

A reading of hudõr zõn [living water] and its relationship with pistuõ [believe] in John 4:1-15 through the lens of some Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the New Testament and a practice in Ghanaian traditional shrines

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Abstract

Jesus' dialogue with a Samaritan woman in John 4 culminated in his promise of 'living water.' The text is not clear what it means to drink the 'living water.' This paper contends that drinking the 'living water' means believing in Jesus. This explanation finds support in the Ghanaian Asante-Twi and Akuapem-Twi, Mfante, Ga, and Dangme mother-tongue translations of 'believe' in the text as *asgyidi*, *gyedzi*, *hemõkâyeli*, and *hemikâyemi* respectively, meaning, "take, eat," a practice in some Ghanaian traditional religious shrines, where people who seek

help and protection from the gods, are given something to eat or drink, after which, when what they have taken in begins to work in their lives, they put their trust in the gods. The major contribution of this paper is that it uses the Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics approach to explain what it means to believe in Jesus; thus creating a link between Biblical Studies as an academic discipline and Bible Studies done in mother-tongue Bible reading communities. This paper has the potential of creating a global understanding of the relationship between 'drinking the living water of Jesus' and 'believing in him'.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Mother-tongue

The term 'mother-tongue' is a linguistic category which expresses the idea that the initial communication skills of a child are acquired from the mother; therefore the language of the mother would be the primary language that the child would learn (Collins, 2003; Kernerman, 2010). Its importance lies in the fact that, it identifies a speaker internally and externally, that is, one identifies with it, and is identified with it, even though it may not be the language one knows best and uses most. This definition should not be taken without criticism since in some countries such as Kenya, India, and various East Asian countries, mother-tongue refers to "mother language" or "native language" and is used to indicate the language of one's ethnic group, in both common and journalistic parlance rather than the first language. Also in Singapore, "mother-tongue"

refers to the English language that was established on the island through British colonization, which is the *lingua franca* for most post-independence Singaporeans due to its use as the language of instruction in government schools as a working language (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_language. Retrieved 15/4/2014).

1.2 Mother-tongue as a theological category

Mother-tongue has become a theological category through the writings of scholars such as Kwame Bediako (2001, 2003, 2006), John Kwamena Ekem (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012), Benhardt Y. Quarshie (2000, 2002, 2011), Philip T. Laryea (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2014). Other scholars who have made contribution in mother-tongue hermeneutics include, R. F. Amonoo (1989), Joseph Edusa-Eyison (2007), James Nkansah-Obrempong (2002),

Solomon Sule-Saa (2008, 2010), Korklu Laryea (2010), Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014), Clifton Clarke (2005), Thomas Atta-Akosah (2012), Frederick Amevenku (2014), Daniel Aboagye Aryeh (2014), Eric Nii Bortey Anum (2014), Sampson Obeng Adjei (2015). Konotey-Ahulu (2010) has also made a contribution to the Ga and Dangme mother-tongues by positing that tonic solfa is the basis of tonal linguistics.

1.2.1 Mother-tongue and research at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

Recently a lot of BA Long Essays (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013), Master of Philosophy (2012, 2013, 2014), and Doctor of Philosophy (2012, 2014) Theses have been written by students of Religious Studies at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. In these projects the candidates, apart from studying the texts in Greek and doing exegesis, also did a comparative study of the Greek texts with their mother-tongue translations, and wrote their comments. Some words and phrases which were translated from the Greek into their mother tongue Bibles but do not communicate with Bible readers in their religio-cultural settings were retranslated or not translated. An example is the work of Grace Adomako (2012). She found out that even though the Greek phrase *nephosmarturōn* in Hebrew 12:1 in the Asante-Twi Bible (1964) literally means *adansefoōmununkum* (cloud of witnesses), it does not make sense to Asante-Twi Bible reading communities because *mununkum* means cloud. She has thus retranslated the phrase as *adansefoōbeberââ* (many witnesses). Another example is that of Dawson Darko (2013). He did a Fante reader-response of Matthew 5:2. He found out that even though the Greek phrase *kaianoixas to stoma autou* means “and he (Jesus) opened his mouth,” it should not be translated because among the Fante; it is an insult when one says an important personality “opened” his/her mouth and began to talk. By implication all that he/she says will be “rubbish;” they will not be taken seriously by his/her audience. Jesus is an important person. His words are respected. Therefore the phrase should not be translated. Sampson Obeng (2013) argues that Jesus’ statement in Matthew 28:18 that *pasaexosia en ouranōkaiepi t...s g...s edoth... moi* rendered in the Akan mother tongue translations as *wôdeôso ro ne asase so tuminyinaa a mame* (They have given me all authority in heaven and on earth to me) should be re-translated to read *ôdeôso ro ne asase so tuminyinaa a mame* because it was the Father who gave the authority to Jesus. Using *wôde* which is plural, meaning “they have;” convey the idea that it was more than one person who gave the authority to Jesus.

