

A Critical Study of Matthew 18:15-18 in New Testament Greek and Selected Akan Mother-Tongue Translations: Implication for Peace-Making in Ghana

Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, PhD Candidate

Stellenbosch University, South Africa, and Pentecost University, Ghana

Ebenezer Tetteh Kpalam, PhD

Pentecost University, Ghana

[Doi:10.19044/esj.2024.v20n2p127](https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2024.v20n2p127)

Submitted: 03 December 2023

Accepted: 23 January 2024

Published: 31 January 2024

Copyright 2024 Author(s)

Under Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0

OPEN ACCESS

Cite As:

Asamoah E.F. & Kpalam E.T. (2024). *A Critical Study of Matthew 18:15-18 in New Testament Greek and Selected Akan Mother-Tongue Translations: Implication for Peace-Making in Ghana*. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, 20 (2), 127.

<https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2024.v20n2p127>

Abstract

Recent global research reveals a world characterised by increasing fragmentation, diminished peace, and mounting risks for future generations. Diverse conflicts, ranging from familial to national issues, persist, even among individuals sharing the same faith. In Africa, nations like Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, the Central African Republic, and Sierra Leone grapple with severe consequences of conflicts. In Ghana, pockets of ethnic discord impact education, healthcare, and social services, prompting the emigration of skilled professionals. Despite ongoing peace efforts in Ghana, effective approaches are crucial. With over 70% of Ghanaians identifying as Christians, contextualising peace-making within sacred texts becomes imperative. In this exploration, the study delves into a biblical approach, specifically scrutinising Matthew 18:15–18 through exegetical analysis in Greek language and mother-tongue hermeneutics. These approaches reveal a convergence between the biblical author's original meaning conveyed in the Greek language and its interpretation in the mother tongue. The paper advocates private conflict resolution to avoid gossip, involving witnesses if needed and church leaders if the issue persists. Disciplinary measures may be necessary, emphasising personal dignity and adherence to God's will. The paper significantly contributes to conflict

resolution knowledge, providing valuable insights for fostering peace in Ghana and beyond.

Keywords: Bible translation, conflict, peace-making, Book of Matthew, mother-tongue, exegesis, New Testament

Introduction

Nelson and Quick (1977) define conflict as any situation in which incompatible goals, attitudes, emotions, or behaviours lead to disagreement or opposition between two or more parties as a fact of life and are, therefore, inevitable. It happens in any human gathering or association, leading to strained relations or antagonistic interactions.

According to the Global Network of Religions for Children (2018), the world today is gradually becoming highly fragmented, less peaceful, and unsafe for both present and future generations because of conflict. It is immersed in an environment of tension, vehemence, falling values, injustices, and reduced tolerance, threatening the present and posterity, who deserve a peaceful and better quality of life.

Conflict can also emerge when individuals possess divergent values, opinions, needs, and interests and cannot reach a mutually acceptable resolution. This happens anywhere: in families, marriages, communities, and nations. Conflict even happens among people of the same faith, such as Muslims and Christians. One would expect that conflict should be uncommon among Christians; Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, teaches his followers to live in peace. He was very emphatic in his teachings that not living at peace with others is inconsistent with the Christian faith (*cf.* Mark 9:50). It is an undeniable fact that conflict hinders peace between families, communities, nations, and religions, as well as among believers.

The core issue driving these conflicts is a misunderstanding between the parties involved in these acts. These misunderstandings, according to Mustajoki (2014), often lead to complications or troubles and conflicts such as furious arguments, litigation, assault, anxiety, broken relationships, destruction of assets, loss of production, war, and deaths and injuries in our everyday lives, which makes it difficult for people to co-exist in a peaceful atmosphere.

In Africa, countries like Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Central African Republic, and Sierra Leone have all experienced conflicts with damning consequences. Some countries experienced human rights abuses and humanitarian crises resulting in the death toll of citizens, while others faced health and medical crises, leading to epidemics such as measles, yellow fever, and cholera, and serious effects on household food security, causing food hunger. Economic and financial

systems also slowed down to a point in some nations where certain sectors, such as cocoa and coffee exports, became paralysed, leading to massive layoffs (Obeng, n/d). In Sierra Leone, for instance, authorities created an amputee camp to house about 20,000 amputees.

Ghana has witnessed violent conflicts on a small scale or within a geographical space at places such as Dagbon, Bawku, and between Nanumba and Konkomba, as well as between the people of Nkonya and Alavanyo, unlike the African nations mentioned above where conflicts have been witnessed on a national scale. Notwithstanding, “Ghana’s current image of peace and stability is worthy of attention” (Tsikata and Seini, 2004). The Global Peace Index (2022) places Ghana in the fortieth position in the world and first in Africa. This means that Ghana is going through a period of relative stability compared with its neighbouring countries. Thus, the country has the fewest conflicts and misunderstandings among other African countries. It does not mean there is no conflict, but it is comparatively low.

The aforementioned conflicts have resulted in various impacts on the populace. Tsikata and Seini (2004) provide an account of the toll that conflicts have taken on human life and property in Ghana. During periods of conflict, peaceful economic activities become unfeasible. Looting and arson have been prevalent themes in the majority of the country’s conflicts. The emigration of personnel, including educators and healthcare professionals, from conflict-affected regions has a negative impact on the provision of education, healthcare, and additional social services. In certain instances of conflict, there has been the destruction of physical infrastructure, including educational and healthcare facilities, resulting in the loss of valuable teaching materials and the burning or looting of health resources. In addition to the human and property toll, the expenses associated with upholding law and order have consistently been excessive and inadequately accounted for, resulting in a strain on the country’s financial resources. Violent conflicts have a significant impact on national security, casting doubt on the purported cohesiveness and unity of Ghanaian society.

