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A Theological and Linguistic Study of the Bono-Twi Translation of the Expressions *ἁγιασθήτω* and *εἰσενέγκῃς* in the Matthean Lord's Prayer

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ABSTRACT

Bible translation endeavors in Ghana and other parts of the world have significantly contributed to the establishment and growth of Christianity. However, like any human endeavor, mother-tongue Bible translation comes with many challenges to both the translator and translation agencies. In this regard, the Lord's Prayer is arguably one of the most difficult texts to translate. This paper examined two challenging expressions in the Matthean Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), namely *ἁγιασθήτω* (v.9b) and *εἰσενέγκῃς* (v.13a), and how their rendition in the ongoing Bono-Twi Bible Translation Project could serve as a model for other Akan mother-tongue translations. The paper is a non-empirical research that gathered data from publications on the subject matter, including books, Bible Commentaries, and journal articles. The methodology for the paper consists of three steps: First, exegetical, linguistic, and theological analyses of the selected expressions in the biblical context; second, a sociolinguistic and theological examination of the Bono-Twi rendering and third, a comparative study between the Bono-Twi version and three Akan versions (Asante-Twi, Akuapem-Twi and Fante). The study found the need to go beyond linguistic considerations to include exegetical and theological analysis to correctly render a text from one language to another. To enhance the effectiveness of mother-tongue Bible translation, the paper recommended that agencies, churches, pastors, and theological institutions collaborate by providing proper training, encouraging local language use, and supporting translation efforts through funding, literacy, and theological input. The paper contributes to the academic discourse on the development of mother-tongue translation, theologizing, and exegesis in Ghana and Africa.

Keywords: *ἁγιασθήτω, εἰσενέγκῃς, Akan, Bono-Twi, Translation*

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Bible translation goes back many centuries. It began with the Bible written in ancient languages like Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.[1] Early translations, such as the Septuagint, were created

[1] Isaac Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators* (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2022), 50.

before the Christian era for Greek-speaking Jewish communities.[2] As Christianity spread, there was a growing need for translations into various languages. This led to significant works like the Latin Vulgate by St. Jerome and translations into other vernaculars, including English. Each translation aimed to make the scriptures accessible to different audiences, helping Christianity grow in various cultures.

Modern Bible translation in Africa was pioneered by Christian missionaries who had to break the linguistic barrier to be able to reach their audience in a better way.[3] These missionaries learnt various African vernaculars, reduced them to writing, and produced African mother-tongue Bibles to serve their audience. Though these translations had their inadequacies, it is certain that they helped in the planting and spread of the Christian faith in many parts of Africa.

Challenges in the Bible translation enterprise are not new. Both Bible translators and translation agencies grapple with various challenges that confront them daily. These challenges are multifaceted, including exegetical, theological, and sociolinguistic aspects. Translators often struggle with the complexities of ancient languages, which may lack direct equivalents in modern tongues. Cultural differences and historical contexts can also change the meaning of biblical texts, making translation difficult.

The Lord's Prayer is a prime example, as it contains deep theological concepts and linguistic challenges. This study focuses on the specific problems encountered when translating the Matthean Lord's Prayer, especially the phrases *ἁγιασθήτω* (v.9b) and *εἰσενέγκῃς* (v.13a). These phrases illustrate the difficulty of keeping the original meaning while ensuring the translation resonates with today's readers. The Bono-Twi translation project is a case study to explore how these challenges can be met within Akan mother-tongue translations. The Bono-Twi rendering is compared to other Akan mother-tongue versions to enable readers of these versions to benefit from the theologically and culturally dynamic rendering of the Bono-Twi version. In the end, the author proposes the Bono-Twi translation as a model for other Akan translations; be it new projects or revised versions. This shows how careful consideration of linguistic and cultural challenges can improve the accuracy and relevance of biblical texts for modern audiences.

With the above introductory notes, the study proceeds to consider the concept of Bible translation.

What is Bible Translation?

The word "translate" etymologically means "to carry across," referring to conveying a message or text from one language to another. The concept of translation may be considered from three perspectives: an academic field, a process, and a product.[4] As an academic discipline, translation studies has to do with the history of translation, various translation theories, and methodologies. As a process, translation has to do with the transfer of information from a source language to a target language. As a product, translation is the result of transferring information from one language to another, expressed in written or verbal form (such as books, printed materials, visual content, or audio recordings). This paper focuses on the translation process, with particular reference to Bible translation.

