



EXEGETICAL DISCUSSION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 13 LEADING TO CONTEXTUAL TRANSLATION INTO GĀ (A GHANAIAN) LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Contextual translation to reflect the cultural elements of the community that uses the translated document has been a critical issue for discussion among Bible translators. The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13 has been a thorn in the flesh of biblical exegetes, translators, and interpreters, which also affects contextual translations. This essay argues that translations must reflect contemporary terms and concepts in the cultural psychology of the community of the audience. It attempts a contextual translation of 1 Corinthians 13 into Gā (a Ghanaian) language. The translation process considered the influence of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian Ministries in Ghana, and the contemporary Christians, who speak Gā as a second language. This study adopts the view that 1 Corinthians 13 is an original composition by Paul and it is the integral part of the discourse on spiritual gifts, which began from 1 Corinthians 12–14.

Keywords: Exegesis; Contextual translation; Gā (a Ghanaian language); Love; Pentecostal and Charismatic, Spiritual gifts.

INTRODUCTION

The translation of the Bible into local indigenous languages in Ghana is one of the key elements to consolidate Christianity in indigenous socio-cultural settings. In the Gold Coast, now Ghana, translation was initiated and spearheaded by the Euro-American missionaries with the involvement of some indigenous Ghanaians, which resulted in the publication of the full Gā Bible between 1853 and 1866 (Ekem 2011: 32). This period was preceded by portion to portion (translations of chapters of a book in the Bible, translations of a book in the Bible, translations of a genre in the Bible) translation of the Bible by early theologians, the clergy, and linguists. Most significant among these are the translation of the Sermon on the Mount by Major Philip Wilhelm von Wrisberg, a Christian Danish government official in the Gold Coast, which was published in 1826 (Kpobi 2015: 25; Ekem 2011: 25). The translation of the gospel of Matthew and John by Rev. A. W. Hanson in 1843 titled: “Matthew ke Dzhon, Sa’dzhj-kpakpaj lu; ie Gha woema lu mli” (Ekem 2011: 25). These translations serve as foundation and encouragement leading to the first full translation of the Gā Bible. von Wrisberg used the Dutch text, as his source text for the translation while Hanson used the Greek text. However, it is significant to mention that their translations reflected the ethos of the dominant Christian denomination at the period – historic mission churches. Therefore the translation of the Catechism, which is a set of instructions concerning the beliefs and practices of a denomination that establishes a new convert in the faith became very significant to be translated. And the translations of Matthew and John. The gospel of Matthew was considered by the historic mission Churches as forming a bridge between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament (Ayegboyin 2015: 87-95) and gospel of John was viewed as a divine gospel. It is a postulation by the Early Church that was carried on by the historic mission Churches (Ayegboyin 2015: 93, 133-138).

The second translation of the Bible into Gā began in 1866 and was completed and published in 2006 (Ekem 2011: 48). Although it was an improvement over the previous version that began in 1853 and

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was published in 1866, the Gã terms and concepts that were used do not easily resonate with the youths and ordinary (second) speakers of the language. It also did not consider the influence of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Ghana. This call for a Gã version that will seriously consider the needs of these group of Christians.

1. Pertaining to the world wide spread of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity that are also been experienced in the historic mission Churches and the fact that the 2010 Population and Housing Census indicated that they are the largest Christian denomination in Ghana having 28.3% of Christian population (2010 Population and Housing Census 2012: 40). It is expected that translations would contextually reflect the ethos of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, which is the emphasis on the works of the Spirit for mission and edification of the members of the church.

2. The Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians need contextualized translations that will highlight the deeds of the Spirit in solving the existential needs of its adherents. The 2006 translation of 1 Corinthians 13 did not consider the text as a block of literature concerning the activities of the Spirit in the church, which Paul began in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. Probably, it was considered as a later interpolation. In that regard, the text was titled: “suomɔ fe dromɔ keenii fɛɛ”, which literally means “love is better than all spiritual gifts”. It clearly depicts a dichotomy between the gifts of the Spirit and love. It does not address (i) the gifts of the Spirit; (ii) the relationship between the gifts and love; and (iii) the role of love in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit. This has rendered 1 Corinthians 13 one of the favorite texts for preaching at wedding ceremonies at the detriment of the gifts of the Spirit.

Considering the many languages in Africa, and available translations, it is obvious that there is a deficit. By the end of 2012, it was estimated that the full Bible have been translated into 189 out of 2000 spoken languages in Africa.² Mojola (2007: 31) referred to the volume of languages in Africa as a ‘Babel’ of languages. He concurred that Africa has about 2000 languages and dialects. This constitutes one third of the world languages. The Bible has been translated into a very minimal number of languages probably due to a lack of resources and inadequate biblical scholars who understand the indigenous languages and concepts. Beside these challenges, the terms and concepts used in some of the translations do not resonate with the youth. It appears archaic to them and does not catch up with the influence of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity currently prevailing in Ghana and many parts of Africa.

In a research to evaluate patronage of Bibles in indigenous languages in Kumasi, Ghana, it was realized that Ghana’s Christian youth’s level of patronage of Bibles in indigenous languages is very low. Only 12.8% of youths between the age group 10 and 40 use them, 87.2% of adults between age 41 and 70+ use Bibles in indigenous languages (Kuwornu-Adjaottor 2012; 125). This is due to the fact that the terms and concepts used are better understood by the elderly than the youth.

In view of the impact of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity on other Christian denominations in Ghana, and some commonality that the Gã religio-cultural ethos shares with first century Corinthian society, it becomes imperative to exegete 1 Corinthians 13 as a springboard for translation into Gã language to show a contextual meaning of love in the pursuit of spiritual gifts. The purpose is to propose a revised version of 1 Corinthians 13 into Gã to reflect some contemporary Gã terms and concepts, and to also echo Pentecostal and Charismatic features in the text.