An appropriate approach or method should be employed to handle conflicts in homes, families, marriages, and among people and religious groups, such as Christians, for peaceful coexistence in Ghana (and the world at large). This could be achieved when offending parties engage in peace-making as a fundamental component of community development, personal growth, and the survival of our planet. The Global Network of Religions for Children (2018) asserts that “[p]eace underlies our quality of life and the fabric of our communities, and as our weaponry becomes ever more powerful, our very survival as people on this planet depends on it.” At the heart of every faith community and culture lies a need to advance peaceful coexistence to enhance productive, meaningful lives and sustainable societies. That is why

Christians are commanded to live at peace with everyone (Mk. 9:50; Rom. 12:18; 14:19; Heb. 12:14), as it repairs broken relationships between people affected by a destructive misunderstanding and reforms institutions.

How then should Ghanaians handle conflict to enable them to live at peace with their neighbours and loved ones in order to live as one family and repair broken relationships? This paper seeks to put forward a biblical approach towards making peace among individuals to enable Africa in general and Ghanaians in particular to enjoy stability and peaceful coexistence.

Methodology

This work employs exegetical approaches in both the Greek language and mother-tongue hermeneutics models. According to Fee (1993), the exegetical method strives to discover the biblical author's original intended meaning in the text. It talks about undergoing a careful exercise to historically investigate the Bible with the objective of coming up with an exact and useful interpretation. Mother-tongue hermeneutics determines the translation of the text into indigenous Ghanaian languages and its significance to the readers. It tries to interpret the Scriptures by employing the home language—the generally accepted language the benefactors of the translated work have known and are familiar with from their infancy—to make it meaningful and culturally relevant.

Extensive data are obtained from lexicons, commentaries, Bible dictionaries, books, journal articles, and any other relevant materials that were useful in the research.

The new testament on peace – making

The theme of peace-making holds a prominent place in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament (Paffenroth 2016). The teachings and principles of the Word of God strongly encourage believers to actively seek peace, reconciliation, and harmonious relationships with others. Ezeogamba (2019) underscores the importance of understanding and practicing reconciliation and peace, asserting that these steps are crucial for valid and conscious efforts capable of making significant sacrifices.

While Nipkow (2003) suggests that the impact of the Bible, especially the New Testament, on global and local peace challenges is subjective and influenced by individual beliefs and interpretations, Villiers (2006) argues that, for many, the Bible, particularly the New Testament, provides profound spiritual and moral guidance, highlighting principles such as love, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Adam & Kyeremeh (2022) propose that embracing the church's foundation on biblical tenets, especially those related to peace, can contribute to fostering societal harmony. Individuals and communities adhering to the

teachings of the Bible, specifically the New Testament, often find strength and inspiration to actively participate in the pursuit of peace (Paffenroth 2016; Ezeogamba 2019; Nipkow 2003; Villiers 2006; Adam & Kyeremeh 2022). By actively pursuing this approach, the potential arises to cultivate stability and harmonious coexistence in Ghana and throughout Africa, thereby mitigating localised conflicts.

Peace-making efforts in Ghana

As stated earlier, Ghana has a relatively low conflict index. The country is often considered peaceful and stable and has not witnessed a nationwide conflict. However, this does not mean there are no pockets of conflict that require peace-making efforts. According to Inssiful (2017), Ghana has witnessed pockets of conflict in areas such as chieftaincy, farmer-herdsmen, and politics. Paolo (2020) argues that the farmer-herdsmen conflict in the Agogo of the Ashanti Region is the most complex one. It has been observed that many of the conflicts in Ghana are ethnic in nature and, as a result, have traditional factors underpinning them. The Akans, being the largest ethnic group in Ghana and widely spread across the country, have the potential to influence peace-making efforts in the nation and beyond. As a result, they could influence peace-making efforts in the nation and beyond.

In Ghana, different levels of society employ several approaches to handle various forms of conflict. In some instances, the Government will constitute a committee or commission of inquiry to investigate the causes and effects of the conflict and initiate peace-building efforts. Inssiful & Bukari (2022) observed that in the Dagbon conflict, for example, the government established the Mate Kole Committee of 1968 and the Ollenu Committee of 1972 to handle the issue. Another approach is the use of police and the military to bring calm and peace in some instances. Authorities usually employ this approach to halt open confrontation among parties and facilitate the establishment of peaceful dialogues through the formation of agreements (Inssiful & Bukari 2013). For example, in the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Agogo in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, this was one of the approaches used in the peace-making efforts. Furthermore, parties in other conflicts also seek adjudication through the law court. For example, in the Dagbon case, the Supreme Court adjudicated the matter (Inssiful & Bukari 2022). However, it is observed that peace-making efforts through the court system have not been effective and, in some cases, have resulted in several tensions between the parties after the court decision. Another approach is conflict resolution led by civil society groups or organisations. Non-Governmental Organisations and Faith Communities, such as churches and mosques, have been involved in some peace building efforts. It is observed that peace building efforts by civil society organisations are more effective than Government-led approaches

since, in most cases, civil society maintains neutral positions on the matter (Inssiful 2017).

Bukari (2013) records that a number of conflict situations in Ghana have been protracted because of a lack of indigenous approaches to peace-making. This implies that there is a need to identify peace-making approaches that are contextual and relevant to Ghanaian culture. Some instances of conflict have witnessed unsuccessful results due to the dynamics of the peace-making approaches and efforts. Bukari therefore advocates for indigenous peace-making and suggests that this approach should incorporate all spheres of society, such as economic, social, political, cultural, and religio-spiritual dimensions (2013). It implies that indigenous approaches should be grounded in the beliefs and worldviews of the people. For this approach to be effective, the chiefs, elders, and religious leaders should lead it. These leaders already command respect in Ghanaian society. Religious leaders have become frontline personnel and are often called upon in times of crisis, as observed by Osafo (2015). The significance of religious leaders in upholding social stability and promoting peace-making endeavors in Ghana cannot be overstated. The incident involving Oyerepa FM and Manhyia¹, wherein a politician allegedly made derogatory remarks against traditional authority in Asanteman through the radio station's platform, resulted in the management of the radio station seeking the intervention of traditional rulers and officials from the Methodist Church of Ghana. The traditional rulers and officials from the Methodist Church of Ghana interceded on behalf of the radio station, resulting in the granting of clemency.

