



THE PURSUIT OF WELL-BEING: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF *EIRĒNĒ* AND THAT OF *OMANYE* AMONG THE GAS OF SOUTHERN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between the New Testament concept of “eirēnē” and the concept of “ómanyē” among the Ga people of Southern Ghana. In this work, “eirēnē” is understood as total human well-being from God. The work aims at locating the possible connections between the above-mentioned perception of “eirēnē” in the New Testament on one hand, and the Ga concept of “omanyē” (wellbeing) on the other. The Ga perception of well-being that is expressed in “omanyē” in their daily greetings, sayings, prayers and songs is therefore contrasted with “eirēnē” in the New Testament in this paper and implications are drawn from it. This study uses the comparative interpretative model and the mother tongue biblical hermeneutics as its theoretical framework.

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Keywords: Comparative, Mother- tongue, Hermeneutics, Peace, Religio-cultural, Well-being.

Contribution/ Originality

The work attempts to explore the struggle for survival and wellbeing by groups whose land has been pounced upon by governments to establish capital cities. The contribution of Indigenous heritage in ensuring wellbeing by the Gas of Ghana who live in and around Ghana’s capital city, Accra was highlighted.

1. INTRODUCTION

The usage of *omanyē* by the Gas shows how they survive in their own land amidst the daily confrontations and encroachment by other ethnic groups, governmental agencies and multinational companies. These confrontations are as a result of their being geographically located in and around Accra, the capital city of Ghana. This study fits into the discipline, Mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics defined by Ekem as, “a discipline devoted to the interpretation and reinterpretation of

biblical texts in languages considered by speakers as their first languages into which they were born.”¹ Kuwornu-Adjaottor says that the mother tongue translations of the bible are resources for African Biblical Studies, and recommends that University Departments of Religious Studies and Theological Seminaries in Africa, should study them in addition to the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Greek New Testament.² Ga scholars who have done some work in the area of Mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics include, Laryea,³ Adjei,⁴ Laryea⁵ and Quarshie.⁶ Kuwornu-Adjaottor says Mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics uses eclectic methodology. It borrows from the fields of Biblical Studies, Bible Translation Studies, and Language Studies – Biblical Languages: Ancient Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek, and Local African/Ghanaian Languages. He outlines a nine-step methodology for this approach.⁷

This work is based on the frame work that most people in some cultures approach religious texts with presuppositions, questions and problems that matter to them. Thus the text and such people are bound together as they dialogue with each other. This can be applied to most people in Africa.⁸ So a religio cultural approach perspective is adopted which attempts to show a ‘cultural’ continuity worlds through a comparative study of selected linguistic, religious, historical concepts is undertaken. However the key to this type of study is that the starting point is the ‘*host culture*’ in this case the Ga culture and the ‘*guest culture*’ is that of world of the New Testament. So the Ga concept of ‘*omanye*’ will be examined alongside that of *eirēnē* of the New Testament. The lessons from this paper will perhaps be relevant to communities located in inner cities where capitals are located.

¹Ekem (2011).

²Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2012).

³Laryea (2001). Laryea (2003). Laryea (2011).

⁴Adjei (2001).

⁵Laryea (2010).

⁶Ibid.

⁷Kuwornu-Adjaottor(2012). (1) Identify a biblical text which you think has been wrongly translated in your mother-tongue. (2) Discuss why the translation is problematic in your culture. (3) State and explain the methodology you will use, and the proponents. (4) Do a study (an exegesis) of the text, using Bible study resources – Dictionaries, Commentaries, Encyclopedias, Word Study helps, etc. (5) Find out what scholars have said about the text, how they interpret it and reasons for their interpretations. (6) Discuss the usage of the concept in your language/culture; interview indigenous speakers of your mother-tongue for deeper insights into the concept you are researching. Use local terminologies in your writing and explain them in English. (7) Compare the text in your mother-tongue with other Ghanaian translations you can read and understand. (8) Analyze the mother-tongue translations; what do they mean? How are the meanings of the text similar to that of the Hebrew/Greek?. How are they different? What might have accounted for the differences in translation? (9) Come out with a new translation of the text that fits into your culture.

⁸Anum (2000).