Some Views on the Source and Authenticity of 1 Corinthians 13

There are three schools of thought on the text.

- I. Barrett and Conzelmann as captioned in the work of Murphy-O’Connor (2007; 810), argue that 1 Corinthians 13 is a classic love piece that stands out in Paul’s writings. In other words, the quality of the writing and the engagement of Hellenistic literary style in praising love, chapter 13 is an interpolation, probably, by a Paulinist into the block of the literature. Morgan (1946: 161-163) largely supported the interpolation opinion when he argued that the passage under discussion was in parenthesis which found its way into the passage. He clarifies by trying to soften his stand that it might be written by Paul, but fixed into the passage by a disciple of Paul. In pursuit of this

² <https://kemptonexpress.co.za/13195/africa-leads-with-bible-translations-2/>. Accessed March 14, 2019.

argument, Davis (2000: 978) referred to 1 Corinthians 13 as an interruption between 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. To sum up, this group of scholars hold that 1 Corinthians 13 was probably written and inserted into its current position in the epistle by a Paulinist or a disciple of Paul. The strength of this argument suggests that Paulinists or the disciples of Paul were supportive of the concerns of Paul to restore unity and orderliness in the church at Corinth. Notwithstanding, 1 Corinthians 13:13 flows well into 1 Corinthians 14:1 and one gift in the three categories mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 is repeated in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

- II. Baker (1974: 232-233) posited that love is not a spiritual gift but the fruit of the spirit, therefore the passage is a digression by Paul. It is an earlier piece by Paul which might not be originally written for the purpose of pneumatological discourse, but Paul deems it fit to add it to 1 Corinthians. Soards (1999: 271) contended that although 1 Corinthians 12: 31 and 1 Corinthians 14:1a flow very well, the polished nature of the text of I Corinthians 13, and the traces of Hellenistic writing styles, makes the text an intrusion and a digression by Paul that was not intended for its current position in the epistle. Applying Cicero's tool of classical rhetoric, which consist of: Exordium; narratio; confirmatio; refutatio; and peronatio, to analyze the text of 1 Corinthians 12-14, Patrick (2004: 47, 62) affirmed that chapter 13 is an excursus and digression by Paul. Fee (1994: 198) supported this contention when he argued that 1 Corinthians 12:31a flows quite well with 1 Corinthians 14:1, therefore 1 Corinthians 13 is an "interlude by Paul." Simply put, these groups of scholars argue that 1 Corinthians 13 might have been written by Paul for a different purpose, and he later found it useful to be included in the first epistle to the Corinthians. This position probably assumes that, since love is not listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 as a spiritual gift but rather as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, it is a digression or excursus by Paul. In any case, if it was written by Paul for a different purpose but was found useful for the Corinthians, there must be historical evidence to prove the case.
- III. Willoughby (1984: 180) offered that in the context of incest, division, fornication, marital problems and disorderly worship services, love is an imperative virtue. Hence, 1 Corinthians 13 was deliberately written by Paul and fixed in its position in the epistle. Horsley (1998: 174) claimed that most of the verbs used in 1 Corinthians 13, generally agree with those in chapter 12 and 14, therefore it was purposely written and fixed in its present position in the epistle by Paul. McDougall (2003: 184) emphasized that one gift out of the three categories in I Corinthians 12:8-10 is found in 1 Corinthians 13:8. Therefore, 1 Corinthians 13 is an authentic composition by Paul meant for its current position in the epistle. To sum up, this group of scholars see I Corinthians 13 as an original composition by Paul, and as part of the pneumatological block of literature for the church at Corinth. This study adopts this position on the text of 1 Corinthians 13.

Exegetical Outline

Exegetes and interpreters of 1 Corinthians 13 have titled and outlined the passage differently based on the method used and the intended purpose for the interpretation. Morgan (1946: 162) titled it "follow after love" and outlined it as follows:

- the value of love verses.1-3;
- the virtues of love verse. 4-7;
- the victories of love verse. 8-13.

Barrett (1971: 299) titled the passage – "the fundamental test: love" and outlined the passage thus:

- the contrast between love and religious attitudes verse. 1-3;
- the description of love verses.4-7; and
- love persists verses vv.8-13.

Erdman titled the chapter – "the way of love" and divided it into three:

- indispensability of love vv. 1-3;
- the manifestation of love verses. 4-7;
- imperishability of love verses. 8-13.

The strength of Morgan, Barrett and Erdman's titles and outline dealt with the central theme of the chapter – love. However, it seems to suggest love as a spiritual gift, which in fact Paul did not suggest neither was it included among the list in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. Notwithstanding, analyzing the chapter from an encomium point of view, Horsley (1998: 174-175) postulated that, since the supreme aim of encomia is to encourage an audience to imitate the praised virtue in a four of five part encomium, the chapter comprises of prologue, act, comparison and epilogue. In view of the fact that Paul was advocating for the Corinthian Christians to be motivated by love in the pursuit and manifestation of spiritual gifts, the argument of Horsley is quite convincing. Based on this assertion, the study titles the chapter thus: love, the motivation for the pursuit of spiritual gifts. It is outlined as follows:

- Prologue: spiritual gifts and love verses 1-3;
- Act: the characteristics of love in the Context of the Exercise of Spiritual Gifts verses 4-7
- Comparison: the durability of love verses 8-12; and
- Epilogue: love is the greatest verse 13.