Given that more than 70 percent of Ghanaians profess to be Christians, conflict resolution and peace-making efforts and approaches should be grounded in the Christian faith. This is because the Bible is the chief authority in decision-making on matters of the Christian faith. This implies that peace-making efforts that find their approaches and expressions in the Christian faith and are informed by scripture are more likely to contribute significantly to peace building in Ghana.

The religious texts contain numerous messages promoting peace, yet one particular message stands out prominently. Jesus Christ, the central figure of the Christian faith, is attributed with this statement. The instructor imparts knowledge on the pursuit of personal peace as a means to achieve collective well-being. The reference in question is located within the biblical book of Matthew 18, specifically in verses 15 through 18. What, then, is the approach used by Jesus in promoting reconciliation among disputing parties?

¹ The aforementioned location serves as the official seat and residence of the Asantehene, who holds the position of Monarch within the Ashanti Kingdom. It is situated in Kumasi, the administrative centre of the Ashanti Region.

Exegesis of Matthew 18:15-18

Background to the Text

According to tradition, Matthew the Levi, who was a tax collector or publican and was called by Jesus to be a disciple, authored the initial Gospel (Mark 3:18; Matthew 9:9; 10:3; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Early church writers affirm the authorship of Matthew, in agreement with Tenney (2003). According to Vanlaningham (2014), the prevailing scholarly consensus is that the composition of this gospel took place in Antioch during the 80s A.D., subsequent to the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD. Additional internal evidence corroborates a date preceding 70 A.D. The estimated time frame for the occurrence in question is believed to be within the years 50 to 90 A.D. (NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, 2016).

The writer, a learned Jewish Christian of the early period, possessed a considerable degree of erudition. The author produced a literary work that features a Jewish theme. The text appears to have been intended for Jewish followers who held differing views on the interpretation of the Law. The author Vanlaningham (2014) posits that Jesus of Nazareth held the titles of Messiah, Son of David, King of the Jews, Immanuel, and King of the world. As per Ladd's (1994) analysis, the book delineates the introduction of Jesus as the Messiah (1:1-4:16), presents a vivid account of his public ministry in Galilee (4:17-16:20), unveils the actual objective of his messianic mission in the form of rejection and death through the confidential instructions imparted to his disciples (16:21-18:35), portrays the Messiah's encounter with the official leadership of Israel (19:1-25:46), and culminates with his agony, demise, and resurrection (26:1-28:20). The author of this discourse has structured the book into five distinct "discourses" that comprise Jesus' teachings on discipleship (chapters 5-7), mission (chapter 10), parables (chapter 13), relationships (chapter 18), and the future (chapters 24-25) (Ladd, 1994). This categorization is a meticulous compilation of Jesus' utterances. Asamoah (2022) suggests that Matthew included the five discourses in the book to give the impression that he fashioned his work after the Pentateuch or the novel Torah. As per his account, Matthew has classified the discourses into five distinct lessons pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven. These include the Sermon on the Mount (The Ethics of the Kingdom), comprising chapters 5-7; The Commissioning of the Twelve (The Mission of the Kingdom), featured in chapter 10; The Parables (The Nature of the Kingdom), discussed in chapter 13; Community Instructions (The Governance of the Kingdom), expounded upon in chapter 18; and The Olivet Discourse (The Future of the Kingdom), spanning chapters 23-25. After the ascension of Jesus into heaven, a speech is delivered to culminate each of these lessons. Tenney (2003) categorises the discourses of Jesus in the book into six distinct sections. These include John's proclamation (3:1-12), the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29), the Commission

(10:1-42), the meaning of forgiveness (18:1-35), denunciation and prediction (23:1-25:46), and the Great Commission (26:1-28:20), each of which is presented in various parts of the book.

The text under study in Greek

Ἐὰν δὲ ἀμαρτήσῃ ἑῖς σε ὁ ἀδελφός σου, ὕπαγε ἔλεγξον αὐτὸν μεταξὺ σοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ μόνου. εἴαν σου ἀκούσῃ, ἐκέρδησας τὸν ἀδελφόν σου· εἴαν δὲ μὴ ἀκούσῃ, παράλαβε μετὰ σοῦ ἔτι ἓνα ἢ δύο, ἵνα ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων ἢ τριῶν σταθῇ πᾶν ῥῆμα· εἴαν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτῶν, εἰπὸν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· εἴαν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας παρακούσῃ, ἔστω σοι ὡσπερ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης. ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅσα ἔάν δήσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται δεδεμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ὅσα εἴαν λύσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται λελυμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ.

Transliteration

Ean de hamartēsē eis se o adelphos sou, hypage elegxōn auton metaxu sou kai autou monou. ean sou akousē ekerdēsas ton adelphon sou. ean de mē akousē, paralabe meta sou eti hena ē duo, hina epi stomatos duo marturon ē trion stathē pan rhēma. ean de parakousē autōn, eipon tē ekklēsia. ean de kai tēs ekklēsias parakousē, estō soi hōsper ho ethnikos kai ho telōnēs. Amēn legō hymin, hosa ean dēsētē epi tēs gēs estai dedemena en ouranō kai hosa ean lusētē epi tēs gēs estai lelumena en ouranō.