According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin translation is the process of conveying "meaning of a text in one language (the 'source text') and the production, in another language, of an equivalent text (the 'target text,' or 'translation'), which ostensibly communicates the same message."[5] Katharine Barnwell defines translation as "re-telling, as exactly as possible, the meaning of the original message in a way that is natural in the language into which the translation is being made."[6] Building on these scholarly definition, Bible translation may be defined as "the rewriting of a biblical text from the source language (which includes Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) to

[2] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators,* 52-53.
[3] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators,* 75.
[4] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators,* 4-7.
[5] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 215.
[6] Katharine Barnwell, *Bible Translation: An Introductory Course in Translation Principles* (third edition) (Texas: SIL International, 1999), 8

another language, re-packaging the original message" to suit the socio-cultural context of the receptor community.[7] In the process, the translator aims to produce "a version that is an accurate rendering of the text written in such a way that the Bible retains its *literary beauty*, *theological grandeur*, and, most importantly, its *spiritual message*."[8] This underscores that Bible translation prioritizes accuracy in conveying the original text's meaning, while also preserving its literary beauty to ensure the translation remains engaging and impactful. Without linguistic expertise, one cannot succeed in the translation enterprise. Additionally, the theological grandeur of the original text must be maintained, reflecting the depth and richness of the biblical teachings. Bible translation is, therefore, "a theological activity,"[9] and so the translator has to be theologically inclined. In addition, the spiritual essence of the Bible should be faithfully conveyed, ensuring that its core message resonates with the receptor community. The translation process also involves adapting the message to align with the cultural and social contexts of the receptor community, making it relevant and accessible to them. This requires translators to have deep knowledge about the receptor culture.

The Bono People and their Dialect

The Bono people (*Abonofoɔ*) are an Akan ethnic group originating from West Africa. They are considered integral to Akan culture because they were the first Akan tribe to have settled in Ghana. In other words, the Bono people are the root and foundation of the Akan people of Ghana. This has earned them the accolade Akan *piesie* (the first of Akan tribes) or *Akandifoɔ* (pioneers). Like many other Akan tribes, the Bono have a matrilineal societal structure. The Bono people mainly live in Bono, Bono East and parts of Ahafo regions in Ghana and in some parts of Côte d'Ivoire.

Linguistically the Bono people speak Twi (Bono-Twi), one of the dialects of the Akan language. Akan languages are part of the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo language family and it is spoken in eastern Ivory Coast, south-central Ghana, and central Togo. The Akan language is made up of numerous dialects which include Bono, Asante, Akuapem, Fante, Wasa, Nzema, Baule and Anyi (Aowin). In Ghana, Akan dialects are spoken in the Ashanti, Bono, Bono-East, Ahafo, Central, Eastern and Western regions. Much scholarly attention has been given dialects like Fante, Akuapem and Asante while the other Akan dialects have received little attention.

In most literature, the name "Twi" is used in reference to Asante and Akuapem dialects to the exclusion of Fante and others. History has it that the Fante were Bono people living in Techiman in the ancient Bono Kingdom. The Fante broke from Bono and settled at Mankesim. The name Fante comprises *Fa* (part) and *te* (break), and so Fante means "the part that broke away." That means that the Fante and the Bono came from the same stock with the same language but different dialects. The Fante were led to their present location by three Bono royals, namely, Obunumankoma, Odapagyan, and Oson.

Bono-Twi dialect is spoken in Ghana (particularly in the Bono and Bono-East regions) and in Côte d'Ivoire. In the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) Bono is regarded as part of the Abron language. Bono-Twi is the third largest Akan dialect, after Asante-Twi and Fante.[10] There are about 2.4 million speakers of Bono in Ghana presently. However, not much scholarly attention has been given to this dialect. Bono dialect research is both minimal and fragmentary.

Bono dialect, like the other Akan dialects, is written in the Roman orthography. Standardized orthographies exist for Asante-Twi, Akuapem-Twi and Fante. However, until the Bono-Twi Bible Translation Project began recently, there was no formal orthography for the Bono dialect. Like many human dialects, the Bono-Twi dialect exhibits sub-dialectical differences; that is, there exist different variants of the Bono-Twi dialect from community to community. The level of intelligibility of the

[7] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 7.

[8] G. G Scorgie as paraphrased in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Leonard Scott Kellum, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 36. Italics original

[9] Jonathan E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Translations and interpretations of baptizontes (Mt 28:19–20) in some Ghanaian mother tongue translations of the Bible," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77 no.1 (2021):1-5, 2. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i1.6859

[10] E. K. Osam, *An Introduction to the Structure of Akan: Its Verbal and Multi-verbal Systems, The Trondheim Lectures* (Accra: Combert impressions, 2004).

variants of the Bono dialects is so high that communication among Bono speakers is done with ease. The sub-dialects in Techiman, Wenchi, Nkoranza, Sunyani, Berekum, Gyaman (Drobo, Sampa, Japekrom, Adamsu and others), and Dormaa are completely mutually intelligible.