1.2.2 Mother-tongue and Bible interpretation at other Ghanaian institutions

There is the Centre of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon devoted to research using mother tongues concepts and categories to interpret the Bible; and the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, a Postgraduate University, offers Master of Arts, Master of Theology, and Doctor of Philosophy programmes with specializations in Theology and Mission – Mother Tongue Theology, and Bible Translation and Interpretation options, among others. There is no doubt that studies in mother-tongue have become an academic discipline, involving rigorous scientific research and resulting in papers being published in journals of high reputation.

1.2.3 Propositions by some Ghanaian scholars on the use of mother-tongue for biblical interpretation

Kwame Bediako cites Clement of Alexandria who observed that the Church’s Bible in Greek amounted to Greek prophecy (2003). Commenting on vernacular Scripture, Bediako posits that, “The ability to hear in one’s own language and to express in one’s own language one’s response to the message which one receives, must lie at the heart of all authentic religious encounters with the divine realm” (1995). To Bediako (2000) this is usually the case because “God speaks into the African context in African idioms, and that it is through hearing in African mother tongues ‘the great things God has done’ (Acts 2:11), that African theology emerges to edify not only the African church but the church world-wide”. By these observations, Bediako does not only mean that the Bible must be translated into African languages to make its message understandable to African people, so that they can hear and experience the Word of God in context; but also that African theologians must use the African languages in their theologizing endeavours. John Ekem (2007) says that “The varied mother tongues of Africa have a lot to offer by way of biblical interpretation in Ghanaian/African languages as viable material for interpretation, study Bibles and commentaries”. The thoughts of Bediako and Ekem have implications for theologizing and doing biblical hermeneutics in mother-tongues. In this regard, mother tongue Bibles, the translations of the Bible into languages into which people are born and nurtured, become important resources for theologizing and interpreting the Scriptures. Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2012) has recommended that University Departments of Religious Studies and Theological Seminaries in Ghana/Africa should consider studying the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Greek New Testament

together with the Mother-Tongue translations because there are enough problems in these translations that can be studied academically.

1.2.4 The focus of this paper

This paper finds answers to the following questions: How is *u* [dwrzw/n (living water)] in John 4:10 translated in some Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the New Testament? What is the relationship between *u* [dwrzw/n [living water]] and *pistuw* [I believe/I am believing]? What does it mean for one to drink the "living water that Jesus gives?" How is a practice in some Ghanaian traditional religious shrines similar to drinking the water that Jesus gives?