Delimitation of the text

In the remotest context, the text under study is about Jesus' rebuke of His disciples for their pride and desire for worldly grandeur when they asked who was the foremost in God's kingdom (18:1). The disciples were frequently preoccupied with the issue of greatness. They appear to ask this question as if Jesus has previously selected someone among them as the greatest, whom he will appoint for the most prominent leadership position within the administration he will soon establish, or as if they want Jesus to choose amongst them the prominent one to occupy the top position in the soon-to-be-established government. Jesus rebukes His disciples for their arrogance and desire for earthly grandeur, which prompts Him to teach them the qualities and attitudes of citizens of the kingdom: humility—having the heart of a child and caring for God's children (18:1–14), honesty—dealing with sin or correcting another believer (18:15–20), and forgiveness—"letting go" of one's offences unlimited times (18:21–35). In the immediate context, the text falls under how a believer should handle another when one sins against the other. The text describes how the Lord Jesus Christ instructed Christians to get along with such individuals.

Structure of the text

The text is made up of five verses (18:15–18), with each being dependent on itself, though each derives full meaning from the other. The text consists of four main parts—18:15; 18:16; 18:17; and 18:18—but is further divided into seven sub-headings.

Jesus' Method of Peace-Making

Part One

Ean de hamartēsē eis se o adelphos sou, (Matt 18:15a)

The sentence begins with the conjunction *Ean* (*Ἐάν*), which is a conditional particle making reference to time and experience, introducing something future but not determining before the event whether it is certainly to take place. This is followed by *de* (*δέ*), which gives the certainty and exact period for the occurrence of an action. What, then, is this action? *hamartēsē eis se o adelphos sou* (*ἁμαρτήσῃ εἰς σὲ ὁ ἀδελφός σου*). Thus, when a brother sins against you now or at that moment. According to Thayer (1999), the noun *adelphos*, the subject of the sentence, means a brother from the same parents or only one parent, as in Matt 1:2; 4:18; one connected by tie of the Christian religion, as in 1 Cor. 7:15; having the same national ancestor, belonging to the same people, countryman, as in Acts 13:26; or a fellow believer, united to another by the bond of affection, as in Matt 23:8. This could also mean any fellow man. All these hold in this context in the sense that some of the disciples shared common parentage, were all of one faith or religion, and were all Galileans or Jews. In effect, Jesus was telling them that they could hurt themselves individually or someone outside their camp could hurt them. The subject offends the object. By parsing, the object *σὲ* is a second-person singular, meaning that Jesus in addressing the group, spoke to one person, possibly Peter, as he was their leader. In other words, he was telling each one of them that a brother can sin against them individually. Jesus' use of *adelphos* was possibly the result of the male dominance of his disciples. This does not exclude women.

hypage elegxōn auton metaxu sou kai autou monou. (Matt 18:15b)

What should the disciple who receives the effect of the action of a brother do? He must *ὑπάγε* (*hypage*) the brother. The verb is in the imperative mood, which commands the disciple to make a move to meet the brother, and *ἐλεγξόν* (*elegxn*), thus confute or admonish. He must not wait for the brother to come to him, but must go to him and convict, refute, or confute what he did to him (Thayer 1999). On why the disciple should not wait for the brother, Wiersbe (2007) gives the reason that the brother may not even realise what he has done. Or, even if he did it deliberately, the disciple's attitude of humility, submission, and love will help the brother repent and apologise. This releases the disciple from the feelings of sadness, insomnia, trouble with memory, and

clinginess that come as a result of depression and worry. The disciple must keep the engagement with the brother between themselves. The disciple must keep the engagement with the brother private. The disciple is not to tell others what the brother did but must go to him directly. Informing others makes them (third parties) lack consideration for the brother, which tarnishes his image. It even becomes worrying when the brother does it unknowingly.

ean sou akousē ekerdēsas ton adelphon sou (Matt 18:15c)

The essence of the disciple having a private conversation with the brother is for him to (*akousē*) hear or listen to the case of the disciple in order to (*ekerdēsas*) win him as a brother, not to win arguments. On why going with the intention of winning the brother is better than not winning the argument, Wiersbe (2007) believes that there is the possibility for the disciple to lose the brother when he tows that line, for it can create a stressful atmosphere, hostility, and anger. The disciple must approach the brother's actions with humility and avoid introducing unrelated issues in order to win him over. On the other hand, the brother must give ear to the disciple's submission by way of comprehending and understanding complaints and not assume a deaf role. He should take time to hear what the disciple is talking about. He should avoid any distractions that may hinder his listening; the disciple must perceive him as actively listening.

Part Two

***ean de mē akousē. paralabe meta sou eti hena ē duo, hina epi stomatos duo marturon ē trion stathē pan rhēma.* (Matt 18:16)**

The next verse begins with a conjunction, connecting the previous sentence to bring out its meaning. In the event that the brother is not saved from the sin he commits against the disciple by way of the private engagement, Jesus provides the alternative. Jesus tells the disciples to *ean de mē akousē. paralabe meta sou eti hena ē duo, hina epi stomatos duo marturon ē trion stathē pan rhēma*. Thus, the disciple should take with him one or two more witnesses, so that upon the testimony of one or two witnesses, every word may be strengthened. Jesus tells the disciple that he should invite one or two more people to affirm what they will see, hear, or experience what will transpire, when the brother persists in not accepting his faults (Thayer 1999). These persons may be adults or elders and not children. They become witnesses in both a legal and historical sense. In a legal sense, they have first-hand knowledge of the incident and can give testimony at the public court, gathering of believers, or wherever so that their testimony can be admitted to the condemnation of an accused brother (*cf.* Deut. 19:15). And in a historical sense, they have become spectators to the incident and are in the best position to recall it. The witness or witnesses take records of the conversation between the disciple and the brother (the offender).

