] your research and writing for His glory’. At the time, as a young PhD student at Church’s old college, Emmanuel, I was researching my first published article, on the East African or Balokole Revival of which he was the leading missionary promoter. That article, published in the Anglican journal *Churchman* in 1978, made the case that the Revival should be understood as an example of African appropriation and refashioning of a European missionary tradition, namely the Keswick holiness tradition as refracted through the lens of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union.¹⁶ That line of argument has not on the whole appealed to the substantial body of scholarship that has been published on the Revival since 1978, most of which has wanted to emphasise African rather than European missionary agency. I do not myself see that to propose that Africans took what the Ruanda Mission brought them from Keswick and Cambridge and made it something that was indubitably their own is in any way to promote an outmoded Eurocentricity. After all, the story of Christianity in modern Africa is precisely about what Africans did with what those of European stock brought them from outside. Furthermore, the book that reproduces his teaching sessions given in the Revival, *Every Man a Bible Student*, first published in 1938, is dedicated, not just to Joe’s wife Decie, but also to five African Christians – Simeoni Nsibambi, Blasio Kigozi, Yosiya Kinuka, William Nagenda, and Erika Sabiti – ‘who, over the years, helped me to make these subjects *real* [in large capitals] in every day living’.¹⁷

At the heart of Joe Church’s teaching was the Keswick Convention message that Christians were called to what W. E. Boardman termed ‘the higher Christian life’, but which Church liked to describe as ‘the highway of holiness’ or the ‘Promised Land’. His preface to *Every Man a Bible Student* alludes to

¹⁶ Brian Stanley, ‘The East African Revival: African initiative within a European tradition’, *Churchman*, 92, 1 (1978): 6-22.

¹⁷ Joe Church, *Every Man a Bible Student* (1938), new edn. (Exeter: Paternoster, 1976), frontispiece.

‘the speakers, too many to number, who came up week by week to the Christian Union (the C.I.C.C.U) and who pointed us to the Life of Victory, showing us the ‘up-and-down life in ‘the wilderness’ and the ‘giants’ that stop us entering ‘the Promised Land’, and lighting up the agelong quest for holiness.’¹⁸ The book is ambiguous. On the one hand it refutes the idea of a once-for-all second blessing as ‘erroneous’. Church describes the sanctified life as one of ‘real brokenness’, requiring ‘the daily cleansing of the Precious Blood’.¹⁹

Brokenness meant being prepared openly to confess one’s continuing sins as a Christian. Teaching public confession of sin appears not to have been common at Keswick itself, but it is explicitly enjoined in *Every Man a Bible Student*, with Charles Finney cited in its support. Confession, writes Church, should be made ‘primarily to God’, but ‘in the hearing of the assembly’, that is before the gathered church.²⁰ And yet the section on confession of sin containing this statement is placed early in the book, between the section on repentance and that on faith in Christ, suggesting a clear discontinuity between the life of sin and the saved life of holiness.

The Revival’s practice of public confession has figured prominently in recent scholarship on the Revival. Derek Peterson has shown how it upset established norms of social order and moral decency, bringing into the open shocking details of sexual transgression that implicated others and challenged those in authority.²¹ More recently, Jason Bruner has argued, correctly in my view, that whatever precedents for open confession may have existed within the secrecy of emandwa initiation cults in the Great Lakes region, what was

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., 75-6.

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Derek R Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c.1935–1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

advocated by the Balokole – the Luganda word for ‘saved ones’ – was novel and disturbing.²² [7]

In 1946, after hearing Kilimenti Semugabo, a Tutsi Catholic sub-chief, recount a dream in which Christ had challenged his pride in refusing to repent, Church wrote a prayer, which he illustrated with a series of five widely disseminated motto card:

Lord, bend that proud and stiff-necked ‘I’,
 Help me to bow the neck and die,
 Beholding him on Calvary,
 Who bowed his head for me.²³

The Balokole were those who had bent their necks, confessed their sins before their fellow church members, and thereby entered into the inner circle of the revived, those whose experience of the victorious life had become ‘real’. Increasingly to be revived was equated with being saved, with the clear and disconcerting implication that those who had not taken this public step were not saved, whether they were Africans or missionaries.

[8] The fellowship of the Balokole was thus a radically egalitarian one, in which distinctions between Tutsi and Hutu or Bahima or Bairu, or between white and black, dissolved into insignificance in comparison with the fundamental division between the saved and the unsaved. As the second motto card in Church’s 1946 series portrayed, the victorious life was a communal one, marked by shared repentance and profound reconciliation. The Revival thus played an important part in subverting the hierarchies of twentieth-century East African societies, both the colonial hierarchy between missionaries and African church leaders, and the indigenous social hierarchies that divided Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda or Bahima and Bairu in Ankole.