2. Materials

2.1 The Greek text: John 4:1-15

Ὡς οὖν ἔγνω ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἡ κουσανοὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὅτι Ἰησοῦς πλείονα μαθητὰς ποιεῖ καὶ βαπτίζει ἢ Ἰωάννης² καὶ τοιοῦτος Ἰησοῦς αὐτὸν ζουκέβα πτιζεν ἀλλοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ³ ἀφῆκεν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν καὶ ἀπῆλθεν πρὸς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν.⁴ Ἔδει δὲ αὐτὸν διέσπεισθαι διὰ τῆς Σαμαρείας.⁵ Ἐρχεται οὖν εἰς πόλιν τῆς Σαμαρείας ἀλεγομένην Συχάρ πλησίον τοῦ χωρίου ὃ ἐδώκεν Ἰακώβ [τῷ] Ἰωσήφ τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ.⁶ ἦν δὲ ἐκεῖ πηγή τοῦ Ἰακώβ. ὁ οὖν Ἰησοῦς κεκοπιακῶς ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ πορὶ ἀρκαθὲ ζετοῦστος ἐπὶ τῇ πηγῇ. ὥρα ἦν ὡς ἕκτη.⁷ Ἐρχεται γυνὴ ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρείας ἀντλήσαι ὕδωρ λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· δὸς μοι πίνειν.⁸ οἱ γὰρ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἀπεληλύθεισαν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἀναγοράσασιν.⁹ λέγει αὐτῇ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ Σαμαρίτις· πῶς σὺ Ἰουδαίου παρ᾽ ἐμοῦ πίνειν αἰτεῖς γυναικὸς Σαμαρίτιδος οὗτος οὐ γὰρ σέβονται Ἰουδαῖοι Σαμαρίτις.¹⁰ ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· εἰ ᾔδεις τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίς ἐστιν ὁ λέγων σοι· δὸς μοι πίνειν, σὺ ἂν ἤτησας αὐτὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν ἄνευ ὕδατος.¹¹ λέγει αὐτῇ [ἡ γυνὴ]· κύριε, οὐτε ἄντιμα ἔχεις καὶ τὸ φρέατος τινὲς βυθὸς πηγαῖον ἔχεις τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν;¹² μὴ σὺ μετὰ ζῶντος τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰακώβ, ὃς ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν τὸ φρέατον καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐπιεικεῖ καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ θρόνα ματα αὐτοῦ;¹³ ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· πᾶς ὁ πίπων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος τοῦτου σειπάλλιν.¹⁴ ὃς δ' ἀντί η ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος οὗ ἐγὼ δώσω αὐτῷ, οὐ μόνον σειπείσται αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὕδωρ ὃ δώσω αὐτῷ γενήσεται ἕντα αὐτῷ πηγή ὕδατος ἀλλομένης ζῶνται ἰωνίου. (Nestle-Aland, 1994).

2.2 An English translation John 4:1-15

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" ² -- although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized-- ³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that

Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." (NRSV).

2.3 The setting and explanations of the text

The setting of the text is provided in verses 1-6. The Pharisees, probably of Jerusalem learn of the extraordinary success of Jesus in his preaching and baptizing ministry (vv. 1-2). This causes Jesus to withdraw from

Judea to Galilee, presumably to avoid conflict which could lead to a premature end of his ministry. Jesus therefore, "had to go through Samaria" (v. 4). At Sychar - a town in Samaria - Jesus encounters a woman who comes to draw water from a well. Discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman leads to the former's statement of drinking the living water of Jesus and its effects (v.14-15).

Andreas J. Köstenberger, 2007 opines that the setting of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman is replete of history and geography: they are by Jacob's well, with Mount Gerizim (the referent of "this mountain in 4:20-21) in the background in plain view. Mount Gerizim, was the Old Testament setting for the Deuteronomic blessing (Deut 11:29; 27:12), and near Mount Ebal, the mountain on which Moses commanded an altar to be built (Deut 27:4-6). The references to Jacob's well and Mount Gerizim place Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in the framework of 'holy geography' which is shown to transcend: he is greater than Jacob and the divine worship that he makes possible is not limited to physical structures or locations (4:23-24). J. H. Neyrey (Catholic Biblical Quarterly 41) also says that the reference

to “the field that Jacob have given to his son Joseph” (4:5), is another pertinent geographical site mentioned in the Old Testament. The reference reflects the customary inference from Genesis 48:21-22 and Josh 24:32 that Jacob gave his son Joseph the land at Shechem that he had bought from the sons of Hamor (Gen 33:18-19) and which later served as Joseph’s burial place (cf. Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32).