Part Three

ean de parakousē autōn, eipon tē ekklēsia. (Matt 18:17a)

The next verse starts with the conjunction *ean* which connects the previous text. When the brother *parakousē*, disobeys or fails to hear or accept his fault in the presence of one or two more witnesses, the disciple must take the matter to the church—the assembly of Christians gathered for worship, as in 1 Corinthians 14:19, 35. They are people hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ who observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs according to regulations prescribed for the body’s sake (Thayer 1999). They are also united into one body, as in Acts 5:11; 11:22. The disciple, together with the witness or witnesses, must bring the behaviour of the brother to the attention of the group united into one body, of which he (the brother) is part, for redress. At this point, the matter that started between two people privately is now out in the open for the whole church, manned by religious leaders, to see with the intention of winning the brother.

ean de kai tēs ekklēsias parakousē, estō soi hōsper ho ethnikos kai ho telōnēs. (Matt 18:17b)

If the brother *parakousē*, fails to listen to the body of believers to whom the matter has become open, *estō soi hōsper ho ethnikos kai ho telōnēs*; meaning, the disciple should see the brother as a pagan or tax collector. Thus, the brother should be considered someone who is alien to the worship of the true God or considered a sinner by the disciple. The disciple, not the witnesses or the church should see the brother as such. The possessive pronoun *soi* is in the dative second person singular, meaning Jesus was referring to the individual disciples but not the collective. Thus, the individual disciple who is not listened to by the brother should recognise the brother as an unbeliever, not the whole church. The essence here is that the disciple cannot treat the brother as a spiritual person, for he has forfeited that position as a believer. The disciple should treat him as one outside the church (the pagan or Gentile, as in Gal 2:14), not hated but not held in close fellowship. In this case, the disciple will now follow the brother towards winning him for Christ as an unbeliever, for Christ came to seek, find, and save the lost. At this point, the disciple would marshal the appropriate ways of winning unbelievers over to the brother in order to save him.

Part four

Amēn legō hymin, hosa ean dēsētē epi tēs gēs estai dedemena en ouranō kai hosa ean lusēte epi tēs gēs estai lelumena en ouranō. (Matt 18:18)

In addition to the disciple recognising the brother as an unbeliever, the church should also discipline him. Jesus begins his statement with *Amēn* “truly” to support the decision of the church that *hosa ean dēsētē epi tēs gēs*

estai dedemena en ouranō anything the called-out people, disciples, or church shall bind on earth no matter the number of times shall have been bound in heaven, and *hosa ean lusēte epi tēs gēs estai lelumena en ouranō* anything they loose on earth no matter the number of times will be loosed in heaven. Thus, whatever determinations they make in conformity with the directions for their conduct towards the offending brother will be accounted just and ratified by the Lord. In explaining further, Barnes (2005) opines that whatever you [the church] shall do in the discipline of the church shall be approved by God, or bound in heaven. According to Wiersbe (2007), when a church disciplines a member, it examines and disciplines itself; the church cannot discipline others if it is not disciplined.

Summary of Text

In the event that a brother who is also a member of the faith or church community transgresses against a fellow disciple, it is imperative that the latter does not adopt a passive stance and await the former's initiative to make amends. The disciple who has been wronged must promptly approach the offending brother and confront him, presenting evidence to refute or challenge the wrongdoing. It is advisable to maintain confidentiality between the parties involved, with the objective of persuading the brother to reconcile rather than prevail in a dispute. Upon conducting a confidential dialogue with the individual, the adherent ought to extend an invitation to one or two individuals to act as observers during the disciple's subsequent attempt to reconcile. In the event of a failed attempt, the disciple ought not to terminate their efforts but rather proceed to bring the matter to the church, which refers to the congregation of believers who have assembled for the purpose of worship. Religious leaders head the church. If the brother exhibits disobedience or non-compliance towards the church, the disciple should regard him as an individual who lacks faith, as he has relinquished his status as a believer. It is imperative for the church to administer disciplinary action against the offending brother. Any decision made in accordance with the guidelines for their behaviour towards the transgressor will be deemed righteous and validated by divine authority. The disciple ought not to dismiss the non-believer but rather accompany them in their journey towards accepting Jesus Christ.

The Akan people of Ghana

The nation Ghana, located in West Africa and falling within the sub-Saharan region, is distinguished by the presence of numerous autochthonous languages, among which is the Akan language. The Akan ethnic group, also known as Akans, use the Akan language. The Ghana Statistical Service (2012) asserts that the Akans constitute a significant proportion of the Ghanaian populace, accounting for approximately 47.5% of the total population. The

southern region of Ghana is the primary location of the Akans. The favourable geographic positioning of the community enables the Akans to engage in farming, fishing, and hunting as viable livelihood options. Ghana is characterised by a multitude of linguistic divisions, with Akan being the predominant language spoken in nine out of the sixteen regions of the country. These regions include Ashanti, Eastern, Bono, Ahafo, Bono East, Oti, Western, and Central Regions (Ekem 2009; Agyekum 2006). The Akan language comprises a variety of dialects, namely Asante-Twi, Akuapem-Twi, Agona, Akyem, Mfantse, Kwahu, Wasa, Assin, Denkyira, Buem, and Bron. The aforementioned dialects exhibit mutual comprehensibility as they share a significant amount of vocabulary. In addition to their native languages, the Anyi (Aowin), Sefwi, Nzema, Ahanta, Efutu/Awutu, and Anum-Kyerepong-Larteh communities are also proficient in the Akan language (Ekem 2009).

Akan societies' religio-cultural beliefs, values, and etiquettes

Akan societies exhibit a shared set of religio-cultural beliefs, values, and etiquettes, which are manifested through their linguistic expressions, cultural practises, and overall perspective on the world. These, according to Asamoah (2020b), are realised in the Akan language, culture, and worldview. They are the religious beliefs, values, and etiquette that the Akan people have upheld since their earliest beginnings and for the vast majority of their history. Among these are respect for religious leaders and elders, and avoiding gossip and disgrace.

