

E. van Eck

Prof. E. van Eck
Department of New
Testament and Related
Literature, University of
Pretoria. E-mail: ernest.
vaneck@up.ac.za.
ORCID: [http://orcid.
org/0000-0003-3810-
4190](http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3810-4190).

D. Sakitey

Prof. D. Sakitey
Department of New
Testament and Related
Literature, University
of Pretoria.
E-mail: [dksakitey@gmail.
com](mailto:dksakitey@gmail.com)
ORCID: [http://orcid.
org/0000-0003-0380-
033X](http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0380-033X).

DOI: [http://dx.doi.
org/10.18820/23099089/
actat.v39i2.10](http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.v39i2.10)

ISSN 1015-8758 (Print)
ISSN 2309-9089 (Online)

Acta Theologica 2019
39(2):172-186

Date Published:
13 December 2019



Published by the UFS
<http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at>

© Creative Commons
With Attribution (CC-BY)



ΑΛΛΑ ΡΥΣΑΙ ΗΜΑΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΝΗΡΟΥ (MAT. 6:13B): READING THE LORD'S PRAYER THROUGH EWE- GHANAIAN DEMONO- LOGICAL LENS¹

ABSTRACT

This article examines the phrase *ἀλλὰ ρύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* in Matthew's rendition of the Lord's Prayer through the Ewe-Ghanaian demonological lens. It employs a combination of the historical-critical and indigenous mother tongue biblical hermeneutics methods to address the ambiguity associated with the phrase *ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* in the petition. It also engages the world of the text with the Ewe-Ghanaian demonological world view and defines the place of *πονηρός* (evil/evil one) in Ewe-Ghanaian Christian spirituality. The article discusses the various hermeneutical and theological positions on the text and juxtaposes them with popular Ewe-Ghanaian Christian demonology. The article argues that the aggressiveness with which the Ewe-Ghanaian Christian confronts his/her destiny issues is premised on the primal belief that everyone came to this world with his/

1 This article represents a reworked version of aspects from Daniel Sakitey's PhD thesis, titled "Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer in Ewe-Ghanaian context", in the Department of New Testament and Related Literature, University of Pretoria, with Prof. Dr Ernest van Eck as supervisor.

her own destiny (*gbetsi*) or fortune (*aklama*). However, there are forces that interfere with one's destiny. It is against this backdrop that one must relentlessly wage a spiritual warfare against those forces through not only tumultuous and verbose prayers, but also ritual performances, in order to either protect a good fortune or reverse a bad one. The phrase *ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* (Mat. 6:13b) is, therefore, a call on "Our Father in the heavens" to reverse any misfortune in one's life, in order to fulfil one's destiny in life.

1. INTRODUCTION

One point of divergence between Matthew's and Luke's accounts of the Lord's Prayer is the phrase *ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* in the second half of the last petition of Matthew. The phrase also appears in the *Didache*, a liturgical handbook of the early church. One reason assigned to the omission of the phrase in Luke's account is his gentile community's gradual departure from the Jewish concept of prayer and Judaism's understanding of the will of God, sin and the problem of evil (Brown 1976:870-872). The word *εἰσενέγκης* in the first half of the sixth petition in Matthew's and Luke's accounts, *καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν*, is a negated aorist subjunctive of *εἰσφέρειω*, which carries the meaning of "to bring in, to lead into", whilst that of *ῥύσαι* in the second half of the petition in Matthew, *ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ*, is an aorist imperative of the verb *ῥύομαι*, which means "to rescue" or "to deliver". It is argued that the two verbs have the same eschatological sense (Brown 1961:204).² Nonetheless, many scholars have noted the ambiguity of the phrase *ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* in Matthew (Brown 1961:206). The meaning of *πονηρός* in the phrase has evolved from its ethical sense in older Greek usage as "a person who is morally reprehensible in conduct toward the gods and human beings" to a Hellenistic demonological interpretation that suggests the "idea of the evil *daimon*" (Brown 2004:25; Beekmann & Bolt 2012:19-22). The petition has been described as typical of Jewish apotropaic prayers, of which one's main features is "petitioning God to avert personal danger and grant heavenly bliss" or "to ward off evil spirits" (Flusser 1992:86). In the early part of the 20th century, Oesterley (1925:154) observed a distinct parallel between the Lord's Prayer and Jewish apotropaic prayers in one of the benedictions of Jewish daily morning service. Although it lacks sufficient evidence to prove its pre-Christian origin, one cannot rule out its possibility. The benediction reads:

2 Luz (1989:384) refutes an eschatological interpretation of *πειρασμός*, stating that it is neither consistent with Jewish apocalyptic nor in New Testament apocalyptic technical terminology.