²² Jason Bruner, *Living Salvation in the East African Revival in Uganda* (Rochester, NY and Woodbridge, Suffolk: University of Rochester Press & Boydell & Brewer, 2017).

²³ For the origins of the motto cards (of which there were five), see J. E. Church, *Quest for the Highest: An Autobiographical Account of the East African Revival* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1981), 218-19.

The Keswick and CICCUC tradition was a pietistic one, not generally marked by its concern to bring the gospel to bear on issues of social injustice. Nevertheless, as re-shaped by the Balokole it had enormous potential for social impact, both positive and negative. [9] We should not forget that the late John Gatutu of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, and controversial originator in 1971 of the call within the World Council of Churches for a moratorium on the sending of missionaries from the West, was a spiritual child of the East African Revival. One of the most intriguing experiences I have had in an academic conference was at Westminster College in 2008, when a conference on the legacy of the Revival was startled to find Gatutu in the midst of his paper burst into the Balokole anthem, *Tukutendereza Jesu* – itself a translation of a hymn from the Keswick hymnbook – with the expectation that the assembled audience, composed largely of historians, should join him in singing it.

There is, however, another side to this narrative. The Rwandan genocide of 1994, it is sometimes suggested, was the acid test of how deep was the commitment of the Revivalists to transcending social and ethnic divisions. It is indeed the case that some of the Abarokore, as they were known in Rwanda, risked their lives by sheltering Tutsi in their homes.²⁴ Yet at Joe Church's old station of Gahini, birthplace of Revival, three out of the four Anglican clergy in 1994 swallowed the dominant ideology, legitimating the murder of Tutsi by appeal to Old Testament precedents such as Samson's slaughter of the Philistines.²⁵ If evangelicalism of a revivalistic kind is to carry lasting credibility in the world today, it has to show that the spiritual fellowships it creates are not simply havens for those on the inside, but also outward-facing communities capable of effecting social reconciliation and transforming their environment.

²⁴ Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 194-6.

²⁵ Nicholas Godfrey, "Understanding Genocide: The Experience of Anglicans in Rwanda, c. 1921-2008" (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2009), 105-8.

[10] My third and final case study of a Cambridge-educated missionary also raises searching questions about the nature of the impact of forms of evangelicalism on non-Western, and especially African, societies. Derek Prince was born in Bangalore in 1915 to a British army family and was baptised in St John's Church, Bangalore. [11] Educated at Eton College and King's College, Cambridge, he was elected a Fellow of King's in March 1940. At the time Prince was not an evangelical Christian, though one of his best friends from his undergraduate days [12] was the classicist and botanist John Raven, son of Charles Raven, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge from 1932, and a leading liberal evangelical. Prince regularly visited the Raven home for tea and in 1939 accompanied the family on a botanical summer holiday to Galway. Raven's influence was probably responsible for turning Prince into a pacifist. Whether he also subconsciously imbibed something 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.²⁶

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.²⁷ What we do know is that in April 1941 [13] Prince was converted and shortly afterwards baptised in the Spirit through contact with the Assemblies of God while undergoing non-combatant training with the Royal Army Medical

²⁶ Stephen Mansfield, *Derek Prince: A Biography* (Baldock: Derek Prince Ministries and Authentic Media, 2005), 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* 84:1 (2015), 20-48.

²⁷ King's College Cambridge Archives, Minute Books of the Cambridge Apostles, volume XVII, 1928-47, minutes for 16 October 1938, 23 October 1938, 13 November 1938.

Corps near Scarborough.²⁸ Although he remained a Fellow of King's until 1949, his life was now set in a new direction.

After war service in North Africa, Prince spent time in Palestine, where he met and married Lydia Christensen, a Danish Pentecostal missionary nearly twice his age. He witnessed first-hand the birth of the state of Israel; he remained a fervent Zionist for the rest of his life. In January 1957 he and Lydia were sent as Assemblies of God missionaries to Kisumu in western Kenya, where Prince became principal of the AOG's Nyang'ori Teacher Training Centre [14]. Arriving in Kenya in the wake of the Mau Mau anticolonial insurgency, he became convinced that 'powerful satanic agents and influences' were at work in Kenya, seeking to bring 'hatred, disorder, and bloodshed'; this was despite the fact that Mau Mau was almost entirely limited to Kikuyuland and absent from western Kenya. He became involved in deliverance ministry, but only in the context of pioneer evangelism. His distinctive teaching that even Spirit-filled Christians might need deliverance came later, after his relocation, first to Vancouver in 1962, and then to Minneapolis and later Seattle. As pastor of Broadway Tabernacle in Seattle in 1963-4 he reached the conclusion that some of the most disturbing problems in the church's life were the result of demonic possession of *bona fide* church members, and began his distinctive ministry that employed detailed questionnaires to identify which Christians were possessed by which demons as a prelude to their exorcism.²⁹

[15] A prolific popular writer, Prince had published more than forty books by 1984.³⁰ From 1979 he broadcast an American daily radio program, *Today with Derek Prince*, which was eventually broadcast internationally in thirteen languages. But his global influence appears to have been most extensively mediated through the international cassette and book ministry he

²⁸ Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 83-94.