The Bono dialect is mutually intelligible with Fante, Asante, Akuapem, Akyem, Agona, Asin, Kwahu and other dialects of Akan. That is to say, the Bono and Akuapem, or the Fante or the Asante, do not speak different languages. Rather, they speak different dialects of the same Twi language. Bono-Twi differs from other Twi speakers like Asante and Akuapem in accent, which can be explained in terms of geography, history and cultural development. The difference in accent between two speakers of the same language is also found between Americans and British English, as well as between Prussian German and Bavarian German. The same words are used by Bono and Asante (or Akuapem) for human activities like "go" (*kɔ*), "cry" (*su*), "eat" (*di*), "weed" (*dɔ*), "break" (*bu*), "fetch" (*sa*), "sweep" (*pra*), "mix" (*fra*) and so on.

The Bono people can easily speak and understand other Twi dialects. However, their long-standing relationship with the Asante, particularly due to their proximity, has made them more fluent in Asante-Twi than in other Akan dialects. To date, schools in Bono-speaking communities use literature written in the Asante dialect. Asante Twi is the Ghanaian language studied in most basic schools in the Bono communities. Consequently, Bono people who have received formal education usually become so exposed to Asante-Twi that they tend to become bi-dialectal, speaking Bono and Asante as two dialects of Twi (Akan). In the church, the Asante-Twi Bible and liturgy books are used in many churches in the Bono community. This is largely because Bono-Twi is still under development, and literature on Bono-Twi is not widely available.

The Bono-Twi Bible Translation Project

The Bono-Twi Bible Translation Project is an ongoing Bible translation work undertaken by the Bible Society of Ghana. The project started in October 2017, and is expected to be completed in 2027, the first four years for the translation and publishing of the New Testament and the next six years for publishing the Old Testament together with the New. The Bono-Twi New Testament has been published and launched in Sunyani and Techiman (the respective capitals of the Bono and Bono East regions of Ghana). The drafting of the Old Testament books is ongoing.

As it is with many other translation projects in Ghana, the translation team consists of the Translation Consultant, the Computer-Assisted Publisher, a team of translators, and a team of reviewers.[11] The actual translation is carried out by a team of translators consisting of three people with diverse backgrounds. The external review team is made up of fifteen people selected from different parts of the Bonoland. Like many other translations, the Bono-Twi Bible translation passes through four key stages before publication.

Four Processes in Bible Translation

The following four stages are common to Bible Translation projects under the United Bible Societies.

1. **Drafting**: Drafting is the initial stage of the Bible translation process where translators create the first version of the text by translating from the source language into the target language.[12] This phase emphasizes accuracy, aiming to convey the meaning of the original text faithfully. Translators must decide between a literal (word-for-word) approach or a dynamic equivalence (thought-for-thought) approach, balancing the need for precision with the goal of readability and comprehension in the receptor language.[13]

2. **Harmonization**: Harmonization involves reviewing the draft to ensure consistency in terminology, style, and tone throughout the translation.[14] This step includes a comparative

[11] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 23.
[12] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 31.
[13] These are not the only translation philosophies available. However, they have been mentioned here because of their prominence in mother-tongue Bible translation in Ghana.
[14] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 33.

analysis with existing translations to harmonize differences and achieve coherence. Translators collaborate to resolve any discrepancies and standardize the translation, ensuring that the text flows smoothly and maintains uniformity in its presentation.

3. **External Review**: During the external review stage, the draft is shared with members of the receptor community to gather feedback on its clarity, readability, and cultural relevance.[15] Additionally, scholars and experts in biblical languages and theology review the translation for accuracy and faithfulness to the original text. Based on this collective feedback, translators make necessary revisions to enhance the quality and appropriateness of the translation for its intended audience.

4. **Translation Consultant Check**: The final step is the translation consultant check, where an expert with extensive experience in translation and biblical studies conducts a thorough review of the text.[16] The consultant provides detailed feedback and recommendations for final adjustments, ensuring the highest quality of translation. Once the consultant approves the translation, it is considered ready for publication and distribution, having met rigorous standards of accuracy, clarity, and cultural relevance.
   With this background, the paper now examines the terms under discussion.