2. EXEGESIS

2.1. The World of the Term *Eirēnē*

The term *eirēnē* from Homer and the period that followed after him was used for the opposite of war. Peace was described as the times in a nation state's life where there were little disturbances in the area of law and order which gives rise to stability, blessing and prosperity.⁹ In Plato, *eirēnē* stood for peaceful conduct. Plato also used *eirēneuō* the verbal form - to live in peace or to have peace to differentiate it from the noun (*eirēnē*).¹⁰ In later writings of Josephus and the LXX it also stood for the act of bringing peace (LXX1 and Josephus *War* 2, 367). In a few instances in classical Greek it was used in a sense of political pacification by force of arms. In other words, using battles to settle scores so as to restore sanity and deal with instability. It was during the period of the Stoics that peace assumed a more spiritual dimension in works of people like Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. Philo, also influenced by Greek philosophy followed suit in advocating inward peace as being 'victory over temptation and lust' (Jos. 57).¹¹

2.2. Old Testament

Turning our attention to the Old Testament, even though our interest is in the New Testament, it is very important for us to look at the usage of the word in Old Testament times. This is because the Old Testament to a large extent shaped and influenced the usage of the word *eirēnē* in the New Testament as its etymology and evolution in the New Testament itself is not very clear.

In the LXX *eirēnē* is used to translate the Hebrew *šālôm*. However, in contrast to the Greek *eirēnē*, the Hebrew *šālôm* is the antithesis not necessarily of war but of any disturbance in the communal well-being of the nation.¹² This is evident in the Old Testament as *šālôm* is expressed in terms of prosperity (Ps.73:3), health (Isa. 57:18; Ps.38:3; contendedness; good relations among nations and people, salvation etc.¹³ Participation in this peace means sharing in the gifts of salvation which are involved, whilst expulsion from it means deprivation from prosperity (Lam. 3:17). In Rabbinic literature, the relationship between *šālôm* and peace is further broadened. "The phrase for 'to greet' *sa'al b'e šālôm* meaning to ask after (someone's peace) i.e. to wish it for someone turns the act of greeting into something approaching an act of blessing. Hence, *šālôm* and *b'rākāh* begin to correspond".¹⁴ Hence, *šālôm* becomes the very essence of the salvation expected by the Jews'.¹⁵

The Qumran community also argue that peace is identical with salvation (redemption) that is, *sōzō* and with happiness. 'The peace of God' (1QM3:5; 4:14) and 'the joy of the Lord' are the watch words of God's people when they arrive home'.¹⁶

⁹Beck and Brown (1986).

¹⁰ Beck & Brown, "Peace", 776.

¹¹ Beck & Brown, "Peace", 776.

¹² Beck & Brown, "Peace", 777.

¹³ Beck & Brown, "Peace", 777.

¹⁴ Beck & Brown, "Peace", 779.

¹⁵ Beck & Brown, "Peace", 779.

¹⁶ Beck & Brown, "Peace", 780.

In contrast to *akastastasia*, that is, disorder, *eirēnē* is an order established by God who is regarded as the God of peace. Related to soteriology, *eirēnē* has a lot of ways by which it is expressed (1Cor14:33).¹⁷ This ‘wide-ranging scope of salvation is shown by the fact that peace is linked with love (*agapē*) in 2 Cor13: 11, with grace (*charis*) in the introductions to some of the epistles (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor.1:3).¹⁸ *Eirēnē* is also linked with *zoē* (life) in Romans (Rom.8:6) where it is linked with *thanatos* (death).¹⁹ In John’s gospel peace is projected as the opposite of tribulation or persecution. It is also lifted from the earthly realm to the heavenly one where it is put forward as the peace in heaven and also as part of the expected salvation. A vivid example of this is the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to the disciples in John 20:19-23. Jesus comes to his frightened disciples where the doors were closed to proclaim peace to them (v. 19b). ‘The greeting, *eirēnē hymin* may be a regular form of greeting, but within the present setting of Jesus’ sudden physical presence among his fear-filled disciples (see 15:18-16:3) it brings into effect Jesus’ promises of John 14: 27 and John 16:33’.²¹ The effect of this was that ‘the disciples are now able to be of “good cheer” (16:33: *tharseite*).’²² The evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is among them as the risen Lord is the joy the disciples experienced in the midst of confusion and suffering (John 16:33). The next stage of the wishing of peace to the disciples was to empower them to go and share his peace with others (John 20:21-23). The disciples were charged ‘to bring God’s forgiveness for all sin that is to be forgiven, and lay bare all sinfulness’ (John 20:23) which is initiated by the *eirēnē hymin* (peace to you) in John 20: 21. This meant that they were to extend the peace to others not only in the form of sanctification but also in leading ethically acceptable lives. So peace is not just to be received but to be passed on to others. Passing on peace therefore means that peace has the capacity to expand. The New Testament however, stresses in other parts that peace may be unrecognized or it may be forgotten or obscured (Rom 3:12,17 or refused (Matt.10:3). So it is not automatic that when peace comes it multiplies by itself. It has to be passed on by the efforts of the recipients.