CONCISE EXEGESIS

Prologue: spiritual gifts and love vv. 1-3

In these opening verses of the chapter, Paul states his intention: a discourse between spiritual gifts and love. According to Murphy-O'Connor (2007: 811), "there is a progression from the lowest gifts of tongues (14: 6-12), via the intellectual gifts and miracle-working faith, to acts of supreme devotion benefiting others." The prologue is composed of four *ἐάν* (if) clauses followed by verbs in the subjunctive mood. It is the mood of probability. Paul hypothetically and rhetorically used himself as an example and examined the result of the exercise of spiritual gifts without love for the Corinthians.

In verse. 1, Paul mentioned tongues of men/humans and tongues of angels. In 1 Corinthians 12: 8-18, there was no mention of tongues of humans and tongues of angels. Hence, it is a difficult text to exegete. Many biblical exegetes have given varying meanings to the text. Fee (1994: 200) argued that "tongues of men' would then refer to human speech, inspired of the Spirit but unknown to the speaker; 'tongues of angel' would reflect an understanding that the tongue-speaker was communicating in the dialect(s) of heaven." This suggest that 'tongues of humans' is xenolalia and 'tongues of angels' is glossolalia. Fee (1994: 201) supported his argument from Jewish tradition and Corinthian Christian spirituality.

According to him, in the Testament of Job 48-50, the use of charismatic sashes result in hemera leading to the composition of lyrics in a heavenly language believed to be that of angels. Secondly, it is generally understood by Corinthian Christians that speaking in tongues constitutes speaking in angelic language that are mysteries (1 Cor.14:2), hence sexual roles should be limited (7:1-7; 11:2-16) and there is no need for future bodily existence (15:12, 35). Soards (1999: 276) concurs that the Corinthians consider speaking in tongues as a privileged speech that puts the speaker ahead of non-speakers.

Moffatt (1938: 192) postulated that 'tongues of human' and 'tongues of angels' is speaking in glossolalic tongues with some angelic words, similar to that in the Dionysus cult and the votaries Cybele in Corinth. Barrett (1971: 299-300) posited that 'tongues of humans' is intelligible language whilst 'tongues of angels' is a language spoken by angels. Therefore the highly spiritual persons were granted the ability by God to understand. He exemplifies from Jewish tradition that due to the piety of Johanan ben Zakkai, he was able to understand the language of angels during worship services. The language of angels (if it exists) may be considered as glossolalic. Barrett's view suggests being granted the ability to understand the speech of angels. Paul stipulated that women should cover their head during worship services because of the angels (1 Cor. 11:10). Ciampa and Rosner (2007: 738) assert that there is an understanding between the Corinthian Christians and Paul that speaking in glossolalic language includes speaking in angelic language.

It is obvious that 'tongues of humans' reflects intelligible human speech, nevertheless, 'tongues of angels' has been a thorn in the side of scholars to interpret. In that regard, it is important to turn to the context of the passage for some clues to exegete the phrase. Reference to angels in 1 Corinthians 13:1 is the fourth time Paul made reference to angels in 1 Corinthians. In 4:8-9, in view of the blessings of God on the Corinthian Christians and his calling into ministry as an apostle, he and the Corinthian Christians have

become a spectacle for angels. In comparison to humans, angels are lower, because humans can easily exercise their will whilst angels express the will of their master, and humans will judge angels (6:3).

Charismatic women were instructed to cover their hair during ministrations because of the angels (11:10). This suggests that Paul had conscientized the Corinthian Christians concerning the activities of angels around them during public worship services (Ekem 2005: 109; Payne 2006: 13). The presence of the “if” clause coupled with the subjunctive mood in v. 1 suggests that angels may have a language that is not the same as or beyond glossolalia of the Corinthian Christians. This is not to argue that ‘tongues of angels’ is glossolalia, however, if someone should speak in ‘tongues of angels’, which may be higher than glossolalia but have no love, it has no impact.

Paul’s intention that he wanted to show that even the exercise of heavenly language (if there is any) needs love was very clear. It does not mean that ‘tongues of angels’ is equivalent to glossolalia or a mixture of glossolalia and angelic speech. This can be substantiated by the fact that, in Pauline literature, “angels always have a hyperbolic function (4:9; Gal.1:8; 4:14)” (Horsley 1994: 176). Without love, Paul describes the exercise of the gift as a gong and clanging cymbal - noisy. Gong and clanging cymbal were basic instruments generally associated with first century ecstasy cults (Soards 1999: 272). This denotes a contrast between love and noise. Using the gift of glossolalia without love is mere noise. Love is the driving power of speech (Morgan 1946: 162). It is significant to echo that the discussion of “tongues” is a reference to the third category of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, which is referred to as “charismata connect with tongues” (McDougall 2003: 182).

In verse 2, Paul made reference to the second category of gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. It is charismata contingent/dependent on peculiar faith (McDougall 2003: 182). He defined prophetic activity to include understanding of mysteries and knowledge. Μυστήρια (mystery, secret) indicates what was not previously known but has been made known through revelation. Γνωσις (knowledge) is the knowledge that leads to the quest to receive prophecy (Morgan 1946: 162). Πίστις (faith, trust, commitment), is the evocation of total confidence in God to execute a particular task. Paul used πάντα (all, every) mystery, all knowledge, and all faith suggesting that the exercise of these gifts can be relative to measurement. These gifts were exercised in intelligible language. Although Paul encouraged intelligible gifts to be exercised in public worship services as against unintelligible gifts (14:26-40), they must operate on the winds on love, else it is nothing. In other words, worthless.