Respect for Elders and Religious Leaders

According to van der Geest's (1998) definition, an elder (*ɔpanyin*) is selected for the position of ancestor (*nana*). The individual proceeds to elaborate on his gentlemanly demeanour, characterised by traits such as civility, kindness, patience, and composure, which could be described as exhibiting a sense of coolness. The entirety of his virtues and qualities can be succinctly encapsulated by the term "honour." Adding on, Danquah (1944) characterises an "elder" as an individual who has conducted himself honourably in various aspects of life. These include engaging in marriage and being given marriage with honour, participating in open or private market transactions with honour, being a member of the *Asafo*, or company of fighting men, dining and drinking with honourable men, engaging in agricultural activities with honour, and experiencing both scarcity and abundance with honour. Others are raising children with honour, worshipping at shrines [or churches] with honour, enduring bereavement with honour, and most importantly, collaborating with others or acting independently to resolve family and other disputes, thereby promoting peace and prosperity within the family with honour. These characteristics of an elder (*ɔpanyin*) put them on a

pedestal and hold them in high regard by the community due to the wisdom they possess. Kariuki (2015) states that elders, who possess extensive experience and wisdom and enjoy a high degree of societal reverence, are often entrusted with the resolution of disputes. When they join the church, these elders are selected by the body of Christ to become religious leaders and lead the church of God.

Gossip and disgrace

Gossip, as defined by Ben-Nun (2021), is the private information about others shared in conversation or in print with others. Thus, it reveals some personal information about a person to others. Aside from the advantages gossip is likely to have, Ben-Nun, quoting Peter Vadja, remarks that gossip serves as a form of attack on another person to disempower them from being active and functioning. Therefore, many quarters and institutions ban gossip due to the potential damaging consequences it can bring. The Akans see themselves as one and find it difficult to attack themselves. One of their proverbs, “*Etire ne tire nka a, yenkase abontenefo nbefa nkodi,*” reflects this mindset, as it emphasizes that individuals tend to refrain from disclosing their personal attributes for the purpose of others deriving advantages from them. This clearly shows that Akans do not entertain anything that would deprive them of their advantages; gossip is one such thing. They do not entertain people who gossip about others because “*animguase mfata Okanni ba*” (disgrace does not befit an Akan).

Also, the preservation of honour is deemed a crucial virtue within Akan culture, warranting the utmost attention and effort. It is advisable to stay clear of any actions or behaviours that may result in *animguase* (a state of shame or disgrace) as opposed to *animuonyam* (a state of glory or honour). No wonder they have the proverb, namely *feree ne animguasee dee fanyinam owuo*, which posits that experiencing death is preferable to enduring shame and dishonour. This does not mean they prioritise personal dignity over obeying the will of *Onyankopɔn* (God). They prioritize openness and transparency consistently to avoid humiliation. This dedication ensures that their actions align with the acknowledged standards within their religio-cultural framework, thereby upholding a sense of respect.

Matthew 18:15-18 in selected Akan mother-tounge bible translations

Asante Twi Twerɛ Kronkron (The Asante-Twi Full Bible, BSG/UBS, 2012)/Asante Twi Twerɛ Kronkron (The Asante-Twi Full Bible, BSG/UBS, 2020)/ Asante Twi Twerɛ Kronkron (The Asante-Twi Full Bible, BSG/UBS, 2021)

Na se wo nua fom wo a, kɔ n kɔyi no aten, wo ne no nko ara ntam. Se ɔtie wo a, woanya wo nua. Na se wantie a, fa onipa baako anaa baanu ka wo

ho, na asem no nyinaa nnyina adansefoɔ mmienu anaa mmiensa anomu. Na se wantie wɔn nso a, kɔka kyere asafo no. Na se wantie asafo no nso a, ennee bu no se ɔbosonsonni ne togyeni. Nokore mese mo se, biribiara a mobɛkyekyere no asase soɔ no, wɔbɛkyekyere no soro; na biribiara a mobesane noo asase soɔ no, wɔbesane no soro. (If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him. If he listens to you, you have gained a brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. And if he refuses to listen, even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven).

The Holy Bible Twere Kronkron: New Testament English-Twi Version (2012)

Se wo nua bi ye mfomsoɔ a, firi adi kɔ na wo ne no nko ara nsiesie mo mmienu ntam. Se ɔtie wo a, woanya no aka w oho se wo nua bio. Na se wantie wo a, fa onipa baako anaase afoforɔ mmienu ka wo ho; adansefoɔ mmienu anaa mmiensa adansedie tumi ma kwaadubɔ biara nya nnyinasoɔ. Nanso se ɔpo se ɔbetie oyinom a, fa to asɔre no anim; na se ɔpo se ɔbjtie asɔre no nso a ennee fa no se ɔye anhununyameni anaase togyeni bi. Mepae mu ka kyere mo pen se, biribiara a mobɛkyekyere no wɔ asaase no wɔbɛbu no se wɔakyekyere no wɔ soro; biribiara a mobesane mu wɔ asaase so no wɔbɛhu no se wɔasane mu wɔ soro. (If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you. Whatever the misdemeanour, the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain the charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community, and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a gentile or a tax collector. In truth, I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven).

Nwoma Krɔnkrɔn (The Fante Full Bible, BSG/UBS, 2019)

Na se wo nua fom wo a, kɔ na keyi no atsen wɔ won ye no nko ntamu: se otsie wo a, enya wo nua. Na se oenntsie wo a, fa kor anaa ebien ka woho, ma asem biara ngyina adasefo beenu anaa baasa anomu. Na ɔpow de obetsie hcn a, kɛka kyere asɔr, na se ɔpow de obetsie asɔr so a, bu no de amanamamfo mu baako nye towgyenyi. Nokwar mese hom de, Biribiara a hom bɛkyekyer wɔ asaase do no, wɔbɛkyekyer no wɔ sor; na biribiara a hom besan wɔ asaase do no, wɔbesan no wɔ sor. (If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him. If he listens to you, you have gained a brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that every

charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. And if he refuses to listen, even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven).

