

# Praying through the Lord's Prayer with Meaning and Significance: Mother-tongue Theological Hermeneutical Study of Mathew 6:9-13



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## ABSTRACT

The Lord's Prayer seems to be the best-known prayer among Christian communities. In liturgical contexts, it appears to be the most memorized and recited text of the New Testament. The popularity of the Lord's Prayer, on one hand, indicates its significance within Christianity. On the other hand, its popularity implies that many people recite it without reflecting on its theological meaning and significance. The main purpose of this work was to read the Matthean text of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) from the perspective of the Akan mother-tongue theological hermeneutics. The paper thus joins with a contemporary few selected voices in the African exegetical enterprise to suggest that a mother-tongue theological hermeneutical reading of scripture contributes to an enhanced understanding of biblical texts which is of ecumenical relevance in the contemporary glocal (global and local) contexts.

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## INTRODUCTION

Prayer in the Bible is depicted as one of the ways of relating to God.<sup>1</sup> To pray is to intercede, to entreat, and thus to make supplication. From the perspective of Christian spirituality, Richard Foster observes that "prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life."<sup>2</sup> Musa W. Dube observes that "the vision that one espouses for oneself, family and friends, neighbours, communities, nations and creation at large is expressed through prayer."<sup>3</sup> In distinguishing prayer from other human desires, Dube identifies that it is a human quest for divine partnership. Thus, from a Christian perspective, in the words of Dube, "to pray is to persistently declare one's visions, availability and commitment to seeking God's will for oneself and for others, including the earth, or God's creation at large."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some figures in biblical stories have viewed prayer as very important. Abraham knew when to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18). Moses knew how to win the war against the Amalekites spiritually on the Mountain – a symbol of prayer (Exodus 17:8 – 16). David was a man of prayer as we find in his Psalms. The Apostles (Acts 6:4) and the Early Church (Acts 12) saw prayer as their utmost priority and a means of intercession respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth, Ebook edition* (United Kingdom: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2003), 33. Foster notes that of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father. Meditation introduces us to the inner life, fasting is an accompanying means, study transforms our minds, but it is the discipline of prayer that brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit. Real prayer is life-creating and life-changing.

<sup>3</sup> Musa W. Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era (Matthew 6:9-13);" in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, eds. G. O. West, & M. W. Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 611.

<sup>4</sup> Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era," 611.

There are many prayers and several ways of praying portrayed in the Gospels. Matthew's presentations about prayer include what has come to be known as the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). The shorter version of this prayer can also be found in Luke 11:2-4 where Jesus responds to his disciples' request to teach them how to pray as John had taught his disciples.<sup>5</sup> Comparing the two Gospel accounts of the Lord's Prayer, Robert H. Mounce observes that, "The differences between the two accounts argue that the Lord's Prayer was intended as a guide rather than a liturgical chart to be memorized."<sup>6</sup>

Following Dube's observation, the Lord's Prayer appears to be the commonest prayer among Christians, especially in the African context. It is undoubtedly the most familiar and memorized text of the New Testament among others such as John 3:16 and Matthew 6:33. Significantly, before many Christian children are introduced to the Bible, they have already been taught to learn and recite the Lord's Prayer at home, church and in some contexts, at school.<sup>7</sup> The popularity of the Lord's Prayer has both positive and negative dimensions. On a negative note, Dube explains that the popularity of the Lord's Prayer means that many people say it without reflecting on its meaning and its implications. On a positive note, however, she observes that:

The popularity indicates its importance to the Christian faith. It indicates that the vision of the Lord's Prayer is probably regarded as the nearest articulation of God's will for the world, that the Lord's Prayer is the clearest statement on the role of Christian men and women in their partnership with God on earth, and that in praying the Lord's prayer, Christian individuals and communities at large repeatedly pledge their counteract and responsibility to the realization of God's will on earth.<sup>8</sup>

In light of the above significance of the Lord's Prayer, it is imperative for theologians, and for that matter, African Biblical scholars, to theologize using insights from the mother-tongue categories that will enhance a better understanding of the text. The main purpose of this article, therefore, is to offer a mother-tongue theological reading of the Greek text of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) using insight from the Akan mother tongue (Asante Twi).

The procedure to be followed in this mother-tongue theological hermeneutical study is, first, a scholarly discourse on Matthew 6:9-13. Here, attention is placed on the scholarly views on the socio-cultural context, genre and interpretative approaches of the passage. Thereafter, there is a translation of the Greek text or phenomenon into the Asante mother-tongue as it critically dialogues with other existing translations. Next is the discourse analysis of the text with the critical engagement of the sociocultural worldview, mother-tongue and other existential realities of the reader. This is followed by a theological interpretation and application of the text to the *glocal* (both local and global) context as synthesis.<sup>9</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

Studies on the Lord's Prayer within Ghanaian biblical scholarship, in more recent times, have been conducted using different approaches ranging from traditional exegesis,<sup>10</sup> Mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics<sup>11</sup> that is focused on engaging critically mother-tongue Bibles to identify translational challenges and African biblical<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Grant R. Osborne, "Moving Forward on our Knees: Corporate Prayer in the New Testament," *ETS* 53, no. 2 (June 2010): 249.

<sup>6</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 55.

<sup>7</sup> Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era," 611.

<sup>8</sup> Dube, "To pray the Lord's prayer in the Global Economic Era," 612.

<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 127-128. The use of *synthesis* as part of this exegetical procedure is meant a creative act of integrating all the various elements into some kind of a unified whole. Fosu has well observed that it goes beyond a summary to include a conclusion about the essential meaning of the text or phenomenon of investigation. See John Kwasi Fosu, *Experiences of Pneumatic Phenomena in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity as Appropriations of 1 Cor 12 – 14: A Critical Analysis* (Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag, 2019), 146.

<sup>10</sup> In his published doctoral dissertation book, *The Lord's Prayer in the Ghanaian Context: A Reception-Historical Study*, Michael Wandusim, for instance, has studied the text of Matthew 6:9b-13 from the perspective of historical-reception with a particular focus on the Ghanaian context. Wandusim's approach to studying the Lord's Prayer has been helpful, especially in bringing to light the traditional critical exegesis of the text as well as its paradigmatic receptions and relevance in Ghana. Michael Wandusim, *The Lord's Prayer in the Ghanaian Context: A Reception-Historical Study* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Employing the insight of the Mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics, Eric Nii Bortey Anum and Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "New Testament Concepts of Forgiveness in the Gospels in the Context of the Dangme Translation and Usage," *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 12 (2011): 1-19, have among others, questioned the translation of the rendering of forgiveness in Dangme Bible. Similarly, by engaging the mother-tongue Scripture, Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "A Critical Study of the Translation of Matthew 6:12 in the Dangme Bible," *Neotestamentica* 54, no. 1 (2020): 67-86, has analysed how the Greek word ἄφεσις ("forgive") in Matt 6:12 has been translated into Dangme and argues that God does not "lend" us our sins as the Dangme translation indicates, but rather "forgives."