Verse 3 expresses the act of religious piety and personal devotion. There is a textual variant of “to be burned” and “in order to glory/boast”. Both have patristic attestations. Considering the context of the passage where Paul is making hypothetical assumptions concerning one’s commitment to religious duties or exercise of spiritual gifts, the reading “to be burned” is probable. Barrett (1971: 302-303) held that human burnings/sacrifices is known in Jewish tradition. Paul might be making allusion to (Dan. 3:25ff LXX) ‘if in some great cause I give myself to the most painful of deaths, but have no love, even this is no credit to me.’ However, he would not condone human burnings in Corinth, hence, ‘to be burned’ should not be understood literally as self-burning of some Christians in Peregrinus and India as recorded by Plutarch and Strabo, but should be understood as “to be branded as a slave”, simply put, selling one-self into slavery to benefit others. It is the extreme form of charity that is, giving all that one possess in addition to one’s body. Paul is reiterating the fact that religious commitments will be judged on the fulcra of love. The absence of love renders the work of charity, and probably martyrdom non-profitable.

Act: the characteristics of love in the Context of the Exercise of Spiritual Gifts verses 4-7

In this section, Paul describes the characteristics of love to show to the Corinthian Christians that the presence of anyone of these virtues in a person indicates that he/she has love. Alternatively put, Paul does not want the Corinthian Christians to misunderstand him or have any ambiguity concerning love. The kind of love Paul discusses here is ἀγάπη (the love of God), which is the highest Christian virtue. Verbrusse (2000: 6) stated that ἀγάπη “...is always in the sense of the love of God,...or in the sense of divine love for other human beings that the presence of God evokes. This brings ἀγάπη close to the concepts like faith, righteousness, and grace, all of which have their point of origin in God alone.” This sets apart ἀγάπη from

ερως (love between a male and female), and φιλεω (love for one's relatives or religious associates or human expression of love for God).

Paul was instructive in this section by asking that the Corinthian Christians emulate the eccentrics of love. Paul states the thesis and antithesis of love or what is love and what is not love. Love is patient, and kind. Patience and kindness are part of the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, which is also the character of God. In Galatians 5:22-23, love, patience, and kindness were present as being on the same pedestal/level. In 1 Corinthians 13:4, patience and kindness were presented as the manifestations of love; in other words, they are a sub-set of love. Paul might have assumed that patience and kindness may be mimicked by some so that they would be seen as manifesting love. He listed what love is not - arrogant, irritable, encourage/rejoice in wrong doing; but love rejoices in truth, is tolerant, hopes and endures.

Comparison: the durability of love vv. 8-12

In this segment, Paul compares love and spiritual gifts. He views sound eschatological when he distinguishes between perishable and non-perishable things. Since God is love and is perpetual, love never ends. Πίπτω (fall) is used to refer to the collapse of structure, fallen things, fallen off and dead, shorten life span, and downfall of humans (Verbrusse 2000: 641-642). Paul used the human developmental analogy to argue that tongues, prophecy, and knowledge will cease when the perfect comes. There are two schools of thought concerning the exact period/time of τέλειον (perfect, complete): (i) the gifts were given for the establishment of the church and the compilation of the Bible, after which they were withdrawn (Crompton 2004: 125; Amevenku 2016: 235-256); (ii) Τέλειον is the second coming of Jesus or at the end of the world, therefore the spiritual gifts are in operation (Willoughby 1984: 143; Amevenku 2016: 238-258). The first argument has no biblical support. The second argument although biblical, lacks precision. In the context of love in which Paul was writing, it is probable that τέλειον was understood as the period when the Corinthian Christians began to engage love as foremost to spiritual gifts. The partial refers to the exercise of spiritual gifts without love.

Epilogue: love is the greatest v. 13

The epilogue summarizes the thoughts of Paul in the chapter. What is unclear in the epilogue is whether Paul introduced hope which is not mentioned in the chapter. Faith here does not refer to miracle working faith but belief in God and His works. It is somehow difficult to fuse together hope, faith and love. Moffatt (1938: 204) argued that love is hopeful and faith-ful.

Synthesis of Exegesis

In view of the divisions and self-centeredness of the Corinthian Christians in public worship services at the time, Paul deliberately wrote chapter 13 to show that in the desire for spiritual gifts and its exercise, love is the foremost requirement. In verses. 1-3, Paul putatively used himself to project the necessity of love amidst the manifestation of the most cherished spiritual gifts of glossolalia and prophecy of the Corinthian Christians. Paul did not make love a spiritual gift. Love is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22) and therefore an attribute of God. The lack of love in the manifestation of revelational gifts and gifts based on special faith is the equivalent to the noise made by gong and clanging cymbals in non-Christian cults in Corinth.

It means that the distinction between Christian manifestations of spiritual gifts and that of non-Christians is love. Paul then lists the thesis and antithesis of love in verses 4-7 so that any one professing to have love and spiritual gifts could be evaluated based on the characters of love described – patience, kindness, truth, hope, and endurance. In fact, the antithesis shows that any one exhibiting resentment, intolerant, and rudeness is not of love. Verses 8-12 show a contrast between love and spiritual gifts. Paul presented love as an attribute of love that has no end just like God. This suggests that where spiritual gifts end, love perpetuates. Hence, τέλειον ought to be understood as the period when the Corinthian Christians began to exhibit love as a motivation for spiritual gifts. Understanding the text in the context of Pentecostal and Charismatic Gã Christian point of view in Ghana, it expresses the theology of the omnipotence of God as indicated in divine gifts to minister to the existential needs of believers.

A Brief History of the Gã People of Ghana and the Language System

The Gã people are an ethnic group in Ghana. Many of them occupy the capital of Ghana – Greater Accra. Their territory shares a border to the North with the Akuapem hills, to the South by the Gulf of Guinea (sea), to the West by Awutu, and to the East by Dangme.³ According to Reindorf, the term Gã is derived from Gaga, a black invading and dangerous military ants, however, the natives of Gã refer to themselves as Loeiabii (descendants of Loei), a dark brown invading ants.⁴ The Gã is a tonal language. It belongs to the Kwa group of Niger-Congo languages spoken along the coast of West Africa, which also includes Akan, and Ewe languages (Yankah 2006: 12-13; Boadi 1994: 51).