So as far as the New Testament is concerned, peace, if it is to exist must be all-embracing in salvaging humankind from any form of disorder and to bring newness of life. But bringing newness is not the end as humankind in pursuit of peace is a work in progress and must keep working at it until the end of time when their exploits at attaining perfect *eirēnē* shall be realized. Furthermore, there is the missionary dimension of New Testament *eirēnē* that is to share it with others.

However, in general terms the type of peace that is put forward in the New Testament is the one which has the capacity to work on all human relations. This may be either on ethical or moral challenges which is described in Hebrews as *en panti agathō* (Hebrews 13:20) or a believer’s well-being in the broadest sense stated in Thessalonians as *dia pantos en panti tropō* (2Thess 3:16).²³ The latter may include all the benefits of peace (health, happiness, harmony etc. but where there is conflict between any of these then the peace as prescribed by God is to be adhered to. Else there

¹⁷ Beck & Brown, “Peace”, 780.

¹⁸ Beck & Brown, “Peace”, 780.

¹⁹ Beck & Brown, “Peace”, 780.

²¹ Moloney(1998).

²² Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 530.

²³ Beck & Brown, “Peace”, 781.

will be disharmony instead of harmony. So there are limits to the attainment of peace and the limits are related to the righteousness of God.²⁴

In a sum, the New Testament perception of peace is neither the stoic's withdrawal from the world nor the pious flight into spirituality and mystical contemplation. It is the joyful assurance of sharing already in the peace of God as one goes through life.²⁵ This involves the well-being of both individuals and communities which is still unfolding.

3. THE CONTEXT OF THE GAS AND THE CONCEPT OF *OMANYE*

3.1. The Context of the Gas

Even though the Ga people do not have a unified concept of well-being, we can deduce a cultural notion of well-being among them which is their concept of '*omanye*' which literally means peace which ensures tranquility and prosperity; therefore it embraces different areas of human experience. It includes climatic, bodily, psychological, socio-economic and political aspects of peace, which entails unity and stability. The Gas live in six coastal towns - Accra, Osu, La, Teshi, Nungua, and Tema. They make their living primarily from fishing which has increasingly become industrialized. In terms of geographical location the Gas are a tiny group on the south-eastern coast of the republic of Ghana, between the *Laloi* lagoon (east) and the Densu River (west), just below the Akwapim scarp.²⁶ Farming, including livestock grazing is the principal occupation of the inland villages, each politically attached to one of the towns. "In 1877 Accra became the headquarters of the newly created Crown Colony of the Gold Coast".²⁷ The British colonial administration therefore moved its capital from Cape Coast to Accra. The Gas therefore gained interest in white color jobs in the capital. Just around the time of the movement of the capital (i.e. 1891), the entire population of Accra was 91, 612 made up of 44,636 males and 46, 976 females. In 1948, the population rose to 145, 901 and by 1960 it was 388, 396.²⁸

Population figures released by the National Bureau in 2000 were as follows: Northern Region 26,000, Upper Region 31, 000, Brong Ahafo Region 46, 000, Western Region 77, 000, Volta Region 78,000, Upper Region 109, 000, Ashanti Region 131, 000, Central Region 161, 000 and Greater Accra Region 897,000, The figures represent the number of persons per square mile.²⁹ Evidently, Greater Accra which is the smallest of the ten regions, had by far the greatest density of population and so it bears a great weight. It was also reported that "Accra Region has grown by 4.2% since 1984 and clearly facilities has not kept pace with such growth. The next highest growth rate was .06 percent recorded in the Western region which was seven times more than that of Accra".³⁰ Even before the movement of the capital to Accra the place was known for its "inadequacy of food supply due to unfavourable climatic conditions, the Accra region is the driest

²⁴ Beck & Brown, "Peace", 781.