<sup>12</sup> Using a textual analysis from the perspective of African biblical hermeneutics to read Matthew 6:9-13, Isaac Boahen has embarked on a comparative study between the Lord's Prayer and Akan (Bono-Twi) libation prayers. Isaac Boahen, "An Akan Reading of

and contextual hermeneutics<sup>13</sup> reading of scripture. It is needless to point out, however, that these approaches have been employed to read the biblical text (or phrases) of the Lord's Prayer depending on the research interest and objectives of the exegetes.

This article, however, follows Fosu's methodological approach of mother-tongue theological hermeneutics in reading Matthew 6:9-13.<sup>14</sup> This method, duly utilized, corresponds to the *integrated approach* to finding the meaning of a text as explained by W. R. Tate in his book, *Biblical Interpretation*.<sup>15</sup> Thus, by employing mother-tongue theological hermeneutics, the insight of the Akan<sup>16</sup> mother-tongue category is used for both the translation of the Greek text and its corresponding exegetical discussions.<sup>17</sup> This study demonstrates that, by using this method, sound theological reflections on the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer that take into cognizance the Akan worldview<sup>18</sup> and their existential realities for a meaningful application to a wider glocal context are achieved.

### Perspectives on the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) within New Testament Scholarship

Scholarly discourses on the Lord's Prayer have traditionally focused on either its setting or theology. Those scholars who emphasize the setting observe that the Lord's Prayer appears to be similar to the first-century synagogue prayers. James Dunn, for instance, notes that the uniqueness of the *Qaddish* is of special interest to Christianity in that Jesus might have used it in formulating the Lord's Prayer.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, an allusion is made to the Jewish synagogue prayers known as *The Eighteen Benedictions* as having an impact upon the Lord's Prayer.<sup>20</sup> In addition to situating the Lord's Prayer in the context of Jewish prayers, Rick W. Byargeon has argued that the overall setting of the sermon on the mount should be understood in the context of the wisdom

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Matthew's Version of the Lord's Prayer (Bono-Twi Translation) in Dialogue with Akan Libation Prayers," *AJRPC* 2, no. 2 (2021): 41-58. Doi:10.31920/2634-7644/2021/v2n2a3.

<sup>13</sup> Using the contextual interpretation of Scripture in the light of African realities, D. Sakitey & E. Van Eck have sought to reconstruct the phrase τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον (Mt 6:11; Lk 11:3) in the light of an African predicament with the Ewe-Ghanaian context in focus. As a relevant contextual theological interpretation of the phrase, Sakitey and Van Eck have argued that τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον in the Ewe-Ghanaian context should be interpreted holistically in a more pragmatic approach towards material prosperity evident in the missionary activities of the mid-19th century North German Missionary Society in Ghana. D. Sakitey & E. Van Eck, "Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον (Mt 6:11; Lk 11:3): The Lord's Prayer and an African predicament - the Ewe-Ghanaian context in focus," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 4 (2020): <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i4.5981>.

<sup>14</sup> John Kwasi Fosu, "Mother-Tongue Theological Hermeneutics: In Search of Relevant Glocal Interpretation of Scripture," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology* 5, no.6 (2023): 85-94. <https://doi.org/10.38159/motbit.2023561>.

<sup>15</sup> In the search for the meaning of a biblical text, W. R. Tate identifies the integrated approach as the fourth approach. The other three include author-centred, text-centered and reader-centered approaches to meaning. To Tate, these three main approaches correspond to three categories that are the World behind the text, the World within the text and the world of the reader respectively. With reference to the first category, Tate identifies methods such as Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism, Historical Criticism, and Tradition Criticism. It is obvious that all these methods entailing the world of the author to some extent constitute higher criticism approaches to biblical studies. In relation to the world within the text, a number of exegetical methods such as literary, intertextual and rhetorical criticisms are used in order to arrive at the original intended meaning. This requires adequate knowledge of the original languages. The last category describes locating the world in front of the text. This is where the context of the interpreter plays an active role in determining the meaning of the text. See his book, *Biblical Interpretation, An Integrated Approach, 3rd Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 1-5.

<sup>16</sup> The ethnic name "Akan" refers to the Twi-speaking peoples of the Coast of Guinea of West Africa. They consist of Ahanta, Akuapim, Akyem or Akim, Agus or Anyio, Asante or Ashanti, Asen or Asin, Bono or Brong, Busa, Chorkosi, Fante, Guan, Kwahu, Nzema and Wasa. Geographically, the Akan inhabit the Eastern part of Cote D'Vair, the Southern half and part of the North of Ghana and the north of Togoland. The culture and religion of Akans exhibit a fairly uniform pattern in spite of the fact that they consist of many autonomous subgroups. The common language and social institutions link them together. See Emmanuel Asante, *Towards an African Christian Theology of the Kingdom of God: The Kingship of Onyame* (Gueenston: The Edwen Mellen Press, 1995), 73.

<sup>17</sup> Here, the exegetical discussions will make use of the insight from the Akan mother tongue linguistic category for some key terminologies and contexts that are situated in the traditional Akan World view and existential realities for meaningful application.

<sup>18</sup> D. K. Naugle in his detailed research on worldviews identifies the German Philosopher, Immanuel Kant, as the first person to make use of the term in the German language as *Weltanschauung* to mean the power that influences how one sees reality. See his work, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Erdmanns Publishing Company, 2002), 57. Used in this context, however, worldview designates one's culturally oriented thought that involves a person's beliefs and presuppositions acquired through one's geographical and socio-cultural contexts making it possible for one to assess fundamental issues of life.

<sup>19</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, "Prayer," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, J. B. Green, S. McKnight and I. H. Marshall, editors (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 617-625. The qaddish is a hymn of praises to God found in the Jewish prayer service that has the magnification and sanctification of God's name as its central message.