According to Bruce Barton et al (1993), the statement in John 4:9 that “Jews do not share common things with Samaritans” is a reference to a long history of strained relations between Samaritans and Jews. Samaria was a region between Judea and Galilee where Jews of “mixed blood” lived. In the Old Testament days, when the northern kingdom of Israel with its capital in Samaria, fell to the Assyrians, many Jews were deported to Assyria. King Sargon of Assyria repopulated the northern kingdom with captives from other lands to settle the territory and keep peace (2 Kings 17:24). These captives eventually intermarried with the few Jews who remained in the land to form a mixed race of people who became known as Samaritans. The Jews hated the Samaritans because they were no longer “pure” Jews. Since the Samaritans were hated by the Jews, many of the strict Jews travelling from Judea to Galilee took a route around Samaria - through Perea, east of the Jordan River (cf. 4:4).

H. N. Ridderbos and G. R. Baesley-Murray (n.d.) in their explanation of the phrase, “Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans,” (4:9) say that its scope is probably broader than merely the sharing of drinking vessels. Some Jews were willing to share with Samaritans, but many were not, fearing ritual defilement. Thus Jesus’ dealings with the Samaritan woman understood in its proper context underscores how he was not afraid to break social barriers in the pursuit of his mission (Baele and Carson, 2007).

The reference to Jesus as the giver of living water in 4:10-15 has a double meaning. On a physical level, “living water” refers to the highly sought-after fresh spring water as opposed to the stagnant water (Gen 26:19; Lev 4:6; Jer 2:13). On a spiritual level, it was God who was known to be the source and giver of life (Gen 1:11-12, 20-31; 2:7; Job 33:4; Isa 42:5). In Numbers 20:8-11 – an incident to which Jesus may allude in the present passage – water gushes out of the rock, supplying the Israelites with badly needed refreshment (see Num 21:16-18). Baele and Carson (2007) opine that in Jeremiah 2:13 God laments that his people have forsaken him, “the spring of living water.” In Isaiah 12:3 the prophet envisions with joy with which

people “will draw water from the wells of salvation” in the last days (cf. Ex 17:6; 1 Cor 10:4).

3. Results

3.1 The contextual meaning of *u [dwrzw/n [living water] and its relationship to pistuw[believe] in John 4*

For us to understand the meaning of “living water” and how it relates to “belief/believe” we need to consider the whole of John 4 where Jesus ministers to a variety of people: the sinful Samaritan woman, his own disciples, the many Samaritans who trusted him, and finally, a noble woman and his household. What do these have in common? Believe in Jesus. Thus in John 4, John, the writer of the Gospel states the purpose of his gospel in showing his readers how various kinds and classes of people came to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. In the Old Testament “living water” speaks of thirsting after God (Psa 36:8-9; 42:1-2; 55:1; Jer 2:13; 17:13). In promising to give living water that could forever quench a person’s thirst for God, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. In this sense, one can say that even though the word “believe” is not used in John 4:1-15, the meaning of “living water” given by Jesus for the woman to drink means, believing in him.

A cursory reading of the Gospel of John reveals that it contains a lot of drama which captures the tension between those who accept Jesus as “of God”, and those who reject his words and works outright. In the Gospel of John, unlike the synoptic Gospels, Jesus’ actions centre around seven miracles he performed: Turning water into wine (2:1-11); Healing an official’s son (4:46-54); Healing a lame man (5:1-16); Feeding of five thousand people (6:5-14); Walking on water (6:17-21); Healing a man born blind (9:1-7); Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-45); Giving the disciples a second miraculous catch of fish (21:1-14). These miracles which are known as signs in the Gospel of John are meant to challenge witnesses to the ministry of Jesus to accept or reject his words and works. From the very onset of the Gospel one is called to believe (1:7) and John ends his Gospel stating that his purpose in writing is that his readers would believe (20:31). Jesus captions accepting his words and works as “believe”. Believe in the Greek New Testament is *pistuw* meaning “to trust”, “to place confidence in”, “to rely upon” (Vine 1996). It is a verb that appears 241 times in the entire New Testament, of which 98 are in the Gospel of John. The word appears as a noun, *pistij* “belief” - the feeling that something is definitely true or exists - 243 times in the New Testament but not in the Gospel of John. In its noun form *pistijis* translated as “faith”, “trust”. It appears as an adjective – *pistoj*, translated as “faithful”, “trusting” - 67 times

in the New Testament. How is “believe” translated in some Ghanaian mother tongue translations of John’s gospel?