²⁵ Beck & Brown, "Peace", 783.

²⁶ Parker (1960).

²⁷ Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State And Society In Early Colonial Accra*, xvii.

²⁸ Attoh (2003). 48. Also in Ghana National Archives Classification Nos, ADM.5/2/1 and ADM.5/2/10.

²⁹ Population Census Figures (2000).

³⁰ Ibid.

area in southern Ghana with a mean annual rainfall of less than 30 inches”.³¹ However, after independence apart from issues related to the climate, central government’s policies have worsened their situation. The government passed laws that dispossessed the Gas of their land and other assets. For example, in 1959,

a memorandum that was circulated by the Minister of Finance was the proposal for the payment of 1000 pound sterling to the Priest of Nai (the Wulomo or high Priest (that is, the High Priest in complete settlement of the priest’s traditional right to levy duty on all ships using the Accra Harbour. This payment should be once - and for all settlement and the priest should be required to sign an agreement that the payment was in full settlement of all claims which he and his successors might have upon the government in respect to right.³²

Another example is Section 10 of the Administration of land Act of 1962 (Act 123) which gives the President of the Republic the power to authorize occupation and use of any land in the public interest by a declaration that “that land is required in the public interest”.³³ The fact that Accra is the capital and Ghana is a unitary state with both the administrative officers and political; and offices located there meant the Gas suffered disproportionately from this law. It is in this context that I will explore ways by which the well-being of such a people as expressed in *omanye* and how it resonates with the New Testament concept of *eirēnē*. which I find having some resemblance to the former. This is to enrich the study and pursuit of well-being and survival in our world today where city dwellers’ self understanding of their well-being is under serious threat.

3.2. The Concept of *Omanye*

Traditionally the ordinary person will greet the priest or the *mantse* (chief) or *onukpa Nii* (an elder) by saying : *Nii, Ha Manye (Elder, grant me ‘omanye’) or Nii, Miihe Manye* (Elder, I am asking for *omanye* from you).The *Nii* (elder) responds *Manye abrao* (*omanye* is yours or *omanye* is granted).The significance of this tradition is profound. It is hierarchical in nature as *omanye* (well-being) is either solicited for by a person of lower rank or status or pronounced on a person of lower rank or status by a person of higher rank or status in the Ga society and cannot be inter-changed. The rationale is that you earn the ability to give *omanye* (wellbeing) either as a priest or as an elder or ruler in the Ga society. In addition, the meaning of the word is so deep and all encompassing. The word *omanye* which is a noun is rendered as “success, happiness, good times, peace, goodwill, victory, good times, peace, good will, victory. *Omanye Aba* (let good times come) is the formula for concluding libation prayer”.³⁴ In the socio-cultural context, the word is often used specifically during the making of libation which is part of the prayer texts for Gas.

Additionally, *omanye* is rendered not only as the above but also “joy, grace, loving-kindness, kindness etc; and it is invoked during public acts like festivals, traditional marriage rites, weddings,

³¹Odotei (1995).

³²Ghana National Archives, Classification No. ADM. 13/1/28.

³³Section (1962).

³⁴Kropp Dakubu, M.E., 1999.

etc.”³⁵ According to Zimmerman, the word is also ‘especially used by religious people and for religious things’.³⁶ This is in comparison with *hedsolę* (being comfortable). So *Omanyē Aba* translates as “Let peace come”! So the greeting, *Tswa omanyē Aba* which is translated as “ask peace to come” has the answer: *manyē ba* which also translates, “peace come!”³⁷ Upon further reflection on this deeply "religious" word, one can explore the depth of its significance further by looking at words which appear to be closely related to it. For example, considering the word *matan* (*Ma tan*) as the opposite of *Manye* (*Ma nye*). *Matan* means bad luck, ill omen. So *Manye* or *Omanyē* implies good fortune, favour, favourable condition, etc. Again if *Matan*, because of the suffix, *tan*³⁸ meaning *ugliness*, is the opposite of *omanyē*, I am inclined to think that *Omanyē* also means beautiful, glorious. In light of the above reflection, when the superior - *Wulomo* (High Priest), -*Mantse* (Chief) or *Onukpa/Nii* (Elder), is invoked i.e. *nii ha manye* (elder, give well-being) and he says *manyē* or *omanyē abrao* (well being is yours),³⁹ he is commending glory, beauty, grace, blessing, peace, happiness, joy, loving-kindness, kindness etc. to be showered upon or be covered on the recipient. This implies that *omanyē* has depth and breadth in Ga.