<sup>20</sup> J. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2 Bd. HThKNT I/1.2 (Freiburg i.Br.-Basel-Wien, 1986), 214. The *Eighteen Benedictions* is the title given to the central prayers that are said three times a day by a devout Jew. It is known as *Shemoneh Esreh* in that one stands while saying this prayer. According to Jewish tradition, the *Eighteen Benedictions* were compiled and standardized by Gamaliel at Jamnia after the destruction of the temple near the end of the 1st Century.

literature of the Old Testament and that the Lord's Prayer should also be viewed in that context.<sup>21</sup> From this perspective, he demonstrates that significant reflections on the wisdom of Proverbs 30:7–9 can be heard in the Lord's Prayer.<sup>22</sup> It could be argued, however, that while the Lord's prayer shares certain elements of both Jewish wisdom and the synagogue prayers, the content of the prayer cannot be limited to those contexts. This then makes theological reflections on the Lord's Prayer imperative.

On interpreting the Lord's Prayer from a theological perspective, Luz has drawn attention not only to its dogmatic and ethical perspectives but also to its eschatological dimension.<sup>23</sup> According to Luz, these perspectives have traditionally shaped its interpretation.<sup>24</sup> Contrary to the historically exclusive use of the Lord's Prayer for liturgical and catechetical purposes,<sup>25</sup> some contemporary scholars argue that by the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is not giving words to be repeated verbatim, but as a model to shape all Christian prayer. Tim Chester, for instance, points out that, Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς (this is how you should pray) is literary "pray in this manner" and implies an example to adapt rather than a 'mechanical formula.'<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Mounce argues that the difference between the two accounts of Luke and Matthew indicates that the Lord's Prayer was intended as a guide rather than a liturgical chant to be memorized.<sup>27</sup>

The Lord's Prayer became part of the 'Liturgy' of the Early Church, at least in the sense of being taught as a model prayer.<sup>28</sup> As a model prayer, "according to the Latin Fathers and the Lutheran Church, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer are seven in number, according to the Greek Fathers, the Reformed Church and the Westminster Divines, they are only six; the two last being regarded – we think, less correctly – as one."<sup>29</sup> Whereas the first three petitions focus exclusively on God, the remaining four petitions have to do with ourselves. As noted by Ekem, the line for the doxology was an early tradition. A tradition that can be traced to Paul and was adopted by St. John Chrysostom.<sup>30</sup>

Among the scholars who interpret the Lord's Prayer from an eschatological perspective, Raymond Brown's assertion stands out.<sup>31</sup> Brown approaches the Lord's Prayer solely from an eschatological perspective and supports his assertion by the theological content within the Lord's Prayer periscope. N. T. Wright and Mounce also interpret the entire prayer from an eschatological perspective. Wright, for instance, describes the Lord's Prayer as "the 'true Exodus' prayer of God's people. Set originally in a thoroughgoing eschatological context, it every clause resonates with Jesus' announcement that God's kingdom is breaking into the story of Israel and the world, opening up God's long-promised new world and summoning God's people to share it."<sup>32</sup> Further, Mounce alludes to the daily bread content in the Lord's Prayer to be the messianic banquet and the temptation referring to the time of severe persecution at the end of the age.<sup>33</sup> Chester also argues that although the Lord's Prayer is a prayer Christians pray in the present, it is a prayer for the future. He writes that:

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus invites us to pray for the coming intervention of God in its different dimensions. Every line of the prayer is steeped in the Old Testament, but each time it is the expectation of the

<sup>21</sup> Rick W. Byargeon, "Echoes of Wisdom in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13)," *JETS* 41/3 (September 1998), 353–365.

<sup>22</sup> Byargeon, "Echoes of Wisdom in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13)," 353–365.

<sup>23</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, EKK I/1-4* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 2002), 441.

<sup>24</sup> Luz observes that "Im Wesentlichen stehen sich drei Grundtypen von Auslegungen in vielfältigen Mischformen gegenüber. Zwei sind bereits bei Tertullian angelegt. Seit ihm versteht man das Unservater als eine Summe des "sermo Domini," d.h. als Zusammenfassung der christlichen Verkündigung, und als eine "commemoratio disciplinae," d.h. als einen ethischen Grundtext. Dem entspricht in der Auslegungsgeschichte a) die dogmatische und b) die ethische Deutung. Die ethische Deutung, deren prägnantester Vertreter in der Alten Kirche wohl Gregor von Nyssa war, verstand dabei das Herrengebet nicht nur als eine Anleitung zum Beten, sondern als eine "Anleitung zu einem gottseligen Leben" überhaupt.<sup>24</sup> Zu diesen beiden sich nicht ausschließenden Deutungsmöglichkeiten ist seit der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule c) die eschatologische Deutung hinzugekommen, welche die einzelnen Bitten mehr oder weniger konsequent auf das Eschaton bezieht und das Unservater ohne Rücksicht auf seine Relevanz aus der Situation der eschatologischen Verkündigung Jesu auslegt." See Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 441.

<sup>25</sup> T. W. Mason, "The Lord's Prayer: II," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 38 (1965): 446.

<sup>26</sup> Timothy Chester, *The Message of Prayer* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 157.

<sup>27</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 158.

<sup>29</sup> Robbert Jamieson et al, *Commentary, Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing house, 1961), 905.

<sup>30</sup> J. D. K. Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's Translation of 'the Lord's Prayer' into Nfantse: An Example of Creative Mother Tongue Hermeneutics," in *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Raymond E Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer," in *New Testament Essays*, ed. Raymond E. Brown (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965), 217-253.

<sup>32</sup> N. T. Wright, "The Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm of Christian Prayer," in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 133.

<sup>33</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 56.

Old Testament to which Jesus refers. It is a thoroughly eschatological prayer just as Jesus is an eschatological figure and the Gospel is an eschatological word of promise.<sup>34</sup>

Chester follows Wright's argument that if the eschatological context of the Lord's Prayer is marginalized, then the prayer loses its particular effect and remains a generalized request for things to be better.<sup>35</sup> Chester advances his argument that,

The Sermon on the Mount, in which Matthew's account of the Lord's Prayer is set, is the first of five blocks of teaching by Jesus in the Gospel. Matthew's five books of the Torah (the Pentateuch). The fact that the first is given on a mountain suggests Matthew intends us to see Jesus as a new Moses, and in Matthew 5:17-48, Jesus presents himself as the new lawgiver. Jesus gives a new law for a new age. The Beatitudes too, with which the sermon reigns, one explicitly eschatological. They resonate strongly with Old Testament spirituality, but Jesus sets this in a framework of promised future blessings. The context then, of the Lord's Prayer is one of eschatological expectation.<sup>36</sup>

Upon analyzing the above scholarly views on the intention of the Lord's Prayer, it can be said that while repeating the words of the Lord's Prayer is to some extent relevant, the more important thing is that Christians use the content of the Lord's Prayer as their paradigm prayer.<sup>37</sup> Thus, whatever reason it is for which a Christian prays, these priorities must be prayed through. This position is supported by Luther's statement that "a Christian has prayed abundantly who has rightly prayed through the Lord's Prayer."<sup>38</sup>

With regard to its implication, the three petitions could be related to future consummation and the next four as connected to God's action in human lives at present. This is because, whatever may be the primary focus, however, each petition has implications for both the present and the future.