3.2 The Translation of “believe” and “belief” in some Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the New Testament

A study of the words “belief” and “believe” in nineteen translations of the Ghanaian mother tongue Bibles from five languages in southern Ghana reveals that they revolve around “taking and eating,” “taking and drinking.” The Asante-Twi and Akuapem-Twi translations render “belief,” “faith” as *gyidi*; the Fante as *gyedzi*; the Ga as *hemôkâyeli*; the Dangme as *hemi kâyemi*. The term has a semblance of Jesus’ words during his last supper with his disciples, when he took two elements from the Passover feast – the unleavened bread and the cup - and he used these to picture his own death (Matt 26:26-30; cf. 1 Cor 11:23-34). The broken bread pictured his body given for the sins of the world. The “fruit of the vine” (Matt 26:29) pictured his blood, shared for the remission of sins. (Baele and Carson, 2007: 91). The concise narrative of the meal contains instructions in Matt 26: 26-27, recorded in the Ghanaian mother-tongue translations under study as follows: Asante-Twi (BSG, 2012) and Akuapem-Twi BSG, 2012) - *munnyenni, monyinaamonnom bi*; Fante (BSG/UBS, 1948) - *homngyendzi, homnyinarannombi*; Ga (BSG, 2006) - *nyâheanyâyea, nyâfâânyânuaeko*; Dangme (BSG/UBS, 1999) - *nyâ he nânyââ ye, nyâtsuonyââ nu*. The Ewe translations (BSG, 1931, 2010) however, render Jesus’ words recoded in Matt 26:26-27 differently; *Mixôeđu, mino* (take eat, drink). In Hebrews 11:1 faith is translated in the Ewe Bible as *xôse*.

3.3 ‘Belief/believe,’ a Ghanaian shrine concept

As part of this research thirteen 2014 Third Year students of the New Testament Greek II class studied “Greek imperative” and did a critical study of the word *pisteuete* (see Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2013) “believe” which appears twice in John 14:1. The students were sent out to six shrines in and around Kumasi and they interviewed traditional priests and priestesses on the etymology of the word *gyidi* found in the Bible. They found out from the priests and priestesses what they do to make people who come to their shrines believe in the gods. (The shrines are: Asuo Manyam Shrine at Tafo, visited March 13, 2014; Nana Abebresse Shrine, Meduma, visited March 14, 2014; Nana Bona Shrine, at Aprade, visited March 17, 2014; Okomfo Serwa Shrine, Ejisu, visited March 24, 2014; Tigare Shrine, Donyina, visited March 24, 2014; Tano Buor Shrine, Kodeeapagya near Offinso, visited March 24, 2014).

Okomfo Aua of Asuo Manyam Shrine, Tafo says that, *gyidi* (belief) means relying on the *abosm* (gods) that, the help one has asked from them will come to pass. For instance, when people come to the shrine to ask for protection from the gods, they are given something in the form of concoction to drink; alternately they are given a ritual herbal bath. Their trust in whatever they have drunk or have been bathed with works and yields success; that constitutes what is called *gyidi*. Okomfo Serwah of Ejisu says, *gyidi* means “taking something and eating it into one’s system for it to manifest into reality.” According to her, making incisions on parts of the body, or taking ritual bath or applying something on one’s body all go into explaining the word *gyidi*. Of the three methods, the *okomfo* (priest or priestess) decides on the appropriate one depending on the help one seeks. Nana Kwabena Adjei, the *Obosomfoô* of Tano Buor Shrine gives the history of the word *gyidi* that strengthens the etymology as given by the *akomfo* cited above. He says, “In the olden days people visited shrine solely for protection and prosperity. Whatever request was made, libation was poured and afterwards *kwadu* (banana) or *bayereto ne kosua* (mashed yam with egg) or *borôde tone kosuaanankatie* (mashed plantain with egg or groundnuts) was given to the person seeking help to eat. Whilst eating, the *okomfoô* prays and says: ‘*Dee wagyeeredieyi, Nana nom nngyina so nyew’abisadeemma won amfandaseemmere won.*’ (What you have accepted to eat, may the ancestors and the gods grant your request so that you would in turn bring thanks offering to them). In accepting and eating the food, one has actually reposed a strong confidence or trust in the gods and ancestors of being capable of making one’s dreams come true. Priests and priestesses from the other shrine gave similar answers to the etymology and their perceptions of belief citing varying examples.