I guess, it is because of this richness of the word, that A.A. Amartey titled his book on some aspects of Ga culture *Omanyē Aba* (let well-being come).⁴⁰

The Ga concept of *omanyē* is captured vividly in a song Margaret Field has described as the Ga anthem.⁴¹ It goes as follows:

<i>Aawoo! Aawoo! Aawoo!</i>	Be exalted, be exalted
<i>Aagba ei!</i>	Oo priestly people
<i>Bleku tsoo</i>	Let bleku (Rain give peace)
<i>Enam enam</i>	Fish, fish
<i>Esu, Esu</i>	Water, water
<i>Manye o manye a</i>	Blessing-wellbeing, blessing/well-being
<i>Adzēban kpotoo</i>	Food in abundance
<i>Aa woo! Aa woo!</i>	Be exalted! Be exalted

Let me do a little critique of Field’s interpretation of the song. Line 4 *Enam, enam* is not the Ga word for fish. Line 5 *Esu, esu*, is not the Ga word for water; line 7, *Adzēban* is not the Ga word for food. These are Fante words. How did they get into Ga? There is the need for explanation. The Fantes, like the Gas are mainly fisher folks. These words may have entered into the Ga song as a result of interaction between the two ethnic groups. Certainly, water and fish is very crucial to the Gas in terms of their well-being. Now how does these ideas from the Ga context relate to well being in the New Testament? Nketiah, making a correlation between *omanyē aba* (peace come) and

³⁵Zimmerman (1858).

³⁶ Zimmerman, *A Grammatical Sketch*, 250.

³⁷ Zimmerman, *A Grammatical Sketch*, 250.

³⁸ Zimmerman, *A Grammatical Sketch*, 284.

³⁹*Ga-English Dictionary with English-Ga*, 103.

⁴⁰Amartey (1991).

⁴¹Field (1937).

well-being takes the view that *omanye* as used by the Ga people means peace, happiness, prosperity and well-being, and is the 'keynote of social greetings'.⁴² So for Nketiah there is a clear linkage between *omanye* and well being among the Gas. If it is true, then he hit the nail on the head by also noting that *omanye* is very paramount to the Gas. Perhaps a proof of Nketiah's stance is that *omanye* is used in varied forms either in the Ga song *Awoo, awoo* which Margaret Field cited or during prayers by the *wulomo* (chief priest) or during out-dooring of new born babies when the *onukpa* (elder) blesses the child by asking for *omanye* for the new born baby.

During the *Homowo* festival of the Gas they hoot at hunger which is a threat to their very existence and well-being and the *wulomei* (High Priests) of the Ga localities perform rituals and pray for abundance of fish, rain, food, long life and prosperity for their people. In the midst of the dry savannah type of location of the Gas, their determination and fighting spirit and their reliance on their religious practices coupled with the cooperation with their religious leaders has sustained them over the decades. Although throughout the year Ga High Priests are consulted for support in areas such like ill health, bareness, rites of purification and sanctification for Ga lands, the climax of their activities is in the performances related to the *Homowo* festival. There, annually they reinvigorate the Gas to expect and hope for good harvest and success in their various endeavours. Above all peace, harmony, unity and reconciliation is also petitioned for and imparted by the High Priests during the festival for all who are domiciled in their territories. As to the level of its attainment, one can say that psychologically and spiritually it urges the Gas on as they fight battles with the government to reclaim some of the lands that have been forcibly taken away from them and also as they regroup from all walks of life to demonstrate through singing and parading through their streets to give messages to the governing authorities in the city of Accra that, they are still existing and have not given up yet. This happens from July to September of every year.