²⁹ Mansfield, *Derek Prince*, 191, 207-11.

³⁰ Derek Prince, *Life's Bitter Pool* (Harpden: Derek Prince Ministries, 1984), 43.

established in late 1983.³¹ The invention in 1962 of the compact audiocassette tape, a medium that enabled the global circulation at very low cost of recorded messages by popular charismatic preachers, carried a significance that has yet to be investigated by historians of popular religious change. [16] It has been aptly said that ‘the cassette tape defined Charismatic culture. The faithful took tapes the way their secular counterparts took medicine.’ Prince’s cassette ministry led to an invitation to visit 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 in Ghana.³² Opoku Onyinah describes Prince as ‘the “mentor” of this kind of ministry in Ghana’.³³ [17] He was particularly influential on both Owusu Tabiri, a leading figure in developing Ghana’s ‘prayer camps’ (specializing in spiritual warfare) in the early 1990s, and Aaron Vuha of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.³⁴

Prince’s influence extended beyond Protestant circles and reached all continents. Roman Catholics who acknowledge a specific debt to his teaching include: the Nigerian priest and popular author, Stephen Uche Njoku; [18] the controversial archbishop of Lusaka from 1969 to 1983, Emmanuel Milingo; and the American exponent of divine healing, Francis MacNutt.³⁵ Some of the most globally popular charismatic authors on deliverance ministry trace their understanding of demonization and its remedy in greater or lesser measure to Prince – among them, Southern Baptists [19] Frank and Ida Hammond, the New Zealand Anglican Bill Subritzky, and the British founder of Ellel Ministries, Peter Horrobin.³⁶

³¹ Prince’s obituary in *King’s College Cambridge Annual Report* (2004), 50, notes the particular significance of audiocassettes for the dissemination of his teaching.

³² Gifford, *African Christianity*, 100, 346-7.

³³ Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana* (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2012), 172.

³⁴ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 89; see also Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 393.

³⁵ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 118-19; idem, *African Christianity*, 227; 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: Paternoster, 2009), 57, 61, 63.

³⁶ Collins, *Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry in the Twentieth Century*, 64-5, 87-90.

Where did Prince's demonology come from? His experience in Kenya was clearly important in causing him to adopt a spiritualised interpretation of Africa's political problems, but it did not lead him to the conclusion that *Christians* 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' insistence in the *Phaedo* that all material things were transitory.³⁷ His fellowship dissertation submitted to King's College in 1940 was on 'The Evolution of Plato's Philosophical Method'. [20] It was a discussion of Plato's analysis and use of Socrates' philosophical method from the perspective of the philosophy of language, as understood by 'the Cambridge School' of modern philosophy, and in particular by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who taught Prince. In his dissertation Prince argued for a comprehensive application to all reality of Plato's theory of forms. [21] He cited the judgment 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'. It was not sufficient, Prince argued, 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.'³⁸

What has all this to do with African neo-Pentecostalism? What has Athens to do with Accra? The answer is that Prince's teaching on deliverance reproduces the language of Plato's *Phaedo* almost verbatim [22]:

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,

³⁷ 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*, 274.

³⁸ King's College Cambridge archives (KCAC/4/11/1), P.D.V. Prince, 'The Evolution of Plato's Philosophical Method' (Fellowship dissertation, n.d. [1940], 60-1; see A. E. Taylor, *Varia Socratica*, first series (Oxford: James Parker, 1911), 244-5. Prince acknowledges his debt to Wittgenstein three times, on pp. 7, 12, and 130.

that we discover the forces which will ultimately shape our destiny, even in the visible realm.³⁹

Or again [23]:

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.⁴⁰

The message that Prince's West African hearers found so attractive was that the invisible world of contesting spiritual powers was not simply to be taken more seriously than the mission churches had done, but was in fact the only enduring reality, infinitely *more* real than the transitory world of material suffering and poverty. He departed from the tradition of both the Assemblies of God and of the prophet movements of the earlier twentieth century in teaching that even Spirit-filled Christians could be not simply afflicted, but even possessed by them – he preferred to use the term 'demonised'. This appeared to eliminate the ambiguity created by older traditions of Pentecostal Christianity.⁴¹ If West African prophets such as William Wadé Harris and Joseph Babalola had been fundamentally mistaken in their assumption that a Christian, once protected from evil by the indwelling power of Christ, was always protected, then might that not explain why even fervent Christians were falling into sickness and failing to escape from poverty?

