

# Matthew 18:15-17 as a Procedure for Addressing Offenses Between Christians

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## Introduction

Christians are not exempt from offending, or being offended by, one another. Sometimes one is justified in taking offense and sometimes a person has no grounds for having taken an offense. But, in both cases, a relational breach has occurred, and remedy must be sought. The pattern of Matthew 18:15-17 is a God-given procedure that provides a systematic method for addressing offenses between Christians. It is a procedure whereby conflicts can be addressed and resolution attained. In the course of the process, righteousness and justice are highlighted and sin is exposed. But even with a strict adherence to the rigid parameters of this procedure, there is still ample room for repentance and reconciliation - if that favored result is a possibility in a given incident.

Before discussing *how* an offense situation is to be addressed (with the potential of forwarding a mechanical procedure that might be used in a cold or legalistic manner) some other questions need attention. For example, when a problem does arise between saints, *who is to go to whom?* Also, what kind of attitudes should one *expect* to see displayed by the various parties in an offense situation? Should the *offended* saint be expected to have the same emotional, attitudinal or spiritual disposition as the *offending* saint? What about the disposition of any outside parties who are called into the fray? These are important questions and address of these will constitute the first section of this paper. This should help to introduce the human factor of emotions, actions, and reactions into a procedure which may otherwise be viewed as calloused or insensitive.

With these human factors as a backdrop, it is then appropriate to discuss the mechanics of how offense situations are to be worked through. The account of Matthew 18:15-17 does provide this material and will be examined in the second section of this paper.

If the findings in these first two sections simply become interesting discussions to then be relegated to a hypothetical or theoretical realm, little will have been accomplished. Therefore, the conclusion to this paper will include a proposition for implementing this procedure in a church or mission work. It is my conviction and experience that offenses do occur between saints and I hope to demonstrate a workable method for addressing this unfortunate reality. To ignore this reality, or deny it, is destructive and dishonoring to God. Offenders are too often allowed to go their way unscathed - while offended saints are left unacknowledged in their injury to work it out on their own. *Neither* of these scenarios is God's will for His Church. The purpose of this treatise is to demonstrate this assertion and then forward a method for dealing with offenses between Christians.

## Offenses in General

The first question to be asked in an offense situation is *who is supposed to go to whom?* Jesus gives two answers to this question. In Matthew 18:15-17, He directs *the one offended to go* and meet with the offender. This will be discussed later in greater detail. But we also find Jesus describing another offense scenario earlier in Matthew's gospel. He said,

*"If ... you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering"* (Mt 5:23-24).

Many commentators believe this passage refers to the worshipping Christian who realizes at the altar his own sin against another Christian. Calvin says, *"he means that as long as by our own fault we*

*stand at variance with our nearest there is no open access for us to God.”*<sup>1</sup> Homer Kent similarly believes that Jesus is addressing one who has wronged his brother.<sup>2</sup> These views are no doubt correct, but the command to act may go even further. If we know a brother has something against us - and sin against them on our part may not even be part of the mix - God still wants us to go. If Jesus' exhortation includes going even if we are convinced the perceived offense *is illegitimate*, then this matter of reconciliation between saints becomes an even weightier subject in God's program. Sherman Johnson has remarked,

*“It is idle for a man to try to maintain right relations with God through worship if he is not at peace with his neighbor .... It is better to leave the church at the most sacred moment of worship than to delay a reconciliation.”*<sup>3</sup>

So, who goes to whom? If sinned against, *we are to go* to the offender. If we sin against another, *we go* to the one offended. And it may be that if we know another Christian has even taken an illegitimate offense against us, *we are still commanded to go* and work toward reconciliation. Paul's statement may be quite appropriate here: *“If possible, so far as depends on you, be at peace with all men”* (Ro 5:12). In short, if a Christian knows that sin, or even perceived sin, has caused a relational breach, *the Christian is to go* and work toward reconciliation. This command to go is not dependent upon the source of the problem. If a breach exists, the saint is to go.

The next question inquires of the attitude of those involved in an offense situation. Should the offender, the offended, and any outside parties who get involved, all be of a similar attitude and spirit? The Bible can help us answer this by some specific passages as well as by some deduced Bible principles.