O lead us not into the power of sin, or of transgression or iniquity, or of temptation, or of scorn, ... May it be thy will, O Lord my God, and God of my fathers, to deliver me this day, and every day, from arrogant men and from arrogance ... and from any mishap, and from adversary that destroyeth (Flusser 1992:86).

Another parallel, described as the oldest known apotropaic prayer of the Second Temple period, was discovered in the Aramaic Testament of Levi from the Qumran community. Reconstructed from the Greek parallel, it reads as follows:

O Lord, you [know all hearts, and] you alone understand [all the thoughts of minds] ... Make far [from me, O Lord, the unrighteous spirit, and] evil [thought] and fornication [and] turn [pride] away [from me]. [And] let not any Satan have power over me [to make me stray from your path] (Eshel 2003:75)³.

In his work *Apotropaic prayer and the Matthean Lord's Prayer*, Wold (2014:112) also holds the view that the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil", may be described as apotropaic prayer depending on one's hermeneutical inclination, especially when one considers the ambiguity characterised by the word *πονηρός*. For Wold, Matthew 6:13 is apotropaic if the genitive τοῦ πονηροῦ reads "Evil One" and it sounds apocalyptic if the genitive is interpreted as "Evil". Wold (2014:112) concludes that

if the early church is instructed how to ward off personified evil, and "evil" is defined as demonic activity, then the final defeat of Satan and demonic beings lies more in the future than perhaps the past [or present].

It is, therefore, axiomatic that the Jewish, Classical Greek and Hellenistic concepts of *πονηρός* have points of convergence and divergence. The Jewish concept reveals two different understandings: an apotropaic view, suggesting the warding off of an evil spirit, and an apocalyptic perspective that makes Satan the object of evil. The Greek concept is understood as ethical misconduct towards the gods, while, in Hellenism, its object became the Devil himself. This latter Hellenistic understanding is in conformity with its Jewish apocalyptic counterpart (Wold 2014:101-112). The apotropaic viewpoint resonates with the neuter usage of *πονηρός*, which carries an abstract interpretation – evil. Another viewpoint that may influence the interpretation of *πονηρός* is the dualism of "this-worldly" and

3 See also Flusser (1966:194-205). Eshel also cites other apotropaic prayer texts from the *Plea for Deliverance* (11QPS^a Col. 19), Jubilees 6:1-7 and 12:19-20.

“other-worldly”, or God-devil and good-evil. Thus, *πονηρός* being rendered “Evil One” is eschatological and not a present reality (Wold 2014:110-111). When viewed from the perspective of the God-devil and good-evil dualism, however, the Jewish apotropaic and Hellenistic theory renders *πονηρός* abstract (evil/evil thing), while Jewish apocalyptic and Classical Greek theory incarnates/personifies it (devil).

A middle position is that the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive and can be used interchangeably in the sense that Satan can be described as Evil or Evil One, since he is the source and personification of evil.

This article employs a combination of the historical-critical and indigenous mother tongue biblical hermeneutical approach to explore the implication of the phrase *ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* in Matthew’s rendition of the Lord’s Prayer for Ewe-Ghanaian Christian spirituality. The historical-critical approach brings out the meaning of the text from the source language (Greek) to the receptor language (Ewe). This follows Ong’s “discourse analysis”, originated by Dell Hymes in his *Ethnography of speaking* and adapted by Holmes and Ottenheimers (Ong 2012-2013:98-123; Coulthard 1985:34-58). The mother tongue biblical hermeneutical approach involves the use of a constructive dialogue between biblical texts and their translations into various languages such as Ewe, taking cognisance of the *Sitz im Leben* (situation in life) that governs them as well as their *Wirkungsgeschichte* (history of effect/influence) and current practical application (Ekem 2007:77; Kuwornu-Adjaottor 2012:11-15). This approach overlaps with Loba-Mkole’s (2007) intercultural exegesis, because both approaches aim at a dialogical reconstruction between the source culture and the receptor culture (Mahlangu & Grobbelaar 2016:99-102). Ekem argues that the mother tongue approach to biblical interpretation is likely to shape the future of biblical studies in Africa. He asserts that the importance of dialogical exegesis to biblical studies in Africa involves:

1. An examination of texts from a cross-cultural hermeneutical perspective, whereby biblical and other world views (for example, African) are brought face to face with each other on the principle of reciprocal challenge (intercultural/cross-cultural hermeneutics).
2. Dialogue between the translated texts and their “originals” with a view to ascertaining their points of convergence and divergence as well as their impact on the community of faith (inter-textual dialogue).
3. Bringing the insights of [1] and [2] to bear on the development of context-sensitive study bible notes and commentaries (applied hermeneutics).

The article first analyses the phrase *ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* in the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer in the existing Ewe translations. This is followed by a dialogical comparison with the source text and its interpretations throughout the epochs of Christianity (patristic and Reformation eras). The article finally assesses its implication for Ewe-Ghanaian Christian spirituality.

2. EWE INTERPRETATIONS AND THEOLOGIES OF ΚΑΙ ΜΗ ΕΙΣΕΝΕΓΚΣ ΗΜΑΣ ΕΙΣ ΠΕΙΡΑΣΜΟΝ, ΑΛΛΑ ΡΥΣΑΙ ΗΜΑΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΝΗΡΟΥ

The translation of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer from its source language (Greek) to receptor languages such as Ewe has resulted in varied interpretations of the text. All four existing Ewe translations – *Biblia* (Bible) (1931; 2010), *Nubabla Yeye La* (The New Covenant) (1990), and *Agbenya La* (The Living Word) (2006) – render *καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* as *eye mēgakplɔ mí yi ɔe tetekpɔ me o; ke ɔe mí tso vɔɔɔtɔ la si me*, literally, and do not sweep us into temptation, but take us out of the hand of the evil one. The only word missing in the 1990, 2006, and 2010 versions, but used in the 1931 version is *ke* (*καί*). All four translations also render *πονηροῦ* as evil incarnate/personified. The Ewe rendering for *πειρασμός* – *tetekpɔ*, from the duplicated verb *te*, literally, to push, and *kɔɔ*, literally, to see – suggests the pushing of an object to see its reaction. The cognate *dodokpɔ*, from *dokpɔ*, literally, measure/ weigh/examine and see, is the same word used to render *πειρασμός* in the Akan language. In the three Akan translations that were examined (1902; 1964; 1992), *πειρασμός* and *πονηρός* are rendered as *sɔhwe*, literally, hold and see, and *bɔne*, literally, a smelling thing, respectively. *Sɔhwe* is the same terminology used to denote examination in Akan. Thus, *πειρασμός* is perceived as an examination or test, while *πονηρός*, understood as evil one or evil thing, is conceptualised as foul smell or rot in Akan. The reaction produced by *πειρασμός* is both positive and negative, although the tempter's ultimate goal is to make the tempted fail the test.

The only existing Ewe commentary that interprets *καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* is found in the work of Rev. Samuel Quist (1937), one of the native co-workers who assisted the German missionaries in the first Ewe Bible translation project published in 1911. He was commissioned by the Bremen Mission in 1931 to write a commentary on the gospel of Matthew (Wiegräbe 1968:42-44; Ekem 2011:139-140). Quist interprets *πειρασμός* in the first part of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer to mean sins that are obstacles; sins that, in his words, “*de xa ɔe mia ŋu*”,

that is, surround us as spies to tempt and destroy us. For him, God allows temptations as trials to come the way of his own for their good, citing EPHB⁴ 387 to buttress his assertion (Quist 1937:44). He made the second half of the sixth petition his seventh and interprets *πονηρος* as evil incarnate. For him, ill-health and misfortunes are the evil referred to in the petition from the Devil. In Ewe-Ghanaian Christian spirituality, good health and good fortune are the two most important prayer topics at any prayer gathering and Satan and his demons are always the causative agents. This notion of every evil emanating from the Devil is also prevalent in Akan and Ga demonologies. Quist shows two ways in which God delivers his children from all evil; he either prevents it from happening to them or he gives them the strength and understanding to endure.