Exegesis of Three Key Expressions

Meaning and Usage of *ἁγιάζω* in the New Testament

According to Newman the word *ἁγιασθήτω* (KJV: hallowed) in the phrase *ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου* is an imperative aorist passive third person singular derived from ἁγιάζω (sanctify)—meaning "set apart as sacred to God"; "make holy" (from *hagios*, holy), "consecrate", "regard as sacred", "purify", "cleanse." English struggles to consistently convey third-person imperatives effectively.[17] In the present passage, "Hallowed be your name" is not idiomatic in modern English. Consider a scenario where someone asks a gardener about the state of their garden, and the gardener responds, "Blossomed be the roses," instead of using a more straightforward expression like "May the roses bloom." The phrase "Blossomed be" illustrates the challenge of using archaic or less familiar language in modern contexts, similar to the difficulty presented by "Hallowed be your name" in the present text. The verb "hallow" itself lacks clarity in meaning, making it challenging to find a suitable replacement.[18] However, finding a perfect translation remains elusive due to these complexities.[19]

To understand how *ἁγιασθήτω* is used here, it is important to examine the various meanings of the word *ἁγιάζω*. The word *ἁγιάζω* has three basic meanings in the New Testament. First, *ἁγιάζω* means "to dedicate to the service of and to loyalty to deity."[20] In this sense, it may be translated as "to consecrate; consecration; to dedicate to God; dedication."[21] Although in certain contexts *ἁγιάζω* (1) and *ἁγιασμός* imply resulting moral behaviour, the emphasis is not on a manner of life but rather on religious activities and observances that reflect one's dedication or consecration to God.[22] Thus, in 1 Corinthians 1:2, *hēgiasmenois* (sanctified) can be translated as those who have dedicated themselves to God or who serve God with wholehearted devotion. The NRSV records 14 instances in the New Testament where the word is used in the above sense (see Matt. 23:17; 23:19; John 10:36; Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 1:2; 7:14 [2x]; Eph. 5:26; 1 Tim. 4:5; 2 Tim. 2:21; Heb. 2:11 [2x]; 9:13; 10:29).

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[15] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 34.
[16] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 34.
[17] Joel D. Fredrich, "The Lord's Prayer: Exegesis of Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4," Paper presented to Minnesota District Pastors' Conference, Hosted by the St. Croix Conference, Crowne Plaza, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, April 13, 2010 (revised June 28, 2010), 8. (http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/1648/FredrichLordsPrayer.pdf?sequence=1)
[18] Fredrich, "The Lord's Prayer: Exegesis of Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4," 8.
[19] Fredrich, "The Lord's Prayer: Exegesis of Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4," 8.
[20] Enhanced Resources.
[21] Enhanced Resources.
[22] Enhanced Resources.

The second meaning of *ἁγιάζω* is "to cause someone to have the quality of holiness" or "to make holy."[23] The domain for such usage includes "holy" and "pure." It is important to distinguish between the two uses of *ἁγιάζω*. The first usage refers to the act of dedicating someone to the service of or loyalty to a deity whereas the second usage signifies the instilling of a quality of holiness (in something or someone). The use of *ἁγιάζω* in the sense of making something holy is recorded 18 times in the NRSV (see John 10:36; 17:17; 17:19 [2x]; Acts 26:18; Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Tim. 2:21; Heb. 2:11 [2x]; 10:10; 10:14; 10:29; 13:2; Rev. 22:11).

The third meaning of *ἁγιάζω* is "to feel reverence for or to honor as holy." In this context, it conveys a deep sense of respect and veneration. This usage can be translated as "to hallow," implying the act of making something sacred or treating it with utmost respect. It can also be rendered as "to regard as holy," indicating a recognition of the inherent sanctity of a person, place, or object. Additionally, it may be translated as "to honor as holy," which involves showing reverence and respect in acknowledgement of its sacredness. This meaning underscores the importance of recognising and venerating God's holiness in various aspects of life. In the NRSV, this is the less frequent usage of the word; it appears only 3 times in the entire New Testament (see Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2; 1 Pet. 3:15).

Rendering *ἁγιασθήτω* into Akan Mother Tongue (Matt. 6:9)

The Concept of Name

The immediate context of the expression under consideration is the phrase *ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου* (NRSV: hallowed be your name). Due to the close connection between the words "your name" (that is, God's name) and "hallowed", it is important to consider the biblical and Akan concepts of "name" to guide the discussions.

In the Ancient Near East environment in which the ancient Israelites lived, "names were thought of as disclosing the attributes and characteristics of a person."[24] A person's name revealed their nature and character. The following biblical examples illustrate the close connection between name and character in the biblical world. Jacob, whose name means "deceiver" or "supplanter," embodied this meaning through his actions, as he deceitfully obtained his brother Esau's birthright. Esau's comment, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and behold, now he has taken away my blessing" (Gen. 27:36, RSV), underscores how Jacob's name reflected his behaviour. Similarly, Abraham, meaning "father of many" (…), fulfilled this by becoming the progenitor of many nations. In the New Testament, the name Jesus, meaning "Saviour," epitomises his role as the Saviour of the world (Matt. 1:21).