Sin causes damage. There are many references to sin against a saint being called, *“a stumbling block”* (Mt 17:1-2, Ro 14:13 and 1Cor 8:7-13). If I stumble *on carpet*, I may get up with little damage. But, if I stumble down *a set of cement stairs*, I may not even be able to get up because of the severity of injury. But, even if I did not fall with the stumble, *the shock* of the stumble will bring out an emotional response. Reactions may include anger, fear, dismay, and these may appear, disappear, and reappear as they displace one another. They may also exist in differing intensity levels at different moments. If we believe that sin has the power to inflict spiritual wounds - cuts, bruises, or breaks - should it be expected that a sin-damaged saint go to an offender in a mild and gentle, kind and patient, loving spirit? It seems somewhat unreasonable to demand such a demeanor from one injured by sin. Conversely, if we have sinned against another, should we expect that injured saint to receive us in a mild, gentle, loving, kind and forgiving spirit? Infliction of sin *does* something. Its penetration into the heart - rips and tears as it progresses. The extent of injury depends upon the severity of the offense. It should be determined if one has stumbled to level ground, or fallen down a set of stairs. Some degree of latitude must be granted *the injured saint* for the expression of various intense emotions. Failure to grant this latitude *is to deny the power of sin* and its evil nature. Obviously, the injured saint is not given license to sin with this latitude. Paul told the Ephesians to *“be angry, yet do not sin”* (Eph 4:26). Indeed, God Himself reacts emotionally when sinned against. When offended, He has expressed emotions of anger (Ex 32:10, Deut 31:16-18), dismay (Hos 11:8, Mt 23:37), jealousy (Ex 20:5, Ex 34:14), and our sin can grieve Him (Eph 4:30) or quench Him as well (1Thes 5:19). Obviously, God incurs no sin by these reactions.

Along with this latitude given to the offended saint in working through a sin injury, there are two other elements I believe should be considered. First, if the offender never acknowledges wrongdoing, then the relational breach caused by that offense may *never* be healed. The injured saint can be encouraged *“to overlook a transgression”* (Pr 19:11), or apply a love that *“covers a multitude*

*of sins*” (1Pet. 4:8) - but when there is no repentance on the part of the offending party, it is difficult at best for that relationship to be truly restored. The more important the particular relationship is to the injured saint, the greater the pressure can be on the injured saint who longs for reconciliation. Second, the injured saint must be allowed some time **to recover** from an offense - even if the offender does repent. It requires time to reflect on what happened, and why, and work through a sin injury before one can truly release it - thus gaining a genuinely restored relationship with the one who had caused an injury.

Each saint, and each situation, is unique and the offended party needs encouragement and support to successfully work through an offense situation. The procedure found in Matthew 18:15-17 addresses the needs **of the offended one** as expressed above. We shall see that the private meetings are designed to allow **the injured saint** to express his/her feelings, that unrepentance on the part of the offender is handled in such a way as to grant **the offended saint** a progressive vindication, and that there is reflection time available for all parties as the procedure for addressing the offense progresses.

Before examining the Matthew account, we should attend to one more topic. When examining **the spirit** in which offenses are to be addressed, there is one more group to consider. In Matthew 18, we shall see that Jesus calls the injured saint to bring others with him/her if the offense cannot be settled privately. What should be the spirit and attitude of these additional people? It seems to me that a brief look at Galatians 6:1 may give us some clues.

*“Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted”* (Gal 6:1).

The sin situation described here in Galatians is different from the sin situation of Matthew 18. It appears Paul is addressing a situation of a saint falling into some sin problem (drunkenness, or bitterness over something, etc.) while Jesus is addressing a situation of some conflict between saints. But the parallel to which I am calling attention is that both settings call for Christians outside the offense zone to active involvement in the problem. While Jesus does not tell us of the spiritual demeanor of these additional saints, Paul does do that in the Galatians account.<sup>4</sup> In commenting on the Galatians account, Raymond Stamm states,

*“What was needed was not harsh condemnation, but sympathetic help to get the lapsing member back into step with the Spirit. The Christian critic must be genuinely sorry for the other’s plight and do all in his power to restore him; ... The Spirit’s ‘repairmen’ are [to be] ... spiritual, endowed with faith and tact.”*<sup>5</sup>

Roy Coad says the reference to *“you who are spiritual ... refers not to any special order of spiritual men ... but potentially to any believer who is fulfilling [Ephesians] 5:25.”*<sup>6</sup> These *“repairmen”* are to be people of tact, with all the Spirit’s graces of gentleness, mercy, justice, and wisdom. This is to be the prevailing attitude of any Christians who are called to intervene in a sin situation. The situation may involve just one saint who has fallen into some sin (as in Galatians 6:1) or the situation may be a call to involvement in a Christian-to-Christian offense scenario (as in Matthew 18:15-17). These additional saints are to exhibit the attributes of God in their attitude and maintain as fair and objective an eye as possible.