In the mid-18th century, Jacobus Capitein (1717-1747), arguably the first minister of the Ghanaian church and pioneer of mother tongue biblical hermeneutics in Ghanaian language (Akan-MFante), translated the Lord's Prayer from Greek to Mfante with Dutch orthography (Ekem 2011:7-16). In the petition under discussion, Capitein views *πειρασμός* as sin and, like Quist, points to God as the one who gets his children into *πειρασμός*, expressed in Mfante as, *na ma mma hen tsir nnkɔ adzebɔn mu*⁵, literally, and do not let our head get into a bad thing. In the second half of the petition, Ekem (2011:11) describes *πονηρος* as evil thing but not the Devil, as evident in the following rendering: *ma mma Obiso nnye hen adzebɔn*,⁶ that is, do not let someone also do us bad/evil. Although Capitein's work can be described as a paraphrase of the source language (Greek), it makes a case for creativity in mother tongue biblical hermeneutics; a clear example of using the theological resources at one's disposal in theologising. The impression that Capitein and Quist create in their interpretation of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer is that there is always an unseen hand responsible for a person's misfortune. This demonological world view is prevalent in every primal religious practice and characterises African Christian demonology.

Although all four Ewe renditions of *καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν* point to God being the one who, as it were, "leads us" into temptation, that is not the case in Ewe-Ghanaian Christian spirituality nowadays.⁷

4 The hymn from the Evangelical Presbyterian Hymn Book (EPHB) suggests that Satan, and not God tempts us.

5 The original text is *o'nye meêma jeniitiêr ónko adebónnim*.

6 The original text is *meêma ebiso ónyjen adebónni*.

7 In two bible study discussions held with presbyters and a youth group of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, Lashibi, on 24th January and 19th February 2018, all assert that God does not "lead us" into temptation.

For the Ewe-Ghanaian Christian, evil cannot be attributed to the Supreme Being. It is believed that the Devil is the source of all evil and this justifies his personification in *ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ* in the second half of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew. This demonological motif of personified evil echoes traditional Christian demonology and finds expression in the patristic and 16th-century interpretations and theologies on the Lord's Prayer. The church fathers are, however, divided over whether or not the term *εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς*, in the first half of the petition, should be interpreted as "lead us" or "allow us" (Souter 1919:27; Stewart-Sykes 2004:48, 85, 193, 196, 202; Brown 2004:158; Lenker 1907:306; Morrison 1972:213).⁸ As mentioned earlier, the implication of their interpretations is that God will be made responsible for the evil that befalls human beings if he is the one who leads us into temptation. He is, however, not responsible if he only allows the Evil/Evil One to come the way of his children. The difference is, however, insignificant, because, if it is within human nature to be tempted, then it falls under the domain of the Divine Will. In other words, God has placed temptation at the door of every human being not to be overcome by it, but rather to overcome it. What is important in all the hermeneutical propositions on *πειρασμός* (temptation) is what is alluded to in the work of Clement of Alexandria that the ultimate goal of *πειρασμός* is education, that is, temptation is a tool that God uses to educate those who call upon his name (Brown 2004:158). In other words, God allows temptation to befall human beings, in order to teach them lessons that would enable them to deal with it in the event of its recurrence.⁹ The fathers were also divided over the interpretation of *πονηρός* in the second half of the petition. The question, however, is whether or not the term should be translated as evil or Evil One/Devil (Brown 2004:158, 250; Stewart-Sykes 2004:84; Morrison 1972:213; Lenker 1907:307). Those who argue for evil rendition may have done so in line with Jewish apotropaic and Hellenistic evil *daimon*, while those who argue in favour of Devil take a Jewish apocalyptic and Classical Greek position (Flusser 1992:86; Betz 1995:380; Eshel 2003:75; Brown 2004:25; Wold 2014:101-112). In their works, Martin Luther and John Calvin align

-
- 8 Calvin's interpretation of *εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς* is that "[God] in His own way ... actually leads men into temptation", although He is not the author of evil (Morrison 1972:213). Luther's concern was about the source of the *πειρασμός*. For him, the source of *πειρασμός* is both external, that is, "from the world and the devil", and internal, that is "from our own flesh" (Pelikan 1956:147).
- 9 Martin Luther may have been familiar with Clement's answer on the ultimate goal of temptation. Thus, in his quest to finding an answer to "why God permits His children to be tempted to sin", he arrived at the following conclusion, "that man may learn to know himself and God" (Lenker 1907:306; Hay 1892:256).