In the biblical context, God's name and his personality are "virtually indistinguishable" (cf. Mal. 1:6; Isa 29:23; Ezek. 36:23; John 12:28; 17:6).[25] Therefore, when God revealed himself as YHWH to Moses (Ex. 3:13-15), Moses understood this name as the embodiment of who God is. Moses' inquiry into God's identity (v. 13) was culturally significant. He sought to understand the Name of the God who was sending him to the Israelites, knowing they would inquire about his identity as a reflection of his personality, essence and character. God's name, YHWH, signifies (among others) his eternal and unchanging nature—He exists, has always existed, and will forever exist as the sovereign and unchangeable God, from everlasting to everlasting.[26] The Hebrews, enslaved under the powerful Pharaoh of Egypt, needed a deliverer greater than their oppressor. Therefore, God's revelation of his personal Name asserted his sovereignty over all powers. This divine declaration was particularly apt to demonstrate that God alone possesses the authority and power to deliver His people from bondage.[27]

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[23] Enhanced Resources.

[24] Keith Sherlin, *Evangelical Bible Doctrine: Articles in Honor of Dr. Mal Couch Couch* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2015), np. https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=ZSZYCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT125&lpg=PT125&dq=

[25] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: Word Biblical Commentary* Volume33A edited Ralph P. Martin (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1993), 148. pdf version; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 246; David L. Turner, "Matthew" In: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 187.

[26] Jonathan S. Nkhoma, *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Essays: Biblical and Early Christianity Studies from Malawi* (Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013), 165-166.

[27] Nkhoma, *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Essays*, 165.

The Hebrew concept of name parallels the Akan view of name. Among the Akan, a name is not merely a label for identification. Like ancient Israelites, the Akan also hold significant value for names as they are believed to mirror the character of the bearer. Therefore, there is a strong preference for acquiring a "good" name. For instance, the name Sikani (wealthy person) is preferred over Diawuo (murderer).[28] Given this cultural context, someone initially named Kwadwo Abeberese (Abeberese means a sufferer) might seek to change their name to Kwadwo Kesse (Kesse means something big), Kwadwo Odeneho (Odeneho means one with absolute authority) or Kwadwo Agyemang (Agyemang means deliverer of nations).

Holiness in Relation to God's Name

The first three clauses of the Lord's Prayer use third-person imperatives, with two in passive voice. Such imperatives, when used in the context of prayer, are requests for God to act and bring about desired outcomes.[29] Hagner renders them using second-person imperatives: "Set apart your holy name; Bring your eschatological kingdom; Cause your will to be fulfilled."[30] Evans, like Hagner, refers to v.9b as an instance of divine passive. He states: "The verb "hallowed be" is an instance of the "divine passive"; that is, use of the passive voice of a verb so that God, who is the subject of the sentence, does not need to be mentioned, especially in a petition."[31] He, therefore, renders the expression as "sanctify your name."[32] Whilst Hagner's and Evan's views seem good, it has the potential of obscuring the human response involved in hallowing God's name, which is integral to this prayer. To refer to this as an instance of "divine passive" risks overlooking the human dimension in hallowing the divine name. Given the foregoing, the idea of divine passive does not seem likely in the present situation.

The biblical narratives show that God's name—that is, his very essence and presence—is already sanctified/holy (Pss. 30:4; 97:12; 103:1; 111:9); holiness is an essential characteristic of God.[33] Therefore, the clause should not be interpreted as a request for God's name to be made holy or sanctified. God's name being inherently holy cannot be made holier. The text is about humanity's responsibility to acknowledge and honor God's holiness by giving him the reverence and respect he deserves (cf. Isaiah 29:23, where "keep God's name holy" is elucidated as "stand in awe of the God of Israel").[34] It is a wish/desire/prayer that God's name be treated as sacred (cf. Exod. 20:8; Lev. 19:2, 32; Ezek. 36:23; 1 Pet. 1:15) and not disparaged (Mal. 1:6).[35]

How then is the expression *ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου* supposed to be translated? On this, Isaac Boaheng argues that this expression should not be rendered in a way that will "imply that the petitioner is saying that something should be done so that God's name will be sanctified. Rather, it must be rendered to express the worshipper's desire that God's name (which is already holy) be handled as such (with due reverence)."[36] Boaheng's assertion is supported by NRSV Enhanced Resources for Bible translators, which states that "In a number of languages it is impossible to employ an expression such as 'your name' as a reference for God himself. Therefore, it may be necessary to translate this expression into Mat. 6:9 *ἁγιασθήτω* (hallowed) as 'may you be reverenced as holy' or even 'may you be acknowledged as God.'" This suggestion is perfect for the Akan context where, like the ancient Israel context, associates God's name with his personality.

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[28] The author is aware of the figurative use of the name Diawuo as a title for a brave and/or an accomplished person. However, it needs to be noted that the literal meaning of the name is not something that most people will like.