³⁹ Derek Prince, *Blessing or Curse: You Can Choose!* (Bletchley: Authentic Media, 2005), 18-19. Cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, transl. David Gallop (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 27.

⁴⁰ Derek Prince, *Lucifer Exposed: The Devil's Plan to Destroy Your Life*, new edition (Baldock: Derek Prince Ministries, 2007).

⁴¹ For precedent in the Early Hellenistic Church for Prince's belief in the possibility of the demonization of Christians see Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 248-51.

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 prosperity) or ill (manifested in poverty or hereditary sickness), a claim that meshed closely with African beliefs about the ancestors. Prince appealed for biblical support to the long list of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28 and the repeated pentateuchal warnings about the iniquity of the fathers being visited on the children to the third and fourth generations. However, the influence of Plato again cannot be ruled out [24]: Plato shared with much Greek thought a belief in the polluting capacity of ancestral curses, and in his *Phaedrus* refers to families ‘afflicted by horrendous illnesses and suffering as a result of guilt incurred some time in the distant past’.⁴² For Plato, however, daemons were not the villains of the piece, but rather intermediary spiritual beings that usefully protected the gods from polluting contact with matter. Prince, by contrast, followed Tertullian in assimilating the whole assembly of ancestral and other spirits into the Pauline concept of evil principalities and powers.⁴³

Prince’s demonology promised many African Christians 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 problems inculcated not trust in the power of Christ, but enduring fear and mutual suspicion. It is noteworthy that in Ghana even the Pentecostal churches that formerly derided the so-called ‘Spiritual’ churches for their use of herbal medicines are increasingly resorting to herbal remedies themselves, some of

⁴² Prince, *Blessing or Curse*, 32-42, 62; Deuteronomy 28, Exodus 20:5, Numbers 14:8, Deuteronomy 5:9; Plato, *Phaedrus*, transl. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 244d-e, pp. 26-7; cf. Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 191-206.

⁴³ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 108-9, 144-5.

which are held to possess exceptional powers of protection against evil forces.⁴⁴ A sacramental reliance on certain material objects as weapons of spiritual contestation may be a necessary corrective to Prince's devaluation of the material.

It would be foolish to claim that Derek Prince was the sole source of the teaching on demonology and deliverance that became so popular in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa from the 1980s. David Maxwell's study of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Zimbabwe 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.⁴⁵ It would require a major research project to trace more precisely the chronology and geography of Prince's impact and form a judgment of his relative significance alongside other leading teachers of demonology, such as the Nigerian Emmanuel Eni. Paul Gifford, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, and Opuku Onyinah have all identified Prince as being of unusual importance for Ghanaian Pentecostalism, though none has attempted any theory of what in particular might account for his enthusiastic reception.⁴⁶ My hypothesis is that Prince's unusual synthesis of Platonism and Pentecostalism provides at least part of the answer.

In conclusion, what did Henry Martyn, Joe Church, and Derek Prince have in common, other than the obvious facts that they were all evangelical Protestants, all educated in Cambridge, and all spent most of their adult lives beyond Britain? As one would expect from evangelicals, all three were preoccupied with the Bible – Martyn with its translation, Church with its

⁴⁴ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Therapeutic strategies in African religions: health, herbal medicines and indigenous Christian spirituality', *Studies in World Christianity* 20.1 (2014), 70-90 (at pp. 86-8).

⁴⁵ David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement* (Oxford: James Currey, 2006), chapter 8.

⁴⁶ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 100, 346-7; idem, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 89; idem, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 118-19. Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 170; Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 172-3, 183.

typological application as a blueprint for the Christian life, and Prince with the window he believed it provided into the invisible spiritual world. All three gave more prominence to the role of the Holy Spirit than did many of their Christian contemporaries. Martyn saw his translation enterprise as legitimated and empowered by the Spirit. Church's vision of the Christian life was of an upward pathway marked by continual bestowal of the sanctifying power of the Spirit. For Prince, the Holy Spirit was above all the only one who could break the sinister hold of the past on individual Christian lives. They were all spiritual absolutists, not the easiest of men to live with. But Cambridge has good reason to remember them all, with discernment of judgment, certainly, but also with gratitude.