### **A Translation of the Greek Text of Matthew 6:9-13 into Asante-Twi and its English Back translation.**

#### **Translation into Asante Twi<sup>39</sup>**

9. *Enti mo mmɔ mpaɛɛ wɔ saa kwan yi so: yen agya (ɔwofoɔ) a wowɔ ɔsorosoro,<sup>40</sup> wo din no na wonfa ahotee ne anidie mmɔ.*

10. *Ma w'ahennie mmra na nna adi. Wope nye ho (wɔ yen asetena mu), sedee ete wɔ ɔsoro no, saa ara na enye ho wɔ asaase so.*

11. *Ma yen nsa nka yen daadaa aduane nne a eyɛ yen daadaa adehiadeɛ wɔ yen asetena mu.<sup>41</sup>*

12. *Na fa yen aka (bɔne) kyɛ<sup>42</sup> yen, sedee yen nso de akyɛ wɔn a wɔde yen ka/ w'fom yen. 13. Na nnya/mma yen nkɔ nsɔhwɛ mu, na mmom, gye yen firi ɔbɔnefoɔ no nsam anaa bɔne mu.<sup>43</sup>*

#### **English Back translation of the Asante-Twi Version**

9. Therefore you are to pray in this manner: Our Father (parent) in heavens above, may your name be handled in holiness and reverence.

10. Let your kingdom come and be manifested. May your will come and be seen in our lives, just as it happens in (the) heaven, even so on earth.

11. Give us today, our daily bread as (a metaphor for) our everyday needs and for (our) existence.

12. And forgive us our debts (sins), even as we have forgiven those who owe/offend us.

13. And do not lead (allow) us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one or evil in general.

<sup>34</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 158.

<sup>35</sup> Chester cites N. T. Wright to argue his case. See Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 158

<sup>36</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 158-159.

<sup>37</sup> Luz also appeals to the open nature of the Lord's Prayer in pointing out that, "Mit der Offenheit des Unservaters hängt es zusammen, daß persönlich gestaltete Gebetsparaphrasen ein guter Weg sind, es aneignend und nachbetend zu verstehen. See Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 441.

<sup>38</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 53.

<sup>39</sup> This translation is based on, Aland, Kurt, et al. Eds, *Nestle - Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th Revised Edition* (Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 14-15.

<sup>40</sup> This translates the dative plural τοῖς οὐρανοῖς that is the principal textual provision of Aland, 28<sup>th</sup> Revised edition (2012), 14. This contradicts the translation of the Bible in Asante Twi – New Testament, *Twere Kronkron Asante* (The Bible Society of Ghana, 1964), 8 which follows the variant reading of the Didache that provides the dative singular τῷ οὐρανῷ.

<sup>41</sup> This translation attempts to emphasize the nature and significance of the ἐπιούσιος to bring out the idea of daily basic needs for existence. This is different from the Asante Twi translation that literary translates it as "ma yen yen daa aduane nne" (give us our daily food today).

<sup>42</sup> This translates the Greek ἄφεσις as kyɛ which means *forgive*. *The Twere Kronkron Asante Twi*, 10, however, translates it as *firi* which means to *loan*.

<sup>43</sup> This is in contradiction to the *Twere Kronkron Asante*, 10 translation which provides the neutral sense of τοῦ πονηροῦ as *bɔne* (evil in general) as the principal translation and the masculine sense ɔbɔnefoɔ *no nsam* (evil one or Satan implied) as secondary translation.

## Discourse Analysis of the Greek Text of Matthew 6:6-13 with Insights from the Akan (Asante Twi) Mother-tongue and Other Existential Realities

Discussions on Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς, as stated, have been as to whether by the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is giving words to be repeated verbatim, or a model to shape all prayers.<sup>44</sup> The opening pronoun of Matthew's version of the prayer, ἡμῶν is plural and brings out the idea that the Lord's Prayer was designed for communal, instead of private worship. To put together the first two words, Πάτερ ἡμῶν (*yen agya*) is used as a title in both the New Testament and Jewish literature to describe God. As rightly observed by Mounce, when Jesus says, *Our Father*, he shows a new relationship that exists between God and humans.<sup>45</sup> The Aramaic *abba* that describes the cognate Greek Πάτερ (father) was a close and loving title that children used to call their father.<sup>46</sup> In this case, to pray *Our Father* draws attention to the fact that, metaphorically, the Christian faith is best understood within the context of a family. This concept of communality is very much at home with the worldview of the Akans where communality and unity in worship are eschewed.

In the opinion of Dube, the Lord's Prayer opens by describing the heavens as the realm of patriarchal authority.<sup>47</sup> The Greek Πάτερ (father), however, brings out a particular culture and time and the limitation of human language in describing God. It has been suggested by biblically gender-sensitive scholars that, the use of masculine pronouns to represent God does reinforce the exclusion and subordination of women in society.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the author's second translation of the Πάτερ into Asante Twi as *ɔwofɔ* (parent) according to the Akan cosmology does not lose its meaning to Christian worshippers. This position is also championed by Dube who writes that, "By designating God as a parent, the Lord's Prayer is not only gender neutral, it also confronts all the Christian communities and individuals of different persuasions and nations with an image of a family."<sup>49</sup> Further, the concept of God's universal Fatherhood and Motherhood is strongly rooted in the worldview of the Akan which is supported by the Akan adage: *Obi nnkyere abɔfra Nyame* (No one points out God to a child).

The notion of ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς translated as *heavens (ɔsorosoro)* raises a theological issue worth discussing. Here, the Father to whom believers pray is in the heavens. Since God is a parent (father) and is in heaven, it remains true, therefore, that God is the mighty creator and sovereign. In the words of Chester, "He has not become some domestic deity."<sup>50</sup> Implying that, from the Akan context, God is beyond all intermediaries or divinities (*abosom*) and that God is the almighty creator (*Otweadeampɔn ɔɔadee Nyame*). As a parent, God delights to hear the concerns of God's children, and as the one in heaven, God can respond in power and wisdom. Some of the ways in which the scripture uses the Greek οὐρανοῖς (heavens) connote the sky which includes the stars, moon and planets. It pictures the dimension of the universe which is indwelt by the spiritual world both good and evil. It describes the unmediated presence of God and the place from which believers look forward to the future.<sup>51</sup>

Having opened, the prayer begins by hallowing the name of God, ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου (May your name be handled in holiness and reverence) and then goes on to express hope that God's will and kingdom will be manifested. ἀγιασθήτω is an Aorist Imperative 3rd person singular passive form of the Greek ἀγιάζω which carries the idea of *making holy* and *regarding as sacred* for reverence. Luz rightly draws attention to the Old Testament,<sup>52</sup> Jewish<sup>53</sup> and Aramaic backgrounds to the fact that in hallowing God's name, both God and the people can become the subject of the action.<sup>54</sup> Thus, on the part of humans serving as the subject of *hallowing God's name*, to handle God's name in reverence is to recognize that his name is holy and that God's name is to

<sup>44</sup> See the previous discussions on the scholarly interpretive perspectives on the Lord's Prayer.