[29] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 246.

[30] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: Word Biblical Commentary* (ADD: Word Books, 1993), 148. He regards v.9b as a petition to God "to vindicate himself."

[31] Craig A. Evans, Matthew: New Cambridge Bible Commentary Edited by Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 146.

[32] Craig A. Evans, Matthew: New Cambridge Bible Commentary Edited by Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 146.

[33] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 246.

[34] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 246.

[35] Isaac Boaheng, "An Akan Mother-Tongue Reading of Matthew's Version of the Lord's Prayer (Bono-Twi Translation) in Dialogue with Akan Libation Prayers," *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture* 2(2) (2021): 41-58. 47.

[36] Boaheng, "An Akan Mother-Tongue Reading of Matthew's Version of the Lord's Prayer (Bono-Twi Translation) in Dialogue with Akan Libation Prayers."

With the above analysis, the study now proceeds to consider how the expression *ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου* may be rendered in the Akan mother tongue.

Towards an Akan rendering of *ἁγιασθήτω*

The Akan dialects of Asante-Twi, Akuapem-Twi and Fante render the text as "*wo din ho nte*" (Asante and Akuapem) and "*wo dzin ho ntsew*" (both meaning "may your name be sanctified", "let your name be clean/sanctified, "may your name become holy"). The word "nte" or "ntsew" (to cause to become holy) is associated with the not "te" or "tse" (meaning that which is being referred to as ho te/tse is holy). One may say *prako ho nnte* (The pig is not clean). The word can be used in the physical sense, or spiritual or religious sense. This rendering follows the second sense of the use of *hagiazo* in the New Testament that is, instilling holiness in something. It appears the worshipper is praying to cause God's name to be holy. The Asante-Twi, Akuapem-Twi, and Fante renderings do not suggest that an external entity should act to make God's name holy/sanctified, as this would only be feasible if there were a being higher and holier than God himself. If these translations wanted to say "set apart your holy name" (Hagner) or "sanctify your [own] name" (Evans), the expressions would have been "*te wo din ho or ma wo din ho nte*" (Asante/Akuapem) or "*tsew wo dzin ho* or *ma wo dzin ho ntsew*" (Fante).

Such a rendering is theologically problematic because God's name is inherently holy and cannot be made holier. Therefore, there is a need to find an alternative rendering. The Bono-Twi rendering uses the expression *anidie* (honour/reverence). The full statement is "*anidie nka wo dini*" ("May your name be honoured/revered"). This rendering is in line with the third sense of the word *hagiazo*. Honor refers to the deep sense of respect, admiration, and high regard given to individuals or groups in recognition of their character, accomplishments, or commitment to societal values and ethical principles. It encompasses the esteem and reverence granted to people based on their integrity, achievements, and adherence to moral or cultural expectations. Honor is often expressed through words, actions, and formal acknowledgments, reflecting an individual's or group's standing in a community or society.

The noun *anidie* holds significant importance in Akan socio-religious life. Akan social norms require people to give great honour to the elderly.[37] Children are traditionally expected to help the elderly carry their loads to their destination without seeking any reward. One is expected to offer their seat to the elderly when the elderly lack one. In the religious context, Akan people revere their ancestors, lower divinities and the Supreme God greatly. These entities that receive reverence/honor from the Akan are holy and cannot be sanctified in any way. They are inherently holy and need to be regarded as such without any attempt to make them holier ("cleaner"). The Akan show reverence to them through rituals such as libation ceremonies, where respect is shown by removing clothing and footwear.[38] Neglecting these customs may incur divine judgment or lead worshippers to forsake a deity if their prayers go unanswered.

The Akan socio-religious, therefore, prepares the Akan Christians to appreciate the need to honour God in their prayers. As Akan Christians integrate their faith into this cultural framework, the Lord's Prayer is a transformative guide. It instructs them to honour and respect God, now acknowledged as their Father through faith in Christ (John 1:12). This transition from Akan Traditional Religion to Christianity underscores the imperative of offering unwavering reverence to God, without reservation or compromise. The Akan word *anidie* encapsulates the broader mandate that God's name should be revered in every facet of life— in speech, thoughts, worship, and actions. The Bono-Twi rendering resonates with the Fante version produced by Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein (1717-1747), an eighteenth-century Dutch missionary of Ghanaian birth. Capitein rendered it as *Wo dzin wombo no yie* ("May your name be handled with due reverence" or "Your name, may it be mentioned

[37] Boaheng, "An Akan Mother-Tongue Reading of Matthew's Version of the Lord's Prayer (Bono-Twi Translation) in Dialogue with Akan Libation Prayers," 48.
[38] Boaheng, "An Akan Mother-Tongue Reading of Matthew's Version of the Lord's Prayer (Bono-Twi Translation) in Dialogue with Akan Libation Prayers," 48.

properly").[39] This rendering emphasizes the significance of treating God's name with utmost care and respect in prayer and daily living. John Kwasi Fosu, in a recent article, suggests the rendering *wo din no na wonfa ahoteɛ ne anidie mmɔ* (lit. "may your name be handled in holiness and reverence").[40] Fosu's model combines two of the senses in which *hagiazo* is used in the NT, namely ANB. The use of *anidie* in this model supports the Bono-Twi rendering to a greater extent.