Gã alphabets

Gã Letters	English Equivalent and Sound
A	as in “far”
B	as in “bar”
D	as in “die”
E	as in “date” it is a short sound
E	as in “let”
F	as in “feel”
G	as in “gall”
H	as in “hall”
I	as in “sick” it is a short sound
J	as in “January”
K	as in “King”
L	as in “light”
m	as in “man”
n	as in “new”
ŋ	as in “lawn”
o	as in “nose” it is a short sound
ɔ	as in “not”
p	as in “pineapple”
r	as in “rat”
s	as in “sound”
t	as in “table”
u	as in “too”
v	as in “viral”
w	as in “wellness”

³ Marion Kilson, *African Urban Kinsmen: The Gã of Central Accra* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1974), 5; Irene K. Odotei, “The History of Gã People: Introduction” on <http://www.justiceghana.com/index.php/en/2012-01-24-13-47-17/6642-the-history-of-gã-people-introduction?showall=1&limitstart>. Accessed 3/7/2015; *Language Guide (Gã Version)*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1986), 5.

⁴Cited in Mustapha Watson-Quartey, “Origin of the Gã-Speaking People of Accra” on <http://www.kpakpatseweroalfamily.wordpress.com/2011/06/18/origin-of-the-gã-people-in-Ghana>. Accessed 3/7/15.

y	as in “yesterday”
z	as in “zebra”

Gã letters of the alphabet do not have c, q and x. It has short and long vowels: Short vowels – a, e, ε, i, o, ɔ, and u. Long vowels – aa, ee, εε, ii, oo, ɔɔ, and uu. Gã consonants are often combined to make additional sounds for which its English equivalents are difficult to find. They are pronounced as one alphabet without space in between the letters.

Gã Consonant Combinations	English Equivalent and Sound
gb	no English equivalent but gbalɔ (prophet) in Gã.
gw	as in “guard”
hw	as in “where”
jw	as in “edge”
kp	no English equivalent but kpaŋ (rope) in Gã.
kw	as in “aquatic”
ny	no English equivalent but nyɔŋma (ten) in Gã.
ŋy	no English equivalent but ŋwei (sky) in Gã.
ŋm	no English equivalent but ŋma (write) in Gã.
sh	as in “shepherd”
shw	as in “Schweppes”
ts	as in “cheap”
tsw	as in “chew”

Translation of I Corinthians 13 into Gã Language

1 Korintobii 13: Suomɔn: ni woɔ wo ekaa koni wɔtiu mumɔ mli nibii/nikee⁵

¹Kε miwiesɔ gbɔmɛi kε ŋweibɔfoi awiemɔi shi mibe suomɔ le, no le mitsɔ akasaa ni gbɛɔ loo ŋoŋo ni jijeɔ. ²Keji miye gbale nikenii ni haa minuɔ teemɔŋ saji kε nilee fεε shishi, ni kε miye hemokɛyeli fεε bɔ ni manye gɔji mafamɔ shi mibe suomɔ le, mijeee nɔ ko. ³Kε mike nɔ ni miyɔɔ fεε miha kekwe ohiafoi ni miŋɔ migbɔmɔtso miha koni mana hienyam shi mibe suomɔ le, minaaa he sεε ko kwraa. ⁴Suomɔ toɔ etsui shi, ni emli hi, eyeee awuŋa, efεee fuu, ewooɔ eheno. ⁵Etaooɔ le diŋtse eno, emli fuu ni efεee nɔ ko ni bulε be he. Eke efɔŋ etooɔ emli. ⁶Enaaa miishεε ye nii ni ejaaa hewɔ shi moŋ enaa miishεε ye anɔkwayeli mli. ⁷Edamɔɔ nibii fεε naa, ehεɔ nibii fεε eyeɔ, ehie kaã nibii fεε nɔ, efɔ shi ye nibii fεε mli. ⁸Suomɔ sεε efooɔ kwrakwra (kɔkɔkɔ). Shi gbale nikenii sεε baafo; wiemɔ srɔtoi sεε baafo; kε nilee ni le, esεε baafo. ⁹Ejaake nilee ni woyɔɔ le yeee emuu ni wɔgbaa fã kε fã. ¹⁰shi kε nɔ ni yeɔ emuu le ba le, nɔ ni ji fã kε fã le sεε baafo. ¹¹Be mli ni miji gbekε le miwiesɔ tamɔ gbekε, mijwεŋɔ tamɔ gbekε, misusuo nii ahe tamɔ gbekε. Shi amrɔ nεε mitsɔ onukpa mishe gbekεbii anifeemɔ aloo asui le mifo. ¹²Ejaake amrɔ nεε, wɔkwεɔ ashishwe mli ni wonaaa nii jogbaŋŋ, shi ye nakai beiaŋ le, wobaana nii hie kε hie. Amrɔ nεε, mile nii fã kε fã, shi nakai beiaŋ le, male nii jogbaŋŋ tamɔ bɔ ni ale mi jogbaŋŋ le. ¹³Nibii ete nεε baahi shi: hemokɛyeli, hienokamɔ kε suomɔ; shi ameteŋ nɔ ni fe fεε ji suomɔ.

⁵ The translation engaged Gã terms and concepts used by the Pentecostal and Charismatic ordinary speaker of the language on the street and common market places or public spaces. It can be compared to the Greek Κοινή (common) as against the Gã spoken in the chief palaces and cultic settings which was used to translate the 2006 Gã version of the Bible.