<sup>45</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 56.

<sup>46</sup> Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 442.

<sup>47</sup> Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era," 617.

<sup>48</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Theological Trends (2): Feminist Critique and Re-visioning of God-Language" (*pdf*).

<https://www.theway.org.uk/back/27Ruether.pdf>. Accessed on May 15, 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era," 618.

<sup>50</sup> Chester *The Message of Prayer*, 159.

<sup>51</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer* 159.

<sup>52</sup> Luz writes that, "Von den alttestamentlichen Stellen her kann man sowohl an die Heiligung des Namens durch Gott selbst (vgl. Lev 10,3; Ez 36,22f; 38,23; 39,7) als auch an die Heiligung von Gottes Namen durch die Menschen (Ex 20,7; Lev 22,32; Jes 29,23) denken. An manchen Stellen kommen beide Aspekte vor." Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 445-447.

<sup>53</sup> Luz observes that, "In jüdischen Texten überwiegen die Gebete, in denen Menschen Subjekt des Heiligens des Namens sind. Viele Stellen sind aber nicht eindeutig zu interpretieren: Heiligung des Namens durch Gott und durch den Menschen gehören zusammen." Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 445.

<sup>54</sup> Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 446-447. Luz makes an interesting conclusion on the Old Testament, Jewish and Aramaic backgrounds that, "All das spricht für eine offene Deutung. Die Bitte ist so allgemein und knapp formuliert, daß sie sowohl an ein Handeln des Menschen als auch an ein Handeln Gottes zu denken erlaubt. Die Mehrzahl der Parallelen deutet allerdings in erstere Richtung, so daß ein ethisches Moment auf keinen Fall ausgeschlossen werden darf.

be glorified.<sup>55</sup> This is an invitation to all believers to honour and revere God's name.<sup>56</sup> Here, those who represent the eschatological meaning use the Lord's Prayer to describe their view about the end times when God's name, would be universally honoured.<sup>57</sup>

It is important to note that people's names in Hebrew thought often represented the people themselves and their character (1 Samuel 25:25). Hence, the name of God in Judaism is of extreme significance and honouring it is central piety. Ekem rightly expresses, "If God is the Majestic 'Wholly Other' who is concerned about creation, then those who approach Him must do so reverently not only from a liturgical but also from an ethical perspective."<sup>58</sup> Therefore, to hallow (sanctify) God's name is to treat with high regard as one would treat the person of God himself. This Hebrew concept of a name and hallowing of God's name is not different from the thought system of most communities, especially within sub-Saharan Africa and Akans in particular where names are concrete expressions of a person's general character. Along this line of observation, Ekem notes that this "explains why diligent care is taken to name children after people who have played an outstanding role in society and impacted people's lives positively. The expectation is that these children will emulate their noble example."<sup>59</sup>

The next petition, ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου (*Ma w'ahennie mmra na nna adi*): *Let your kingly rule come and be manifested* is an urgent request that God will establish in a full and final sense, God's rule on earth. Jamieson, Funsset and Brown refer to the kingdom of God as "that moral and spiritual kingdom which the God of grace is setting up in this fallen world, whose subjects consist of as many as have been brought into hearty subjection to his gracious sceptre, and of which His son Jesus is the glorious Head."<sup>60</sup> In spite of the notion that the kingdom came in the life and ministry of Jesus,<sup>61</sup> it awaits the παρουσία (1 Cor. 15:23).<sup>62</sup> It is worth mentioning that humans live now in those days between the beginning of the age to come and the end of the age that is present. Thus, God's sovereign rule is realized in the hearts of God's followers, but it will one day be openly acknowledged.<sup>63</sup>

Another prayer item is γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς (may your will come to pass, just as it happens in the heaven, even so on earth). The heart of this prayer is that just as God's will is done in heaven, so also should it be on earth (verse 10). There have been two main views regarding how this will of God here could be realized:<sup>64</sup> That is, should it be seen as the work of humankind or the act of God pushed through humankind? Luz thinks that the latter view represents an attempt to give it an eschatological meaning.<sup>65</sup> Some scholars take the final clause ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς (Just as it happens in the heaven, even so on earth) as qualifying all three of the preceding petitions. For instance, Dube writes that "... God's name will be hallowed if God's rule and will are established on earth as it is in heaven."<sup>66</sup> This perspective appears convincing only if "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" invites all to make the earth and its creatures be devoted to God.

The second half of the prayer shifts to the concrete manifestation of God's will and the presence of the Kingdom. The first, Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον (*Ma yen nsa nka yen daadaa aduane (adehiadee) nne* (Give to us today our daily bread for our existence or provision), concerns daily bread. The meaning of the Greek ἐπιούσιος which is normally translated as *daily* is slightly obscure. The background of

<sup>55</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 160.

<sup>56</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 23.

<sup>57</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 161.

<sup>58</sup> Ekem, *Jacobus Capitein's Translation of the Lord's Prayer*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> Ekem, *Jacobus Capitein's Translation of the Lord's Prayer*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Jamieson et al, *Commentary, Practical and explanatory on the whole Bible*, 905.

<sup>61</sup> Udo Schnelle, following F. Hernenbrück, sees *Das Reich Gottes als Gottes neue Wirklichkeit* (The Kingdom of God as God's reality) and links God's Kingdom to the purpose of Christ on earth. Schnelle further writes that, *Gottes kommen und Handeln in seinem Reich ist die Basis, die Mitte und der Horizont des Wirkens Jesu. Mit der Rede vom Reich/der Herrschaft Gottes nimmt Jesus nicht nur eine Zeitdiagnose, sondern eine umfassende Sinnbildung vor, deren Ausgangspunkt die Erfahrung und die Einsicht war, das Gott in neuer Weise zum Heil der Menschen unterwegs ist und das Böse zurückgedrängt wird.* Udo Schnelle, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 91.

<sup>62</sup> Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 448.