Thus, *hagiazo* in Matthew 6:9, contextualized within Akan traditions, highlights the profound cultural and spiritual call for Akan Christians to honor God unreservedly as a reflection of their new identity and relationship with God as Father through Christ. This reverence is not merely a ritualistic gesture but a transformative commitment to uphold the sacredness and dignity of God's name in all aspects of their faith and life. Therefore, when humans are called to hallow God's name, it entails recognising its holiness and glorifying it.[41] This invitation extends to all believers to honor and revere God's name.[42] In this context, proponents of the eschatological interpretation of the Lord's Prayer use it to express their belief that in the end times, God's name will be universally honored.[43]

The Expression *καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν* (v. 13a)

The phrase "*μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς*," traditionally translated as "lead us not into," has sparked recent scholarly debate. According to the Fitz Rienecker's The Linguistic Key to the New Testament, *πειρασμός* can mean "test" or "temptation."[44] However, it has traditionally been rendered as "temptation." According to Genesis 22:1-12, God tests people to see if they will obey Him, and 1 Corinthians 10:13 suggests God provides both the test and the strength to endure it. However, James 1:13 states it is against God's nature to tempt people to sin. Therefore, the literal translation "lead us not into temptation"—which implies that God leads people into sin—seems to contradict other parts of the scriptures listed above. Hagner opines that, depending on its context, the Greek term *πειρασμός* can mean either "temptation" or "testing."[45] Hagner prefers the latter in the present context since God does not lead into temptation (James 1:13). For Hagner, God allows his people to be tested, which involves challenging circumstances that try one's faithfulness. Temptation entices one to sin, while testing aims to strengthen faith, though both can result in sin. This petition in the Lord's Prayer refers to severe testing that could lead to apostasy. He also notes the debate over whether this testing is eschatological, related to the end times, or pertains to everyday life. He considers the future aspect as the primary sense without rejecting the present application.[46] The present test, however, foreshadows "the great final test."[47] In this case, the expression could be rendered "do not lead/bring us into a test", which possibly draws on an old Jewish sapiential prayer, "Do not bring me into the power of a sin, a temptation, a shame" (b. Ber. 60b).[48]

France, however, opposes this view and states that while this petition in the prayer could have an eschatological reference, its main purpose is not suggested as such.[49] It relates to the testing experiences that disciples face while living by the principles of God's kingdom in a world that does not share those values, including the persecution mentioned in 5:11-12.[50] In 26:41, Jesus again exhorts

[39] John D. K. Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's Translation of 'The Lord'sPrayer' Into Mfantse: An Example of Creative Mother Tongue Hermeneutics," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, Vol. 2 (2007): 66-79, 71.
[40] John Kwasi Fosu, "Praying through the Lord's Prayer with Meaning and Significance: Mother-tongue Theological Hermeneutical Study of Mathew 6: 9-13," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology* 5, no.7 (2023):112-124, 116. https://doi.org/10.38159/motbit.2023572
[41] Timothy Chester, *The Message of Prayer* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 160.
[42] Robbert H. Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 23.
[43] Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 161.
[44] Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 18.
[45] Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: Word Biblical Commentary*, 151; see also Ben Witherington III, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Matthew* (Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2006), 147.
[46] Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: Word Biblical Commentary*, 151.
[47] Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: Word Biblical Commentary*, 151.
[48] Witherington III, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Matthew*, 147.
[49] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 281.
[50] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 281.

his disciples to pray for deliverance from *peirasmos*, referring to their immediate danger rather than an eschatological threat.[51]

Since Jesus spoke Aramaic, not Greek, it is sometimes helpful to consider the Aramaic origin of expressions. According to Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine it has been suggested that in the original Aramaic, "lead" can be used causatively ("cause us not to enter") or permissively ("allow us not to enter").[52] Ben Witherington III, in support of this view states that "The Aramaic original of this petition would likely read something like 'cause us not to enter,' or better, 'do not allow us to enter.'"[53] In any of these cases, God is not considered the tempter, which is consistent with James' teaching and Old Testament tradition that God does not tempt.[54] The prayer is thus requesting that God protect the worshipper from entering situations of temptation. Considering the arguments, I opine that the text is not about temptation; however, God is passive, not acting in making one enter temptation. The Aramaic root supports this view.