Translation of 1 Cor. 13 into English.⁶ Love: the Motivation for Pursuing Spiritual Gifts

¹Even if I speak in tongues of humans [intelligible human languages] and of angels [angelic language beyond glossolalia] but have no love, I am a noisy brass or a wailing cymbal.²Even if I have the gift of prophecy [prophetic endowment], which enables me to understand all mysteries and all knowledge, even if I have all faith which enables me to move mountains [extra ordinary mighty works] but have no love, I am nothing.³If I give out all my livelihood to feed the poor; even if I sacrifice my body in order to receive glory; but have no love, it profits nothing.⁴Love is patient, love is kind; it is not envious; not boastful; not arrogant; ⁵it is not self-seeking; it is not indignant; ⁶it does not rejoice over unrighteousness but delights in the truth; ⁷it tolerates all things; believes all things; hope all things; endures all things. ⁸Love never ends. But prophecy will come to naught; tongues will cease; knowledge will come to naught. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but whenever the perfect comes, the partial will come to not. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke as a child, thought as a child, reasoned as a child. When I became an adult, I put away childish characters. ¹²For now we see in a mirror riddle, but then we will see face to face, now I know in part, but then I will know completely just as I have been known. ¹³And now abide faith, hope, and love, these three but the great of these is love.

Some Commentary on the New Gã Translation of 1 Corinthians 13

The translations into Gã and English languages were largely influenced by the assertion that 1 Corinthians 13 is an original text authored by Paul, meant at its current position in the block of literature concerning spiritual gifts spanning I Corinthians 12-14. I Cor. 13 serves as the foremost requirement for seeking and exercising the gifts of the Spirit. First century Corinthian Christians desire for pneumatic manifestation share some commonality with Gã pneumatic manifestations. Although my translation have some key words that can be found in the 2006 Gã translation, there are some differences that need to be appreciated in the context of Gã pneumatic activities and the influence of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. The 2006 Gã translation does not seem to have fully incorporated the religio-cultural pneumatic activities of the people. It seems to have translated 1 Corinthians 13 as interpolation of literature that does not relate to pneumatic activities. Nonetheless, it is an improvement on previous translations.

Gloss

Atsɔɔ 1Korintobii 13 keje blɔfo mli ketee Gã mli ejaake bɔfo Paulo dieɲtse ŋma. Ene hewɔ le wɔnaa ake efata mumɔ mli nikee nii ni jeɔ shishi keje 1Korintobii 12-14 le. 1Korintobii 13 haa wɔnaa nɔ ni sa ni wɔtiu sɛɛ ke nɔ ni sa ake wɔtao ketsu mumɔ mli nikee nitsumɔ le. Klɛŋklɛŋ Korintobii ayinɔ ke Gã nifeɲmɔi komei fɛɛ tsɔɔ ake ameyɛ hemɔkeyeli kome. Eye mli ake wiemɔi komei ni obaanyɛ ona ye 2006 Gã Biblia le shishitsɔɔmɔ mli shi ebaahi ake abaana srɔtoi ni yɔɔ shishitsɔɔmɔ nɛɛ mli.

The 2006 Gã version titled 1 Cor. 13 thus: suɔmɔ fe dromɔ keenii fɛɛ (love is above all gifts of grace). The title leaves the context of the description of gifts of the Spirit Paul discussed in 1 Corinthians 12 and the comparative analysis of the gifts of prophecy and tongues and its appropriation in public worship services. It compared spiritual gifts with love, meanwhile Paul's argument was not to seek for love instead or in place of spiritual gifts. In that regard, I titled it Suɔmɔn: ni wɔɔ wɔ ekaa koni wɔtiu mumɔ mli nibii/nikee. This title suggests that prior to seeking and exercising spiritual gifts, the seeker ought to have love for the work of Jesus and fellow humans. This will educate those who have the gifts and may not be using it correctly due to personal desires and the lack of love. It further emphasizes love as the fruit of the Spirit which ought to tally with spiritual gifts.

Gloss

2006 Gã Biblia le wo 1 Korintobii 13 le yitso ake 'suɔmɔ' fe dromɔ keenii fɛɛ. Shi eha ŋmale le shishitsɔɔmɔ le bafee tamɔ ni aasusu sane ni yɔɔ 1 Korintobii 12 le he. Eke munio mli nikee le to suɔmɔ he. Paulo etsɔɔ mli ake esa ake wɔtao suɔmɔ he. Paulo etsɔɔ mli ake esa ake esa ake wɔtao suɔmɔ moŋ ni wɔshi mumɔ mli nikee. Ye ene mli le miwo ŋmale nɛɛ yitso ake "suɔmɔ: nɔ ni wɔɔ wɔ ekaa koni wɔtiu mumɔ mli nibii/nikee." Ene tsɔɔ ake akeni mɔ ko baatao mumɔ mli nikee le, esa ake mɔ ko atao suɔmɔ keha enyɛmi ke nitsumɔ ni

⁶ Author's translation prefers dynamic and functional translation over word for word literal translation

Yesu keshi wɔ ɛ. Ene baanyɛ akanyaŋ mɛi ni yɔɔ mumɔ mli nikee nii ni amɛketsuɔ nii ɛ kɛnaa amɛhe ɛ koni amɛtao suɔmɔ. Ebaaha ni wɔkɛ wɔjwɛŋmɔ ahi suɔmɔ nɔ akɛ eji nɔ ko ni kɛ mumɔ mli nikee nyiɛɔ.