themselves with the church fathers who argue for a personified *πονηρός* (Pelikan 1956:147; Lenker 1907:307). As intimated earlier, *πονηρός* denotes both personified and abstract evil. Therefore, interpreting it as “evil” or “evil one” may depend on one’s demonological school of thought.¹⁰ However, if the eschatological sense conveyed by the petition is anything to go by, *πονηρός* is evil personified as Satan or the Devil destined for destruction on the Day of the Lord.

3. ΠΟΝΗΡΟΣ MOTIF IN EWE COSMOLOGY

The demonological issues raised in the petition under discussion can be viewed from the perspective of Ewe-Ghanaian cosmology, particularly in communion with the divine (prayer). The Ewe concept of evil is best appreciated in the following petition in the oldest form of Ewe libation prayer text: “*ahe ne to dzi, evɔ ne to dzi, edɔ ne fo mia nu, eku ne fo mia ta*”,¹¹ that is, “may we not be caught in the state of darkness and ignorance; may we not be caught in the state of fear, confusion and superstition; may we not be caught in sickness, disease and squalor; may death and destruction depart from us”. The petition reveals what is believed in Ewe religion to be the four cardinal predicaments of life: state of darkness creating ignorance; fear resulting from confusion and superstition; disease and squalor, as well as death and destruction. It is believed that human beings are naturally at the shore of the sea of ignorance and must thus continually climb the ladder of knowledge of their godly nature, in order to free themselves from the state of ignorance that creates fear, confusion, superstition, disease, sickness, and squalor, culminating into death and destruction (Van Eck & Sakitey 2019:4). Ignorance throws one’s ego into evil. In Ewe cosmology, the nomenclature “Devil” does not exist. What existed during pre-missionary and missionary eras was *Abosam*, a term borrowed from the Akan *Abonsam* or *Sasabonsam*, who is perceived to be a monstrous creature synonymous with the Serpent or Satan in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures (Meyer 1999:77-78; Beekmann & Bolt 2012:). The “diabolic” or demonological term with which the Ewe can identify the word “Devil” is *vɔ* (fear) that wrongly translates evil. In Ewe cosmology, it is believed that human beings were created with a single destiny. However, a human being’s habitual nature, when it begins to interact with the pleasures of this life, creates a new order that is always in conflict with his/her godly nature. The interaction between our godly and evil nature then creates what can be described as God-devil, good-evil dualism within

10 In the 16th century, John Calvin argues that “it makes very little difference whether we understand by the word evil the devil or sin” (Morrison 1972:213).

11 Interview with Dr Dartey Kumordzi, 14 October 2015.

us. Therefore, what is described as Devil in Ewe cosmological sense, is our habitual nature, which we ignorantly acquire from the world. In other words, we are our own devil.¹² It is foreign to the Ewe primal mind to personify evil. However, both the Ewe libation prayer and the Lord's Prayer share a similar notion that the power to avert evil rests solely on their objects of worship and not any individual or community.¹³ Thus the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, *και μη εισενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ*, when situated within the Ewe demonological frame, should be rendered *eye mega kplɔ mi yi tetekpɔ me o, ke ɔemi tso vɔ me*, literally, and sweep us not into temptation, but take us out of fear/fearful thing.¹⁴ The light that the Ewe cosmic notion of evil throws on the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer is that the path to sin is ignorance, confusion, and superstition, and not witchcraft, which the Ewe-Ghanaian Christian believes to be the main agent of evil (Meyer 1999:175-212).