Towards an Akan Model

The Asante-Twi and Akuapem-Twi translation "*Na mfa yɛn nkɔ sɔhwɛ mu*" matches the Latin "…*et ne nos inducas in tentationem,"* both meaning "And lead us not into temptation."[55] The German translation "…*führe uns nicht in Versuchung*" literally means "do not hurry us into temptation," which implies God is the cause of human sin. This interpretation suggests God actively leads people into temptation, which is misleading. As noted earlier, this position is "theologically inconsistent with God's nature and must be avoided."[56] It is theologically incorrect to view God as leading people into temptation. The Bono-Twi rendering "*Na nnyae yɛ mma yɛnnkɔ nsɔhwɛ mu*" and the modern Fante translation "*Na mma nngyaa hɛn kɔ nsɔhwɛ mu*" (meaning "And do not allow us to fall into temptation") are both exegetically and theologically acceptable translations. The modern Fante translation is an improvement upon Capitein's ancient Fante translation "*Na mma hɛn tsir nnkɔ adzebɔn mu*" (And **do not allow** our **heads** to be pushed into evil). Capitein's translation heavily incorporates the Akan anthropology where the head (Fante: tsir) symbolizes a person's luck or entire being.[57] Fosu's model is "Na nnya/mma yɛn nkc nschwɛ mu" ("And do not lead [allow] us into temptation").[58]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to Bible translation agencies, the Church, pastors, and theological institutions to enhance the quality and effectiveness of mother-tongue Bible translation efforts. Translation agencies should provide extensive linguistic and theological training to ensure translators have the necessary skills for handling complex biblical texts. They should encourage interdisciplinary collaboration by involving biblical scholars, theologians, and local language experts in translation projects. Developing standardized translation guidelines will help translators make informed decisions, while regular reviews and peer assessments should be implemented to improve translation accuracy over time.

Churches should actively promote the use of mother-tongue Scriptures in worship, preaching, and Bible study to deepen members' understanding of God's Word. They should support Bible translation projects through funding, theological consultations, and linguistic assistance to ensure

[51] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 281.
[52] Barclay Moon Newman, and Philip C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 172.
[53] Ben Witherington III, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Matthew* (Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2006), 147.
[54] Witherington III, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary*, 147.
[55] Boaheng, "An Akan Mother-Tongue Reading of Matthew's Version of the Lord's Prayer (Bono-Twi Translation) in Dialogue with Akan Libation Prayers," 55.
[56] Boaheng, "An Akan Mother-Tongue Reading of Matthew's Version of the Lord's Prayer (Bono-Twi Translation) in Dialogue with Akan Libation Prayers," 55.
[57] Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's Translation of 'The Lord'sPrayer' Into Mfantse," 77.
[58] Fosu, "Praying through the Lord's Prayer with Meaning and Significance: Mother-tongue Theological Hermeneutical Study of Mathew 6: 9-13," 116.

accuracy and accessibility. Additionally, churches should educate their congregations on the significance of accurate Bible translation and its impact on Christian faith and doctrine.

Pastors and church leaders should incorporate mother-tongue Scriptures in their sermons and teachings to make biblical messages more relatable to their congregants. They should collaborate with translation agencies by providing theological insights and feedback to ensure doctrinal soundness. Since effective engagement with mother-tongue Bibles requires literacy, pastors should also encourage and support literacy programs within their congregations.

Seminaries and theological institutions should integrate Bible translation studies into their curricula to equip students with the skills needed to contribute to translation work. They should encourage academic research on mother-tongue translation challenges and solutions, particularly in African contexts. Additionally, fostering partnerships with Bible translation agencies will ensure that translation efforts are informed by rigorous theological training and research.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the theological and linguistic dimensions of the Bono-Twi translation of the expressions *ἁγιασθήτω* and *εἰσενέγκῃς* in the Matthean Lord's Prayer. Through exegetical, linguistic, and theological analyzes, the paper has demonstrated the complexities involved in rendering these expressions into Bono-Twi while maintaining their theological integrity and linguistic accuracy. The study has also highlighted how the Bono-Twi translation offers a model for other Akan mother-tongue translations by addressing key exegetical and sociolinguistic challenges. By comparing the Bono-Twi version with the Asante-Twi, Akuapem-Twi, and Fante translations, the paper has underscored the significance of contextually appropriate Bible translation in ensuring theological clarity and doctrinal soundness. The findings suggest that mother-tongue Bible translation is not merely a linguistic exercise but a theological endeavor that requires scholarly engagement with the biblical text, cultural nuances, and theological traditions of the target audience.

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