In verse 1, my translation shows that tongues and the language of angels is a usual phenomenon that took place during many public worship services of the Corinthians. It has become a known language that even though some of the members of the Church may not understand, they easily identify it. Therefore I used awiemɔi (languages) as against alilei (tongues), which emphasizes tonality, suggesting normal human language in different tones. The use of akasaa to translate κύμβαλον (cymbal) is to indicate anything that makes lousy noise including metal and copper implements, and gongor (drum) used for epiclerisis in Gã traditional pneumatic activities to wake the spirits. This translation agrees with the use of cymbals (copper, metal trays) used in Corinthian cults. The use of ayawa (domestic pan usually made of silver) might have limited the meaning to pans used in domestic activities.

Gloss

Mitsɔɔ Klɛŋklɛŋ kuku ɛ mli akɛ gbɔmɛi awiemɔi kɛ ŋwɛibɔfoi awiemɔi ji nɔ ko ni wɔnaa yɛ jamɔ kɛ sɔlemɔ mli. Ebaatsɔ wiemɔ ko ni mɛi yɔsɔ yɛ sɔlemɔ mli shi ebaa ɛ akɛ anuuu shishi. Ene hewɔ ɛ mike “awiemɔi” yɛ alilei najiaŋ ni tsɔɔ gbɔmɛi awiemɔi srɔtoi ni wɔyɔɔ ɛ. “Akasaa” hu tsɔɔ mɔ ko ni gbɛɔ loo ejijeɔ. Etamɔ dadei kɛ mii ni ayiɔ ketsiɔ Gamei awawɔi yɛ kusumii naa. Neke shishitsɔɔmɔ nɛɛ kɛ “akasaa aloo ŋoŋo” ni gbɛɔ ɛ kpaa gbɛɛ tamɔ bɔ ni Korintobii ɛ feɔ yɛ amɛjamɔi amlɛi ɛ. Keji akɛ “ayawa” tsu nii ɛ ebaa ɛ akɛ aawie “pan” ni yei kɛhoɔ nii loo amɛfɔɔ nii ahe yɛ mli yɛ Shia.

In verse 2, the use of haa (that which enables) is to indicate the ability of a person who possesses the gift of prophecy and therefore understands mysteries. This knowledge leads to the understanding of mysteries to their very foundation or formation (shishi). It speaks to the issue of finding spiritual causalities of issues that defies scientific and social solutions in Gã pneumatic activities of wulɔmɔi (traditional priest who also prophesies). It also agrees with Paul’s admonition for the Corinthian pneumatic persons to use the gift of prophecy to reveal secrets resulting in the conversion of non-Christians to the faith (1 Cor. 14: 21-25). In verse 3, kɛkwɛ ohiafoi (to care for the poor) is used instead of kuma mɛi (to serve humans) as used in the 2006 translation. The use of kɛkwɛ ohiafoi is to emphasize social justice and show specificity that the giving of all that one has is to benefit the poor. In other words, the gifts expressed in love ought to benefit the poor and the ungifted ones.

The 2006 use of hã ni ashã mi (give one’s body to be burnt), however, did not give the reason for the act. This agrees with Corinthian and ancient Gã tradition of human sacrifice. In my translation above, I used miha koni mana hienyam (to give one’s body in order to gain honor). This translation takes cognizance of the concept of καυχάομαι (boast, glory, pride) indicating the reason for παραδίδομι (to give, to hand over). The addition of kwraa (absolutely nothing) in my translation is to show the intensity of οὐδέν (no, none, nothing). The 2006 translation used eshwãaa; efeeɛ pupuupu in verse 4. These words do not easily resonate with the ordinary Gã person or speaker. In the translation above, efeeɛ fuu, ewooɔ ehɛnɔ (not boastful, not arrogant) easily resonates among contemporary Gã speakers, and it also expresses the meaning of οὐ περπερεύεται οὐ φυσιοῦται (not to boast, not puff up, inflate, blow-up).

Gloss

Kuku ni ji enyɔ mli mike “haa” tsu nii ketsɔɔ akɛ mɔ ni yɔɔ mumɔ mli nikee ɛ anu teemɔŋ saji ɛ ashishi jogbaŋŋ. Esa akɛ mɔ ɛ ale eshishifã loo he ni eje. Ebaawa koni otao naamɔmɔ kɛha naagbai komei ni baa kɛ bɔ ni wulɔmɔi komei feɔ amenii amehaa. Eke bɔfo Paolo kpaa gbɛɛ (feɔ jwɛŋmɔ) yɛ ŋaa ni ekɛha Korintobii ni kɛ gbale nikee ni amɛyɔɔ ɛ jieɔ teemɔŋ nibii kpo. Keji amɛkɛ mɛi ni jeeee Kristofoi miigba sane ɛ, amɛgbalaa amɛ kɛbaa anɔkwale ɛ mli. Kuku ni ji etɛ ɛ kɛ “kɛkwɛ ohiafoi” tsu nii keye “kuma mɛi” najiaŋ. Akɛ kɛkwɛ ohiafoi tsu nii ketsɔɔ akɛ eji mɔ fɛɛ mɔ gbɛnaa akɛ eke nɔ ni eyɔɔ ɛ aha koni ohiafoi ana sɛɛ. Ene tsɔɔ akɛ suɔmɔ nikee ni awie he ɛ tsɔɔ akɛ esa akɛ ohiafoi ana he sɛɛ ketsɔɔ wamɔ ni wɔkɛ baaha amɛ ɛ nɔ.