4. ΠΟΝΗΡΟΣ AND THE REVERSAL OF DESTINY IN EWE-GHANAIAN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

At the centre of popular Ewe-Ghanaian Christian spirituality is Satan or the devil and his angels-demons, witches and wizards who are believed to be responsible for the misfortunes that befall human beings. The means whereby one is delivered from such misfortunes is through ritual performances and carefully worded prayers, which are believed to be the panacea for the reversal of one's destiny or misfortune.¹⁵ This notion stems from the primal religious belief that everyone was sent into this world by *Bomenɔ*, the principle of creativity and productivity, with the declaration of the constitution of his/her origin and destiny, known in Ewe as *gbetsi/Se/dzɔgbese/gbefofo* (Dzobo 2018).¹⁶ However, the reversal of one's *gbetsi* depends on the gravity of one's bad fortune. In other words, one's destiny warrants a reversal if it is determined to be beyond the normal hardship that everyone faces in life. *Bomenɔ* herself follows the individual

12 Interview with Dr Dartey Kumordzi, 8 May 2019.

13 Interview with *Torgbe Keh XII*, 28 June 2015.

14 Interview with Rev. Fred Amevenku, 13 September 2017.

15 Good fortunes are known as *gbetsinyui*, while bad fortunes are *gbetsivoe*. Examples of both good and bad fortunes include longevity, prosperity, many children, houses, large farms, poverty, barrenness, and infant mortality. Everyone seems to have a combination of both *gbetsinyuie* and *gbetsivoe*.

16 In Ewe cosmology, the term *gbetsi/Se/dzɔgbese/gbefofo* is used to describe the guardian god or destiny of the individual. It stems from the belief that everyone was sent into this world with the declaration of the constitution of his/her origin and destiny – some kind of farewell ceremony.

to the earth and serves as a guardian god known in Ewe as *aklama* or *dzogbenyuie* – the principle of good fortune. An individual also comes to the earth with bad fortune (*dzogbevoe*), as indicated earlier. It is believed that *aklama* gives the individual protection, proposes his/her undertakings, and delivers him/her from all misfortune or evil. There is no luck in Ewe cosmology; everything that happens in a person's life was predetermined because of the belief that the person chose it in his/her source of origin (*Bome*) before entering into the material world and is, therefore, responsible for his/her actions and inactions. The interaction between one's habitual nature and the pleasures of this life in Ewe cosmological view creates a new order that counteracts with one's old order, resulting in the God-devil, good-evil dualism within one. It is a cosmological fallacy to blame others for one's misfortunes in life.

Reversing one's bad *aklama* in Ewe primal religion is through divination: a diviner, known as *Boko* or *afakala* or *gbetsiɖelawo*¹⁷ is consulted. The divination is aimed at finding out the type of fortune for which a particular individual known as *gbetsiɖenala* has opted in *Bome*. When it is established that the person opted for an unpropitious fortune, it will be reversed through a process known in Ewe as *setɔtro*, literally, reversal of law, *gbetsiɖede* (removal of *gbetsi*), *nuxexe*, literally, payment of a thing or propitiation, or *fexexe* (payment of debt), performed by either a priest or a priestess.¹⁸ It is performed to *gbetsi* the guardian god, also known as *ɲɔlimetasi*. Reversing one's bad fortune involves the cancellation of the old fortune. *ɲɔlimetasi*'s involvement is to witness the event and record the person's new fortune.

The items needed for the *gbetsi* ritual are seven clay dolls, small mat, raffia bag containing pebbles or broken china wares representing money, assorted food items, a day-old chick, and four cowry shells. Other items may be asked for, according to the various local practices. The *gbetsiɖenala*, the individual on whom the ritual is performed, is then made to carry the seven clay dolls in a pan on the head and is led along a footpath to the outskirts of the village. After a hole of a knee-high depth has been dug, the *gbetsiɖenala* is made to stand in the hole and lots are cast with the four cowry shells to find out whether *ɲɔlimetasi* will accept the symbolic bag of money as adequate payment for the reversal of his fortune. If the outcome of the lot cast is negative, more money is provided. If it is positive, it is an

17 *Afakaka* is the act of divining and *Afakala*, *Boko* or *gbetsiɖela* is the one who performs the act of divining or removing *gbetsi*.

18 The idea of both male and female religious leadership is evident, in this instance. Ewe traditional priesthood is not the preserve of males alone, although male priests are dominant.

indication that *ɲolimetasi* has accepted the payment for the release of a positive and propitious fortune to the individual. The following prayer is offered with cornflour mixed with water, called *wotsi*.