<sup>63</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 56. Luz has also noted the scope of God's Kingdom to be prayed for: that is either for God to reign in the whole world so that the work of the evil one becomes ceased or the prayer is meant for God's rule over the life of the individuals. See Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 448.

<sup>64</sup> Luz observes that, "Zielt die Bitte auf ein Handeln des Menschen: Dein gebietender Wille geschehe durch die Menschen? Oder meint sie ein Handeln Gottes: Führe du deinen Ratschluß bei den Menschen durch?" See his work, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 447.

<sup>65</sup> Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 448. For Luz, "Ein Spezialfall der letzteren Möglichkeit ist die eschatologische Deutung: Gott möge seinen Willen im Eschaton durchsetzen."

<sup>66</sup> Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era," 619.

God's daily bread seems to describe how God supplied daily manna to the Israelites as they were in the wilderness (Exodus 16:15-21). They needed to rely on God to provide new bread each morning because they could not keep any manna overnight. Etymologically, "ἐπιούσιος" pertains to the Greek words ἐπί and οὐσία referring to substance. This literary carries the sense, as Luz cites Origin and the Vulgate to point out, "*das Brot, das sich mit unserer Substanz vereinigt oder über alle Substanzen hinausreicht*" (the bread that unites with our substance).<sup>67</sup> Significantly, it could be observed, however, that the extent that this may be in reference to the Lord's Supper and Christological sense of providing bread (John 6) cannot be well substantiated. ἐπιούσιος can also be understood as existence that is the bread that was essential to survival.<sup>68</sup> In that era, bread was the most important survival food.

Thus, in the author's view, the common translation of *daadaa aduane ne adehiade nne* (daily bread and basic necessity) appears to be a translation that is conveniently close in meaning. This is, therefore, in support of some scholars such as Ekem who translates it as "*ma yen nsa nka yen daadaa aduane ene,*" and that of Mounce.<sup>69</sup> This position (and the author's stand), however, disagrees with other scholars such as Chester<sup>70</sup> and Luz<sup>71</sup> and for that matter Christians who read the Lord's Prayer as solely eschatological. They view ἐπιούσιος as describing the Second Coming reading for tomorrow (and spiritual bread) in a metaphorical sense. This objection is valid in that Jesus is portrayed in John 6, for instance, as caring for the everyday needs of his followers.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, this prayer request of daily provision of bread for existence is most probably at home with the Akan context since they are positioned in Africa where bread for food is an indispensable need in life. Thus, the Lord's Prayer gives the Christian community (Akan) and human institutions the commitment of being responsible sons and daughters of God, thereby emulating God by remembering those members of the family who cannot afford their daily bread and at the same time cannot go without it (Acts 2-4, 6).<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, the Greek, καὶ ἄφεσις ἡμῶν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν could be translated: *Na fa yen aka (bɔne) kyɛ yen, sedee yen nso de akyɛ wɔn a wɔde yen aka anaa w'afom yen* (And forgive us/cancel our debts, even as we have forgiven our debtors/those who owe us). The translation of the Greek ἄφεσις into Asante Twi as *kyɛ* (forgive) is in opposition to the translation of the Bible in Asante Twi, published as *Twere kronkron Asante* by The Bible Society of Ghana, 1964 which is translated as *firi* (loan).<sup>74</sup> This translation presupposes that sins or debts are loaned and not forgiven. When ἄφεσις is translated as *kyɛ* (forgive), however, it shows Matthew's request for debts or sins to be forgiven in the same manner that people forgive those who owe them or sin against them.<sup>75</sup> Since we owe God complete obedience, every failure puts us in debt to him.<sup>76</sup> Mounce argues that the word "debt" is used only in connection with sin. The explanation is

<sup>67</sup> According to Luz, "Die Kirchenväter und die mittelalterlichen Exegeten haben von hier aus — gefördert durch den liturgischen Gebrauch des Unservaters vor der Kommunion — das Brot fast immer auf die Eucharistie oder christologisch im Sinne von Joh 6 gedeutet." See Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 449.

<sup>68</sup> Citing Aristotle, Luz points out: *Versteht man ousia als "Existenz," "Lebensunterhalt" so könnte evpiousioj als "existenznotwendig" gedeutet werden* (When one understands ousia as existence or basic needs, then evpiousioj can mean basic necessity. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 450.

<sup>69</sup> Ekem, *Jacobus Capitein's Translation of the Lord's Prayer*, 5; Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 57.

<sup>70</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 158-160.

<sup>71</sup> Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 451-452 Here, Luz translates it as *Brot für morgen*.

<sup>72</sup> Powell has specifically noted that John's Gospel among other things employs a rich and varied vocabulary for the phenomenon of salvation. Here, among other things, this salvation includes abundant life implying that Jesus affects the quality of life that is here and now. A life that is endless in value and meaning. See his book, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2009), 184.

<sup>73</sup> Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era," 621. Luz appears to throw more light on the extent to which this prayer can apply to a wider social context when he comments that, "Die vierte Unservaterbitte gehört in eine Situation sozialer Bedrängnis, in der die Nahrung für den folgenden Tag nicht einfach selbstverständlich vorhanden ist. "Brot" als wichtigstes Nahrungsmittel kann als pars pro toto für "Nahrung" überhaupt stehen, aber nicht darüber hinaus auf irgendwelche Lebensbedürfnisse überhaupt ausgeweitet werden: Man kann etwa an die Situation eines Tagelöhners denken, der noch nicht wissen kann, ob er am folgenden Tag wieder eine Arbeit findet, wovon er mit seiner Familie leben kann. "Brot für morgen" enthält zugleich eine Begrenzung: Es geht um das Überleben können, nicht um Reichtümer." See Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 451-452.

<sup>74</sup> A similar issue on *forgiveness* in the context of Matthew 6:12 has been discussed by Anum & Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "New Testament Concepts of Forgiveness in the Gospels in the Context of the Dangme Translation and Usage on the Dangme Mother-tongue Scripture," 1-19.

<sup>75</sup> This is against the backdrop of the understanding that in the teachings of Jesus and in Jewish thought, sin is not seen only as *Verfehlung*, (mistake, offence) but as "Schuld" (debt). See Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 452.