4. Discussion

One thing that runs through the interviews is that the *akomfoô* from the various shrines visited link the word *gyidi* in the New Testament with “taking and eating” something physically that one trusts will become a reality in one’s life. Could it be that during the translation of the Bible into the Ghanaian mother-tongues under study, the translators visited shrines to find out the appropriate contextual word to translate the words “believe” and “belief/faith”? If so then they may have applied unknowingly the *Skopostheorie* (*skopos* meaning purpose), an intercultural communication approach. This approach gives indigenous readers of the Bible an opportunity for their voices to be heard in the translation process. The approach allows the indigenous readers to supply certain terminologies that will help translate

certain biblical concepts and make them understandable by the reading community. (For a discussion see J. A. Naudé, 'An overview of recent developments in translation studies with special reference to its implication for Bible translation', *ActaTheologica*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2002. (2) Nathan Esala, 'Skopostheori: A Functional Approach for the Future of Bible Translation in Africa?' *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 15(2), 2012.

The akomfoô's understanding and interpretation of "belief/believe" is similar to the Samaritan woman's understanding of what it means to drink the 'living water' that Jesus gives. The woman asked Jesus: "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water" (John 4:15). The later verses of John 4 reveal that drinking the living water that Jesus gives means believing in him. In John 4:16-24, the woman believed in Jesus as "a prophet"; and in verse 25-30 as "the Christ." It also portrays how religious indigenous Ghanaians are. It compares with the thought of Kwesi Sarpong (1974, 2002) that in indigenous Ghanaian communities, religion is more than an attempt to relate with deity; it is a way of life that consists of beliefs and practices; and with Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2014) who says that, the rendering of *deisidaimoneste,rouj* "very religious" as "religion" *jami*-(Dangme Bible, 1999), and "worship" *ôsom*(Asante-Twi Bible, 2013) means that religious people have objects of worship; and what they do as they worship constitute "religion."

As noted in this paper, belief/believe in itself is vague; it must go with practical activities that strengthen the bond between the object and subject of worship. Thus Jesus offers "living water" to those who believe in him; and they partake of his body and blood during communion services. Similarly, devotees to the gods of Ghanaian traditional shrines are given food and drinks, to strengthen their bond with the deities. What they are given to eat and drink constitute belief/faith – *gyidi* (Akuapem and Asante-Twi); *gyedzi* (Fante); *hemôkâyeli* (Ga); *hemi kâyemi* (Dangme); *xôse* (Ewe). This paper is in line with Charles Nyamiti's (1994) proposition that African Christology is broadly a discourse on Christ in accordance with the mentality and needs of the people in the black continent; and more narrowly, a systematic and scientific elaboration of reflections on Christ in keeping with African concerns and thought forms (cf. Magesa, 2010).

The major contribution to this paper to academia is that it has used the Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics approach to explain what it means to believe in Jesus. By so doing it has created a link between Biblical Studies as an academic discipline

and Bible Studies done in Ghanaian churches in mother-tongue Bible reading communities. This paper has the potential of creating a global understanding of the relationship between 'drinking the living water of Jesus' and 'believing in him'.

Conclusion

There is a relationship between "drinking the living water" that Jesus gives as recorded in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar (John 4:1-15), and believing in Jesus. Believing in Jesus as rendered by some Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the New Testament literally means "taking and eating Jesus." There is a semblance of this understanding of "belief/believe" in a practice in some Ghanaian traditional religious shrines, where people who seek help and protection from the gods, are given something to eat or drink, after which, when what they have taken in begins to work in their lives, they put their trust in the gods.

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