Philip Laryea, writing on *Christ as Lord of the Ga Homowo* festival argues concerning *omanye* and the Gas, that

it is not difficult for a person whose categories of thought have been shaped by the Ga religious tradition to draw a correlation between the greeting *nyehea manye* (receive peace, you all) and the post resurrection greeting of Jesus and *Hejole ahanye* (Peace be with you) in John 20:26.⁴³

Laryea goes further to analyse Zimmerman's 1907 translation of John 20:26 into Ga by saying, Zimmerman could have translated *eir...n... hymin* (peace be with you) as *nyehea manye* since it is this expression that fully conveys the idea of wholeness that we find present both in the Greek thought *eir...n...* and in the corresponding Hebrew *šālôm*, Laryea continued by saying that he wonders why of the two key words that featured in all Ga worship and social life - *wala* (life) and *omanye* - Zimmerman picked *wala* and left out *omanye*.⁴⁴ However, when one reads through Zimmerman's thoughts concerning *omanye*, one can realize that in his linguistic expressions he has clearly indicated that the *omanye* is used by "fetish people and those in public life".⁴⁵ Even though

⁴²Nketiah (1963).

⁴³Laryea (2011).

⁴⁴ Laryea, *Yesu Homowo Nuntso*, 131.

⁴⁵ Zimmerman, *A Grammatical Sketch*, 284.

he indicated that it can be compared to *hejole* he did not use it. So even though *omanye* was a Ga cultic expression Zimmerman treated it as a non-Christian concept. Interestingly when one looks at the Ga Bible, the 1907⁴⁶ translates John 19:3 ‘Hail king of the Jews’ as *Oshiee* (good evening) but the 1977⁴⁷ and 2006⁴⁸ rendering the same phrase as *Ha manye*. This was the occasion where following Pilate’s proclamation of Jesus as “king of the Jews” John 8:39, Jesus is mockingly dressed and proclaimed by the soldiers as “king of the Jews” (John 19:3). This Johanine account is highlighted by a coronation, a clothing and a proclamation of the truth. I see the importance the Gas attach to this word and so the least opportunity to put it in the text indicating greeting a ruler that, they had seized it and utilized it. This is perfectly in line with its hierarchical usage which we have discussed earlier in this work. At any function when they get the opportunity they invoked *omanye* and nothing else. You always hear them say,

<i>Tswa omanyaba</i>	Let well being come
<i>Tswa tswa omanyaba</i>	Let, let well-being come
<i>Dzee wogbee kome?</i>	Are we not having one voice? Or are we not of one accord?
<i>Tswa omanyaba</i>	Let wellbeing come.

This offer of peace from a communal point of view based on group cohesiveness which is fostered by religious leadership is evident when Gas gather. The question that comes to the fore is whether this wish really brings what is hoped for. In the 2006⁴⁹ version of the Ga Bible, Jeremiah 8:11 is rendered as:

*Omanyee! omanyee! omanyee!*Peace oo! Peace! Peace!
Be mli ni omanyeko be kwraa When there is no peace in the horizon or reality.

In this verse *omanye* is used four times (I have put them in bold above). “The idea of peace is related to Jeremiah’s controversy with the cultic prophets throughout the book of Jeremiah. He criticized the cultic prophets for fostering a false sense of security”.⁵⁰ The question here is whether when peace is proclaimed to a community by religious leaders, like prophets and priests, it always works. For instance, while Jeremiah was very skeptical about any form of peace for the people of Jerusalem, the other prophets were hopeful. In a similar way the challenge is whether what the *wulomei* (chief priests) and others have been wishing and working on year after year really works for the Ga people in the city of Accra.

3.3. Implications

As I have stated earlier that the New Testament concept of *eirēnē* is used as the window through which well-being is experienced which is then examined alongside the Ga concept of *omanye*. The concept of *omanye* is perceived as offering of good favour from a superior body to his

⁴⁶Nmale Kroñkroñ Le (1907).

⁴⁷Kpân mô Hee Lê (1977).

⁴⁸Nmale Kroñkroñ Le, 2006.

⁴⁹Dmale Krxñkronj Le, 2006.

⁵⁰Sisson (1986).