<sup>76</sup> Luz identifies the necessity of the Christian community engaging in this prayer for forgiveness when he writes that, "Wichtig ist auch, daß die Gemeinde, die das Unservater betet, selbstverständlich voraussetzt, daß ihre Glieder auch als Christ/innen noch sündigen und der Vergebung bedürfen." See Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 453.

that behind the Greek ὀφείλημα (debt/one's due) is the Aramaic *hōbâ*, which was used figuratively of sin as a moral debt.<sup>77</sup> In addition to the forgiveness of sins, other scholars also argue that forgiving debts in the Matthean context had something to do with the economic structure of the day. Dube observes that in the context of Matthew's Gospel and that of the Roman Colonial Empire, the average Palestinian Jew had debt. The debt emanated from the Imperial Tax (Matt. 22:15-22) and Temple Tax (Matt. 17:24-27). In addition, many lived in crowded, inadequate and infertile lands, leading to unemployment and indebtedness.<sup>78</sup> In favour of this position, Chester also contends that "our acts of mercy include not only the forgiving of wrongs done to us but economic generosity."<sup>79</sup>

It could be said that although the request is not for the forgiveness of 'supposed loans' granted by God since the Greek ὀφείλημα has a connotation in the direct context of the economic structures of the Roman Empire and Palestine, it is most probable that the Lord's Prayer is suggesting that debts due to loans must be dealt with. Although paying off one's debts is central to the Christian faith, the Lord's Prayer, however, challenges the "systematic structures" that lock many responsible, hardworking individuals and nations into a vicious circle of poverty and debts.<sup>80</sup> The very fact that the location of Akans is in the region of West Africa (with its varying forms of poverty, oppression, hunger and indebtedness) authenticates this argument in that the situation of Africans today can, in a sense, be identified with the Jews in the Matthean context. Yet forgiveness according to this prayer is a two-way exercise. The request for forgiveness is based upon the willingness to forgive others. The person who does not forgive is unable to receive forgiveness. This demonstrates that both the spiritual and physical dimensions are needed to be forgiven.

Interpretations of the petition, καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν (*Na nnya yen nkɔ nsɔhwɛ mu - and lead us not into temptation*) of the Lord's Prayer vary considerably. According to the Fitz Rienecker's *The Linguistic Key to the New Testament*, πειρασμός can mean "test" or "temptation."<sup>81</sup> However, it has traditionally been translated as "temptation." Since this would seem to imply that God leads people into sin, individual scholars who are uncomfortable with that implication read it as a test of character. For instance, Mounce interprets verse 13 to mean "Do not let us fall into a trial so difficult that we will fail."<sup>82</sup> In this sense, in the thought of Mounce, this petition serves as a plea against hard tests described elsewhere in scripture such as those of Job. Other scholars, on the other hand, see this as a preventive prayer from temptation as used in the context of James 1:14 since all people are vulnerable. This position is strengthened by the fact that Jesus demonstrated to his core disciples, a group of people that should be among the best of his followers (Matt. 26:41) that they should pray that they do not enter into temptation. It is important to note that some other exegetes also interpret it eschatologically with the explanation that the hour of trial is the intensely difficult time of suffering that immediately precedes the second coming of Christ.<sup>83</sup> However, it is least probable that the term πειρασμός is connected to such an event in the New Testament.

Translators and scholars on the prayer item, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ (*Na emom, gye yen firi bɔne/ɔbɔnefɔɔ no nsam*): *But deliver us from evil*, are divided in opinion as to whether the notion of evil identified in the final petition describes evil in general or the devil in particular. The Greek adjective τοῦ πονηροῦ could be either neuter (evil in general) or masculine (the evil one) gender. In favour of the neutral interpretation, Luz, for instance, appeals to the Hebrew thought and the Didache to argue that τοῦ πονηροῦ does not designate Satan but as evil in general.<sup>84</sup> Also, Mounce comments that since in Hebrew thought, Satan is not designated as 'the evil one,' many interpreters prefer the neutral meaning which is the difficult circumstances that often plague human lives.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, it has been argued that since the expression τοῦ πονηροῦ flows closely from the subject of temptation, the Devil is intended.<sup>86</sup> It could be argued, however, that Luz's suggestion that the parallel verses in the New Testament (2 Tim 4:18) and the Hebrew thought on τοῦ πονηροῦ hardly designate Satan is untenable considering the role of Satan in the Gospels with particular reference to the

<sup>77</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 57.

<sup>78</sup> Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era," 622.

<sup>79</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 169.

<sup>80</sup> Dube, "To Pray the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era," 622.

<sup>81</sup> Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 18.

<sup>82</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 57.

<sup>83</sup> Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 164.

<sup>84</sup> Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 454. For Luz, "Die Mehrzahl der matthäischen und neutestamentlichen Belege, die Parallelität zur Versuchungsbitte, die ältesten mutmaßlichen Deutungen der Bitte in 2 Tim 4,18 und Did 10,5 sowie die jüdischen Parallelen im Judentum ist "der Böse" als Satansbezeichnung kaum belegt - sprechen für neutrische Deutung. Von den jüdischen Texten her legt es sich wiederum nahe, an Alltagsbefahrungen zu denken: Krankheit, Drangsal, böse Menschen, den bösen Trieb."

<sup>85</sup> Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew*, 58.

<sup>86</sup> Jamieson et al, *Commentary, Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, 907.

special role of Satan in the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4. Thus, in the author's view and from the Akan thought and context, the final petition could be better understood as a prayer for deliverance from the evil one and from all evil of whatever kind as well. Hence, the primary translation, *gye yen firi zobonefo no nsam* (deliver us from the evil one) and the second translation, *gye yen firi bone mu* (deliver us from evil) is contextually meaningful.

### **Theological Interpretation and Application of Matthew 6:9-13 to the Glocal Context as a Synthesis**

A critical look at the issues raised in the above exegetical and theological discussions on the Lord's Prayer identifies some issues that call for careful consideration in relation to the Christian faith and practices in the church as well as biblical interpretations in the African context. To begin with the phrase "our Father" (parent) that commences the prayer, it can be said that the use of the plural pronoun "our" by Jesus classifies all human beings irrespective of one's race, skin colour, financial status, position and language or culture as belonging to one family in that it is an indication that the Lord's Prayer was for all. This strengthens the African concept of communality. Similarly, the use of the *Father* and his position as in the heavens above, as the universal parent also has a theological implication in the context of Africa. This can be seen from the fact that this prayer attempts to blend the Judeo-Christian concept of God with the African notion of God as one in heaven above, who is simultaneously and graciously found in the midst of His (God's) children and attends to their needs. For example, although the Akan concept about God shows that God is in heaven above,<sup>87</sup> the proverb, "*aboa a onni dua no, Onyame na pra ne ho*" (*It is God who protects the tailless animal*) shows that God is gracious with God's children. That God is present with humans to protect and help, is a way of identifying the concept of God's graciousness. Thus, God's grace is identified in this prayer and God is seen as the one who answers prayers.