Oh! Oh! Oh! Three things make life
 Today you *Bomenɔ*
 You have been paid for the life of this child.
 He is no more yours.
 Now you [Name of the individual]
 We have received you from your *gbetsi* (bad fortune)
 He will no longer visit you with any sickness, etc.
 Your evil *gbetsi* is cancelled;
 You are received back into the living
 Peace, Peace, Peace. (Dzobo 2018)

The *gbetsiɔdenala* is now lifted out of the hole, which is covered up and sealed, symbolising the burial of the individual's evil *gbetsi*. He takes off his old clothes and leaves them there and new ones are put on him. This act also symbolises the removal of the old life of evil *gbetsi* and the putting on of the new life of favourable *gbetsi*. The seven dolls are left under a tree for *ɲolimetasi* to take to *Bomenɔ* and after this new life is released by *Bomenɔ* from the other world. The *gbetsiɔdeɔde* is a presupposition that an individual comes to this world with immutable good fortune. However, if a diviner determines that one's fortune is bad, the ritual of propitiation can be performed to reverse it. With this understanding, it is believed that a poor person can become rich through the process of reversing his/her *gbetsi*. At the entrances of homes and at the centre of Ewe communities, one finds a clay statue representing the god (*legba*) responsible for reversing the rigid and evil destiny of the individual.

This primal demonological world view is transposed into popular Ewe Christian spirituality and gives impetus to spiritual warfare against anything that is unpropitious and seeks to interfere with an individual's success in life, which is believed God has destined to be good. This religious world view finds expression in popular Ewe-Ghanaian Christian liturgical practice, particularly in prayer and homily where worshippers are made to believe that the hardships they face in life as Christians are as a result of either their family witches or curses that have been imposed on their forebears. In other words, these forces have changed what God has destined them to be in life and must, therefore, be reserved through tumultuous and verbose prayers and ritual performances. At any "serious" Ewe popular Christian prayer gathering, there are two categories of believers: those who have

problems with their *gbetsi* and those with secure *gbetsi*. The reason for their gathering is to either request from the “man of God” the reversal of a bad fortune or protection against losing a good one. For instance, if one is suffering from a chronic disease, one quickly establishes intuitively that something has obviously gone wrong with his/her *gbetsi* and needs to be reversed. Every effort is then made to reverse this perceived spiritual anomaly through imprecatory prayers and the use of elements such as anointing oil, water and, recently, communion wine. Therefore, the Ewe-Ghanaian Christian understanding of ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ in the sixth petition of the Lord’s Prayer is a petition to “Our Father in the heavens” to reverse any misfortune in the life of the individual and restore good fortune, in order to fulfil his/her destiny in life.

5. CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of deliverance from evil in popular Ewe-Ghanaian Christianity is to change one’s destiny from bad to good. It involves the waging of spiritual warfare against any form of interference – spiritual and material – in the life of the individual. Therefore, any petitionary prayer intended to exorcise this evil must be accompanied by sacrifices synonymous with the *gbetsi* ritual performance in Ewe cosmology. Hence, the sixth petition of the Lord’s Prayer only finds relevance in popular Ewe Christian spirituality if it is ritualised, because, in the Ewe primal imagination, the efficacy of prayer greatly depends on its rituality. The aggressiveness with which one’s destiny is confronted in popular Ewe-Ghanaian Christian spirituality is premised on the primal belief that everyone came to this world with his/her own *gbetsi* (destiny) or *aklama* (fortune). However, there are forces that interfere with one’s destiny. It is against this backdrop that one must continue to wage a spiritual warfare against those forces by means of not only tumultuous and verbose prayer, but also ritual performances, in order to either protect a good fortune or reverse a bad one. Thus, to the Ewe-Ghanaian Christian, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ is a call on our heavenly Father to reverse any misfortune in our lives and to bring about the restoration of a good one, in order to fulfil our destiny in life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BEEKMANN, S. & BOLT, P.G.
2012. *Silencing Satan: Handbook of biblical demonology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.
- BETZ, H.D.
1995. *The Sermon on the Mount*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. Hermeneia – A critical and historical commentary on the Bible.
- BROWN, C.
1976. Prayer. In: C. Brown (ed.), *The new international dictionary of New Testament theology*, 2 (Exeter: The Paternoster Press), pp. 855-886.
- BROWN, M.J.
2004. *The Lord's Prayer through North African eyes: A window into early Christianity*. New York: T & T Clark International.
- BROWN, R.E.
1961. The Pater Noster as an eschatological prayer. *Theological Studies* 22(2):175-208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056396102200201>
- COULTHARD, M.
1985. *An introduction to discourse analysis*. Second edition. London: Routledge.
- DZOBO, N.K.
2018. *The Ewe traditional cosmology and cosmogony*. National Commission on Culture, Accra. [Online.] Retrieved from: <https://www.ghanaculture.gov.gh> [30 May 2019].
- EKEM, J.D.K.
2007. A dialogical exegesis of Romans 3:25a. In: L.J. Mkole & N.H. Taylor, *Journal of the New Testament Society of South Africa* 30(1):75-93. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X07081547>
2011. *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- ESHEL, E.
2003. Apotropaic prayers in the Second Temple period. In: E.G. Chazon (ed.), *Liturgical perspectives: Prayer and poetry in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill), pp. 69-88.
- FLUSSER, D.
1966. Qumran and Jewish apotropaic prayers. *Israel Exploration Journal* 16(3):194-205. New York: Israel Exploration Societ.
1992. Jesus and Judaism: Jewish perspectives. In: H.W. Attridge & G. Hata (eds), *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press), pp. 80-103.