or her subordinates or subjects. It is therefore a hierarchical phenomenon. *Omanyē* is either solicited from or offered by a person or deity who then freely gives it. So when it comes from the *wulomo* (high priest), it is seen as coming from a spiritual source. But it can also come from secular people or *shia onukpai* or *Niimeī* (family heads or elders of the community or clan). The hierarchical nature or the top-down nature is in contrast to the *eirēnē* or *Šālôm* which in Christianity and Judaism can operate from both bottom-up or top to bottom. In New Testament perception it is not strictly hierarchical. Also, the type of well-being that is wished on the Ga people by their high priests is holistic well-being. The high priest does not offer only words of assurance and hope but also acts as medicine man in terms of the provision of herbs for various ailments including barrenness. The high priest also provides counseling, political well-being as well as social cohesion among members of his community. In other words, the high priests were to provide both physical and spiritual well-being for their generation. The New Testament also gives the impression that wellness looked for is physical and spiritual. For instance, people with fever and ophthalmic problems were dealt with. In both the New Testament and among the Ga people however, there is the tendency to emphasize spiritual well-being more than the physical one. Also, there is a dualistic relationship between spiritual healing and physical healing in the *omanyē* concept which is not found in the New Testament. For instance, one needs not be a herbalist to operate as a healer in the New Testament but one needs such knowledge to do so in the Ghanaian context. Furthermore, there is the ethical dimension in both the New Testament perception of well-being and the *omanyē* of the Gas. The New Testament *eirēnē* places certain demands on Christians who aspire for it. There are the Christian principles like truthfulness, honesty, justice etc. based on Christian ethos that ensure responsible well-being. This is what Christian communities are expected to initiate through conversion and baptism and monitor among its members from cradle to the grave in prayer and catechetical texts, biblical texts and hymn texts. With regard to the Ga context this is initiated through prayer texts, and out-dooring ceremonies, upbringing and monitoring of children as well as the provision of support through religious and secular functionaries. However, in both contexts there is the challenge in monitoring people in their pursuit of well-being. For instance, among the Gas due to their metropolitan location and urbanization it has become difficult to monitor them to ensure that the demands are adhered to. An example is the issues of truthfulness and honesty among Ga children which has become so difficult to monitor because of the urban and metropolitan set-up of the city of Accra and its surrounding Ga towns.

Also in the New Testament and among the Gas, both the concept of *eirēnē* and *omanyē* respectively has futurist dimensions. A closer look at the Ga *omanyē* shows there is emphasis on economic and political well-being in the here-and-now than that of New Testament. Margaret Field makes this issue clearer in her statement that,

The stretches of the *Shai* and *Accra* plain, hardly above sea-level, present nothing to the incoming breezes to make them drop moisture. Further inland, where these winds ascend the forested slopes of the *Akwapim* ridge, rain is plentiful, but *Temma* (sic), *Kpong* (sic), and *Nungwa* (sic) at times suffer much hardship from drought. Their continued dependence on the mercy of heaven keeps their worship more heartfelt than the people of

Accra where the new god, 'Gov'ment' has erected miraculously over-flowing stand-pipes.⁵¹

Field's statement might not be the full picture. Even though Accra is the capital and there is infrastructural development and the provision of certain necessities like water and electricity, the cultural set-up is still intact because of their lack of complete trust in the colonial government machinery and the Ghanaian ones that followed thereafter. Nevertheless her statement brings to the fore the realities that confront the Gas with their harsh climatic conditions and geographical location, which is the reason why the Gas tend to focus on the achievement of well-being in the here and now. Also, the New Testament concept of sharing well-being with others in the manner of reaching out to them, spiritually, socially and economically is part of the aspect of the extension of the concept of *eirēnē* to them. In a similar way, the Ga High Priests will fast and pray for the well-being not only of Gas but also for non-Gas who live among them. The prayer he offers is not for only the Gas to live in peace but also for peaceful co-existence with their neighbours.

4. CONCLUSION

The Gas, being an aggressive people, have managed to survive the strong tides coming from the context where their communities are confronted day by day with the struggle to survive in the midst of encroachment by other major ethnic groups, governmental agencies and multinational companies on their lands, culture, religion, environment and economic as well as political well-being just because, they are geographically located in and around the capital city of Ghana which is Accra as a tiny group. A recent book by E.O. Attoh, *The Sun will never set in Accra* says it all. This book regarded by a reviewer as pep talk to the Gas looks at the marginalization of Gas through the attacks on their language and culture. According to Djangmah who wrote the forward, "these are words of a peace maker. Self-pity would not be the most appropriate response to the circumstances the indigenous [Ga] find around them".⁵² They should continue to pursue their well-being within the *omanye* context so as to survive as a people. The balance between traditional heritage and values that have been tested over time and refined through their interaction with other religious traditions makes Ga people able to have peace, live in peace and project peace to others. This summarises what it means to be an indigene of a capital city like Accra. And this is the Ga people of Southern Ghana.

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⁵¹ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 10.

⁵² Attoh (2003).

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