A further critical observation on the content of the Lord's Prayer reveals that prayer is theology, and to theologize is to pray. This is in line with Karl Barth's affirmation that, "The first and basic act of theological work is prayer."<sup>88</sup> Leander E. Keck also argues in this same direction in his reflections on the Lord's Prayer by pointing out that, "Matthew's decision to place the Lord's Prayer at the centre of the instruction of the Sermon on the Mount bridges the gap between worship and theology."<sup>89</sup> Thus, prayer is a theological exercise. This perspective provides a piece of information about the deep theological convictions on the attribute of God that Africans, and for that matter Akans have. A typical example is seen in the Akan traditional prayer in the form of pouring of libation where God is ascribed as "*Otwedeampɔn Nyame*" meaning "the dependable God." Thus, theology can be seen in some traditional prayers. This can be used as a means of dialogue between Akan Traditional religious partners and Christians in an attempt to establish a common ground for religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Moreover, with regard to Christian prayers, there is a need for deeper teachings as to how Christian prayers should be. God's word should be reflected upon in Christian prayers. What this means and implies is that African Christian worship and thus prayer in the churches and individual lives should not be separated from theology. Theology should be reflected in songs and prayers. For example, where would the place of God be when some Christians pray that those who offend them be cursed and killed?<sup>90</sup>

Another aspect of the Lord's Prayer that is worth reflecting on is that it is an expression of faith that is not solely based on what it says but on what it assumes. This assumption is that human beings are not independent, and thus indicates a sign of genuine humanity. In this light, Keck remarks that "it is not a sign of weakness to pray, but a sign of genuine humanity. Prayer is not merely for emergencies, but a thankful praise that acknowledges our true dependence on God."<sup>91</sup> Thus, an examination of the Lord's Prayer in the context of Africa calls for a renewal of mind and worldview on the part of African Christians who are from the traditional religious background that worshippers turn to their object of worship or the Supreme Being and for that matter

<sup>87</sup> Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 127 discusses Akan's myth about God. Here, Sarpong summarizes the myth about the old woman with the pestle. That is "God was once very near to the earth. But each time an old woman was pounding her fufu or corn the pestle hit him. God protested several times, but as he realized it was all to no avail he decided to withdraw into the skies."

<sup>88</sup>Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), 160.

<sup>89</sup> Leander E. Keck, et. al. (eds.) *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & and Reflections for each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal Books in Twelve Volumes, Volume VIII* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 206.

<sup>90</sup> Werner Kahl has made this observation about an instance where a particular Akan pastor in Germany leads his congregation to pray so that their perceived human enemies, who could even be their envious family members, should die. See his article, "Jesus Power, Super Power - Productive Frictions in Intercultural Hermeneutics - A German Perspective," *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics, Trinity Theological Seminary: Centre for Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics* 1, no. 1 (May 2015): 101.

<sup>91</sup> Leander E. Keck, et. al. eds. *The New Interpreter's Bible-Matthew*, 206.

the intermediaries (gods/divinities, ancestors, magical powers) only when they are in need.<sup>92</sup> The praise and petitions identified in the Lord's Prayer suggest that prayer seems to be one of the normal ways of relating to God and must be done regularly and not only when in need.

The content of the Lord's Prayer in general has implications for Christian practice. Through the Lord's prayer, Jesus teaches believers to live out prayers or talk to God. By praying the Lord's Prayer, Christians are reminded of their obligations to God and one another. In the words of Luz, *Gebet und menschliches Handeln schließen sich nicht aus, im Gegenteil: Gebet ist ein Sprechen des aktiven Menschen mit Gott*<sup>93</sup> (Prayer and human responsibility are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, prayer expresses human actions with God). In this case, prayer goes with responsibility. This can be illustrated by the content of the Lord's Prayer that even as Jesus teaches believers to pray for forgiveness from God, he also asks them to forgive others. Again as Jesus teaches believers to pray for daily needs, it gives a sign of overcoming any form of greed and thereby relying on God daily.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study suggests that biblical scholars are to consider mother-tongue theological hermeneutics as a crucial enterprise of relevance. The translation and discussions of the Greek text from the perspective of one's mother tongue are necessary in bringing about the original meaning and thus its relevant application to the existential realities of the reader.

This study further recommends that, whilst affirming the continuity of including the Lord's Prayer in the liturgical context in evangelical Christian traditions, on the one hand, the emphasis on its theological content as a model should be given maximum attention than its mere recitation as an acquired liturgical tradition to be followed. On the other hand, the study recommends that contemporary Christian Churches that do not include the Lord's Prayer in their liturgies or order of service should reconsider its relevance and theological roles most importantly in order to share in the faith and practice of the wider global ecumenical Christian context.

On the note of bible translation, this study recommends that the translation of ἄφεσις in Matthew 6:12 into Asante Twi as *firi* (loan) of the United Bible Society, *Twerɛ Kronkron Asante* should be revised to be *kyɛ* (forgive). The theological significance of this is that debts and for that matter sins are to be forgiven and not loaned. This alternative translation would be more theologically liberating without subjecting the one praying to perpetual enslavement.

## CONCLUSION

By the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus appears not only to teach his earliest disciples and the immediate generation of Christians at his time. He rather teaches Christians of all generations and cultures what it means to pray. The Lord's Prayer should thus be a pattern for Christian prayers in the aspects of offering praise to God, prayer for God's work in the world, daily needs and help in daily schedules. It has been observed that the phrase, "our Father in heaven" indicates that God who is majestic is also personal and loving and that the Lord's Prayer is intended not only to be communal but ecumenical. The first line of the prayer is also a statement of praise to God and a commitment to revere and honour God's name. For Christians to pray for God's kingdom to come and be manifested is a prayer for God to reign both in the believers' hearts and where God establishes the new heaven and earth. This will take place as believers pray for God's purpose to be established on earth. By praying for daily bread and needs, Christians acknowledge their humanness and God's ability to sustain and provide for them. Belonging to the request for daily needs is the forgiveness of debts that brings about peaceful co-existence between God and humankind. Then the prayer ends by requesting for God's deliverance from evil in general as well as the evil one, who is Satan.

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<sup>92</sup> Joseph Williams Acheampong, "I will pass over you: The Relevance of the Passover to the Understanding of Salvation in Contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostalism – A Critical Reflection from an Akan Perspective" (Dr. theol. diss., Universität Hamburg, 2015), 51-144. <http://ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de/volltexte/2015/7500/>. Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2016. Acheampong has discussed at length that the traditional religious Akan sees the Supreme Being and the intermediaries as interventionists and thus turns to them in the form of *abisa* (prayer) only when they are in need.

<sup>93</sup> Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 453.

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