Ahyerɛ Krongron (The Esahie Full Bible, BSG/BFBS, 2019)

Sɛ eliema yɛ wɔ tɛɛ a, kɔha ye mvomsoɛ kyire ye wɔ mmerɛ bɔ ɛne ye be munyɔ pɛ yɛɛ bɛwɔ berɛ ɔ. Sɛ otie wɔ a, anya eliema. Nakoso sɛ wandie a, fa sona ko anaa nyɔ boka wɔ nwo so, kyɛbɔ ɔkɔyɛ bc mmenia nyɔ anaa nza kɔyɛ edwire ne nwo adanzefoɛ ɔ. Na sɛ wandie asɔre ne koso a, ye de bu ye kyɛ bosoensolenie ne ɛtoɔdidelenie. Nahore nu, meka mekyire ɛmɔ kyɛ, nikyee biala bɔ ɛmɔkɔsangye nu wɔ aseɛ ye aso nen, bekɔkyekye ye nyamejso; yɛɛ nikyee biala bɔ ɛmɔkɔsangye nu wɔ aseɛ ye aso nen, bekɔsangye nu nyameɛso. (If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him. If he listens to you, you have gained a brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. And if he refuses to listen, even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven).

Analysis and Interpretations of the texts in the selected Akan mother-tongue Bibles

All the works employed the home language—the generally accepted language the benefactors of the translated work have known and are familiar with from their infancy—to make the translations meaningful and culturally relevant. Again, there is cultural relevance, authenticity, and appreciation of the translated text for the target audience or beneficiaries. This enables the Akans (or Ghanaians) to access the word of God in their local language or mother-tongue with the same impact as the original text.

However, the Holy Bible, *Twere Kronkron*: New Testament English-Twi Version (2012), translates *asɔre* as “community” other than church. This is not out of place; the usage of the word “community” refers to the body of believers living in a particular place—thus, the church community.

All translations also advise the need to confront the culprit and give proof to dispute the wrongdoing. They must do this alone and not gossip around which is frowned upon in Akan culture, for “*animguase mfata Okanni ba*” (disgrace does not befit an Akan). The preservation of honour is deemed a crucial virtue within Akan culture, warranting the utmost attention and effort.

After a confidential conversation, the adherent should invite one or two people to see the disciple's reconciliation endeavour. If an attempt fails, the disciple should bring the situation to the church, the congregation of Christians who have gathered for worship. Perhaps the Akan culture's reverence and deference towards elderly individuals and religious authorities will have a significant role in this context. The disciple should treat the brother as a non-believer if he disobeys the church. The church must discipline the brother; the rules for treating the transgressor will be righteous and approved by God. The follower should help the offender, who is seen as an unbeliever, to accept Jesus Christ.

Implication of Matthew 18:15-18 for peace-making in Ghana

The text guides Ghanaians, who are predominantly identified as Christians, on conflict resolution strategies, with a focus on promoting peace-making efforts in the event of interpersonal disputes.

According to the teachings of Jesus Christ, in the event that an Akan or a Ghanaian commits a transgression against a fellow brother or sister, either by birth or otherwise, the offended party should not anticipate the offender rectifying their wrongdoing. Instead, the offended party should promptly approach the offender and confront them with evidence of their actions in order to challenge or disprove their behaviour. The essence of this is to maintain the unity within themselves to live in harmony. It is advisable to maintain confidentiality between the parties involved in this issue, with the primary objective of enabling the transgressor to acknowledge, comprehend, and rectify their misconduct, rather than engaging in a dispute with the aim of emerging victorious. Maintaining confidentiality is paramount because the offender might not know what he has done wrong. Spreading the news or explaining to others instead of directly addressing the offender tends to result in gossip, which is not given the necessary attention among the Akans, in particular, and Ghanaians, in general. This is because Ben-Nun (2021), quoting Peter Vadja, remarks that gossip serves as a form of attack on the offender to disempower him from being active and functioning. In situations where a private conversation between two parties becomes difficult due to the offender's refusal to acknowledge their wrongdoing, it is advisable for the offended party to seek the presence of one or more witnesses from the same environment during subsequent attempts to reconcile. An elder could fulfill this role, as disputes are often resolved by elders who possess extensive experience and wisdom and enjoy a high degree of societal reverence.

In order for reconciliation to occur, it is imperative that the aggrieved party continue their efforts towards resolution in the event that the transgressor remains unwilling to acknowledge their culpability. It is advisable for the individual to bring the issue to the attention of the church leadership in order

to achieve a peaceful resolution. This could be the church the offender attends or otherwise, as long as it belongs to the body of Christ. The church, because the largest percentage of Ghanaians are Christians who belong to different denominations.

In the event that the transgressor refuses to acknowledge their transgressions, it is appropriate for the aggrieved party to publicly identify them as unbelievers. This is to enable the offended person to know how to relate to him, not as a mature Christian but as an unbeliever. Knowing this will enable the offended person to approach the offender as an unbeliever who needs to be won for Christ. The offended person would now devote much time to the offender by leading him to Christ. This is to enable the offended individual, who happens to be a mature Christian, not to relent in winning his brother but to make the necessary efforts to win the lost.

Subsequently, the church imposes discipline upon the transgressor, which is deemed righteous and validated by divine authority, emphasising the significance of personal dignity in adhering to God's will through the church. In situations where an Akan or a Ghanaian individual feels offended, refraining from severing ties with the offending party is recommended. Instead, it is recommended that the individual continues to engage with the offender in a manner that is consistent with the principles of evangelism, with the ultimate goal of leading the offender towards a Christian faith. Due to the perpetual nature of evangelism, the aggrieved individual must persistently pursue the offender, who is considered a non-believer, in order to lead them to Jesus Christ, regardless of any obstacles.