Afi 2006 kɛ wiemɔ “hã tsu ni ashã mi” tsu nii shi egbalaaa nɔ hewɔ ni ewie nakai. Ene kɛ Gamei akusumii kɛ Korintobii ahɛmɔkeyeli ni yɔɔ afɔle ni gbɔmɛi shaã ɛ feɔ ekome. Yɛ misane shishitsɔɔmɔ nɛɛ mli ɛ mike “miha koni mana hienyam” tsu nii. Neke shishitsɔɔmɔ nɛɛ haa ni anaa wiemɔi komei tamɔ; hienyam, hɛnɔwomɔ kɛ fuufeemɔ. Etsɔɔ hu akɛ esa akɛ wɔna mɛi mɔbɔ. “Kwraa” ni miketsu nii ɛ tsɔɔ

hiẽdɔ ni yɔɔ nɔ ko mli. Afi 2006 shishitsɔɔmɔ lɛ kɛ “eshwãaa”, efee pupuupu tsu nii yɛ kuku ejwɛ lɛ mli. Nɛkɛ wiemɔ nɛɛ mli tsee ehaaa. Ga wiemɔ lɛ wiemɔi komɛi. Shi moŋ “efeee fuu, ewooo ehɛnɔ” haa Ga wiewɔi lɛ nuɔ sane lɛ shishi jogbaŋŋ. Ehaa ni onaa akɛ esaaa ni mɔ ko feɔ fuu loo egbeɔ edaŋ.

In verse 8, the 2006 translation used suɔmɔ sɛɛ efooo gbi ko gbi ko (love will not end). The translation above proposes suɔmɔ sɛɛ efooo kwɔkwɔra (kɔkɔkɔ) (love will never end, it is perpetual). Kwɔkwɔra (kɔkɔkɔ) better expresses the idea of the eternity of love and better represents οὐδέποτε πίπτει (never ends). Verse 11 of the 2006 translation used nuu nukpa lɛ (a mature male). The translation above used onukpa to translate ἀνήρ (a man, husband, a mature person) in order to be gender balanced.

Gloss

Kuku ni ji kpaanyɔ (8) yɛ afi 2006 shishitsɔɔmɔ lɛ mli lɛ, akɛ “suɔmɔ sɛɛ efooo gbi ko gbe ko” tsu nii. Shi nɛkɛ shishitsɔɔmɔ ni mifeɛ lɛ kɛ “suɔmɔ sɛɛ efooo kwɔkwɔra / kɔkɔkɔ” tsu nii. Kwɔkwɔra / kɔkɔkɔ haa nii wɔnaa suɔmɔ akɛ eji nɔ ko ni esɛɛ efooo. Wiemɔi lɛ tsɔɔ loo egbalaaa sane lɛ mli jogbaŋŋ. Kuku ni ji nyɔŋma kɛ ekome (11) yɛ 2006 ŋmale lɛ shishitsɔɔmɔ lɛ mli lɛ wie nuu onukpa ko he. Shishitsɔɔmɔ nɛɛ mli lɛ, mikɛ wiemɔ ni ji “onukpa” ni tsu nii. Nɛkɛ wiemɔ nɛɛ damɔɔ shi kɛhaa nuu, mɔ ko ni hiɛ efã loo wu tsu nii. Enyɛɔ edamɔɔ shi hu ehaa hii kɛ yɛi fɛɛ.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, I attempted to undertake exegesis of 1 Corinthians 13 in order to aid translation into Gã language. 1 Cor. 13 forms part of a block of literature dealing with spiritual gifts and its use in public worship service. The centrality of love in this chapter have predisposed some scholars to argue that it is an interpolation or digression by Paul or Paulinist. Love is the fruit of the Spirit. In view of the wide spread of Pentecostalism and its influence on other Christian denominations who were not initially inclined to Pentecostal ethos, and pneumatic expression without love can be misleading. The exegetical work shows that, in the context of divisions and factionalism in the Church at Corinth, Paul deliberately gave an exposé on love and its characteristics. He admonished the Corinthian pneumatic persons to minister the spiritual gifts in the attitude of love that never ends. The 2006 Gã translation builds on previous translations. The exegesis show that the translation can be improved to further enhance the religio-cultural elements in Gã tradition in the context of the Corinthians, and taking into consideration contemporary issues in translations such as the operations of the gifts of the Spirit to solve existential needs of worshipers, and the use of contemporary Gã terms and concepts that can be easily understood by a second speaker of the language. The new translation share some commonality and differences with the 2006 translation. This is probably due to variations in exegetical results by the method used.

This calls for some ramifications for translation of the Bible into indigenous languages in Africa. Scripture translations into indigenous African languages can be considered as a political issue, because some divisions of an ethnic group would advocate for the use of particular terms and concepts in the translation, as a means of consolidating their dominance and control. During translations, it is usually the traditional linguists and elders in the palaces and the shrines who are invited to give input. The 2006 Gã translation had immense input from wulɔmɛi (traditional priests) (Ekem 2011: 23). This is due to the fact that they are the very custodians of the language.

However, they are not Christian theologians, therefore were not able to give input concerning contemporary theological issues. In addition, they tend to support the use of old adages in the language because they are usually confined to an area in the community where old adages were being used. This makes the translation an archive for research into a language other than Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, which the contemporary Gã speaker would have to approach it with an encyclopedia of Gã language if there is any. It is a Herculean task for the contemporary Gã speaker and the alternative is to use other translations like those in English language. In contemporary Bible translations, the translators seek to use simple language that can be easily understood by many, without deviating from the message of the Bible. This is gradually making newer translations such as the NIV, ESV, and NET, just to mention a few popular among Christians. The impact of Pentecostal and Charismatic on Christianity in Ghana is phenomenal, hence any translation that considers contemporary language and prevailing theological issues will be cherished by many Christians. Therefore selecting personnel for Bible translation for a Gã community that is also

Pentecostal and Charismatic in nature ought to include (i) contemporary speakers of the language; and (ii) and scholars of prevailing theological issues. Biblical studies in Africa ought to include the study of indigenous languages and concepts. Biblical scholars ought to be socially engaged and ecclesiastically involved in order to appreciate the need of the community in Bible translation.

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