HAY, C.A.

1892. *Martin Luther, Sermon on the Mount*. Philadelphia, PN: Lutheran Publication Society.

KUWORNUNU-ADJAOTTOR, J.E.T.

2012. *Doing African Biblical Studies with the mother tongue biblical hermeneutic approach*. [Online.] Retrieved from: <http://ir.knust.edu.gh/bitstream/123456789/4602/1/DOING%20AFRICAN%20BIBLICAL%20STUDIES%20WITH%20THE%20MOTHER%20TONGUE%20HERMENEUTICS%20APPROACH.pdf> [1 September 2018].

LENKER, J.N.

1907. *Luther's catechetical writings*, 1. Minneapolis, MN: The Luther Press.

LOBA-MKOLE, J.

2007. The New Testament and intercultural exegesis in Africa. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30(1):7-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X07081542>

LUZ, U.

1989. *Matthew 1-7: A commentary*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.

MAHLANGU, E. & GROBBELAAR, J.

2016. Child theology in Africa: A new hermeneutics. In: J. Grobbelaar & G. Breed (eds), *Welcoming Africa's children: Theological and ministry perspectives* (Cape Town: Oasis), pp. 88-104. <https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2016.waccs13.03>

MEYER, B.

1999. *Translating the Devil: Religion and modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

MORRISON, A.W.

1972. *A harmony of the gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke*. Ann Arbor, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans. Calvin's New Testament commentaries, I

OESTERLEY, W.O.E.

1925. *The Jewish background of the Christian liturgy*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

ONG, H.T.

2012-2013. Has the true meaning and purpose of The Lord's Prayer been lost? A sociolinguistic study of the Lord's Prayer in dialogue with Wilson-Kastner and Crossan. In: L.K. Dow (ed.), *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 14 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers), pp. 98-123.

PELIKAN, J. (Ed.)

1956. *Luther's work, The Sermon on the Mount (Sermons) and the magnificat*, 21. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

QUIST, S.

1937. Erklärung des Matthäus-Evangeliums (in Ewe). Unpublished. Bremen.

SAKITEY, D.
 2018. *Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer in Ewe-Ghanaian context*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

SOUTER, A.
 1919. *Tertullian's treatises concerning prayer, concerning baptism*. London: Society for promoting Christian knowledge.

STEWART-SYKES, A.
 2004. *Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen on the Lord's Prayer*. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

VAN ECK, E. & SAKITEY, D.
 2019. *ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου: Interpreting the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:10a) in the light of Ewe-Ghanaian eschatological vision. HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 75(3), a5207. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i3.5207>*.

WIEGRÄBE, P.
 1968. *Gott Spricht Auch Ewe: Geschichte einer Bibelübersetzung*. Bremen: Verlag der Norddeutschen Missionsgesellschaft.

WOLD, B.
 2014. Apotropaic prayer and the Matthean Lord's Prayer. In: J. Dochorn, S. Rudnig-Zelt & B. Wold (eds), *Das Böse, der Teufel und Dämonen-Evil, the Devil, and Demons* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), pp.101-112

Keywords

The Lord's prayer
 Ewe traditional prayer
 Evil

Trefwoorde

Die Ons Vader gebed
 Ewe tradisionele gebed
 Bose