Conclusion

The impact of the Bible on global and local peace challenges is subjective and influenced by individual beliefs and interpretations. Nevertheless, for many, the Bible offers profound spiritual and moral guidance, emphasising principles such as peace and reconciliation. According to Adam & Kyeremeh (2022), actively embracing the church's foundation on biblical tenets, particularly those related to peace, can play a role in fostering societal harmony. As a result, Akan-speaking Christians in Ghana and communities dedicated to the teachings of the Bible, particularly the peace-making strategy elucidated in this paper, have the potential to foster stability and harmonious coexistence in Ghana and across Africa. Through the adoption of the conflict resolution approach delineated in this paper, individuals can actively contribute to the alleviation of localised conflicts. Following Jesus' guidance, the approach recommends addressing the offender privately, steering clear of gossip, and actively pursuing peace when necessary. If initial attempts prove unsuccessful, the next step involves involving witnesses and seeking assistance from church leaders. The approach

encourages treating the offender with the perspective that they may not have embraced the Christian faith, promoting a call for repentance and reliance on God's forgiveness. The church is then advised to implement suitable disciplinary measures, prioritising personal dignity and aligning with God's will. The study concludes that Matthew 18:15–18 provides a stronger foundation for peace-making efforts among the Akan-speaking Christians and Christians in Ghana as a whole. This approach, when pursued, has the potential to foster stability and peaceful coexistence in Ghana and across Africa, thereby reducing pockets of conflict.

Conflict of Interest: The authors reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All of the data are included in the content of the paper.

Funding Statement: The authors did not obtain any funding for this research.

References:

1. Agyekum, Kofi. (2006). "The sociolinguistic of Akan personal names." *Nordic journal of African studies* 15(2). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.53228/njas.v15i2.24>.
2. Asamoah, Emmanuel Foster. (2020). "The Bible and Akan Traditional Religious Values: A Search For Dialogue." *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology (MOTBIT)* 2(2): 78-86.
3. Asamoah, Emmanuel Foster. (2022). "Towards Solving the Synoptic Problem for African Biblical Exegesis." *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 11(5): 41-50.
4. Asante-Twi Twere Kronkron. (2012). "The Asante-Twi Holy Bible." BSG/UBS.
5. Asante-Twi Twere Kronkron. (2020). "The Asante-Twi Holy Bible." BSG/UBS.
6. Asante-Twi Twere Kronkron. (2021). "The Asante-Twi Holy Bible." BSG/UBS.
7. Barnes, Albert. (2005). *New Testament Commentary, Power Bible CD*. Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc.
8. Ben-Nun, Liubov. (2021). *Social Dynamics of Gossip*. Israel: B. N. Publication House.
9. Danquah, J. B. (1968). *The Akan Doctrine of God*. Second Edition with new introduction by Kwesi A. Dickson. London. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.
10. Ekem, John David Kwamena. (2009). *Priesthood in Context: A Study of Priesthood in Some Christian and Primal Communities of Ghana*.

- and Its Relevance for Mother-tongue Biblical Interpretation. Son Life Press.
11. Ezeogamba, A. (2019). Reconciliation (Matt 5:21-26): Inevitable Condition For Authentic Worship Of God. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.31227/osf.io/nruxa>.
 12. Fee, Gordon, D. (2002). New Testament exegesis: A handbook for students and pastors. Westminster John Knox Press.
 13. Ghana Statistical Service (GSS). (2010). Population and Housing Census: Summary Report of Final Results. Accra: Sakoa Press Ltd.
 14. Global Network of Religions for Children. (2018). "The Need for Peaceful Coexistence". Retrieved on August 22, 2022, <https://gnrc.net/en/blog/3942-the-need-for-peaceful-coexistence>.
 15. Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Peace Index 2022. (2022). "Measuring Peace in a Complex World" Sydney, June 2022, 10. Retrieved from <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.
 16. Kariuki, Francis. (2015). Conflict Resolution by Elders in Africa: Successes, Challenges and Opportunities. Available at SSRN: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3646985>
 17. Ladd, George Eldon. (1994). A theology of the New Testament. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
 18. Mustajoki, Arto Samuel. (2015). Causes of Misunderstanding, Revised by Matthew Billington. Retrieved from <https://375humanistia.helsinki.fi/en/arto-mustajoki/causes-of-misunderstanding>.
 19. Nelson, D. L. and Quick J. C. (1977). Organisational Behaviours Foundations, Realities and Challenges. New York: West Publicly Co.
 20. Nipkow, K. (2003). God, Human Nature and Education for Peace: New Approaches to Moral and Religious Maturity. London, Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315197234>.
 21. NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible. (2016). The Gospel of Matthew. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
 22. Nun, Ben. (2021). "Social Dynamics of Gossip." Israel: B. N. Publication House.
 23. Nwoma Krōnkrōn. (2019). The Fante Full Bible, BSG/UBS.
 24. Obeng, Ignatius Joseph. (n/d). Conflicts and Peace Studies, Lecture notes. Winneba, GH: University of Education.
 25. Paffenroth, K. (2016). "Greg Garrett, Entertaining Judgment: The Afterlife in Popular Imagination," *Theology*, 119(1): 50-52. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X15605461h>.
 26. Rydelnik, Michael, and Michael G. Vanlaningham, eds. (2014). *The Moody Bible Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

27. Tenney, Merrill C. (2003). *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnitt. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
28. Thayer, Joseph H. (1997). "Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 4th."
29. The Holy Bible (Twerɛ Kronkron). (2013). *New Testament English-Twi Version*. Ghana: New Word Publishing (GH) Limited.
30. The Holy Bible. (Twerɛ Kronkron) (2012). *New Testament English-Twi Version*. Ghana: New Word Publishing (Ghana) Limited.
31. Tsikata, Dzodzi, and Wayo Seini. (2004). "Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana" Working Paper 5. Retrieved from <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08cbb5274a31e00013e0/wp5.pdf>.
32. Van der Geest, Sjaak. (1998). "Ɔpanyin: the ideal of elder in the Akan culture of Ghana." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 32(3): 449-493.
33. Villiers, D. (2006). "Gee die Bybel nog vandag aan ons morele oriëntering oor kwessies soos homoseksualiteit," *Acta Theologica*, 26, 54-78.
34. Wiersbe, Warren W. (2007). *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*. David C Cook.