In summary, I believe the spirit in which one goes when addressing an offense depends on one’s relation to that offense. The person hit directly by the sin must be given some latitude in his/her reaction. The offended saint needs opportunity to vent feelings and time to work through the effects of the offense. And when the offender shows no repentance, the offended one may need additional time and understanding as the offended saint works through the injury. When considering the spirit and

attitude of Christians who get involved in the offense scenario (and yet are not the primary parties in the problem) they should proceed with great care. Their goals should include gentleness, objectivity, wisdom, justice - all the Spirit's graces which can be procured and applied to the situation. If the desired goal of reconciliation can be obtained, these spiritual "*repairmen*" may become the catalysts and key to that end.

## **The Pattern of Matthew 18:15-17**

### **Introductory Statements**

Outside of the Matthew 18:15-17 account, there is no well-defined method for addressing offenses between Christians in the New Testament. There are only scattered procedural pointers. For example, the attitude for approaching one overtaken in a fault was just discussed (Gal 6:1). In Titus we find that a factious man is to be rejected "*after a first and second warning*" (Tit 3:10). The Corinthians, after gathering, were "*to remove the wicked man from among*" themselves (1Cor 5:13). Paul tells the Romans to keep their eye "*on those who cause occasions of stumbling... and turn away from them*" (Ro 16:17). The Thessalonians were to "*keep aloof from ... and do not associate with*" any brother who refused to work (2Thes 3:6,14). They were also to "*take special note of that man*" (2Thes 3:14). Even Paul's turning over of a professing Christian to Satan for discipline (1Ti 1:20) or flesh destruction (1Cor 5:5) lacks much procedural explanation, unless of course his declaration of that penalty *was in itself* sufficient to cause the reality to occur. Even though Matthew 18:15-17 appears to be a simple method which Jesus gave to his band of disciples so they could resolve disputes between Christians in their day, I hope to demonstrate the value of adopting this procedure as a formal part of any church's polity even now.<sup>7</sup> This simple process provides an effective method for offenses *to be fully discussed and hopefully rectified*. Furthermore, commitment to this procedure will help produce Christian tolerance within the fellowship, and that will result in at least an appearance of unity to the outside, unbelieving world. And if this procedure is practiced diligently, I believe a degree of genuine Christian unity will develop in time. Christians who may have formally split from one another will be better able to work through offenses and misunderstandings and will consequently be exposed to one another over a longer period of time. I am of the conviction, that if Christians have enough exposure to one another, they will be "*taught by God* (literally, 'God-taught') *to love ('agapao') one another*" (1Thes 4:9). God will cause (or allow) experiences to occur in such a way as to develop *genuine respect for one another* as human beings - and as Christians. This valuing, or esteeming, or respect for another is a very rudimentary aspect of the meaning of "*agapao*."<sup>8</sup> Each human being, and particularly those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, possess an intrinsic value which commands respect. The command to "*agapao*" is one that Christians can *willfully determine to do* towards one another. If each Christian will do this, each Christian will also eventually see the contribution that each saint makes to the Body of Christ. (See Appendix).

### **Exegetical Overview of Major Points**

Matthew 18: 15-17 reads as follows:

*"And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private, if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer."*

The textual witnesses of Matthew 18:15 **do not** all agree. While most of the New Testament textual variants are of little consequence, the variant found in verse 15 is of a greater consequence than the norm. The words, “*eis se*”(against you),” are omitted in some witnesses and included in others. As can be seen in the translation above, the NASB translators decided on omission of the phrase. If the words are omitted, then Jesus was telling the disciples that if their brother sins, they are to go reprove him in private. The sin could be any sin against anybody. If we expand this directive to the whole church, then each Christian is acting as his/her brother’s keeper with everyone overseeing everyone else in matters of sin violations. In some ways, this could have a very beneficial effect especially since we unwittingly sin in various ways and our brethren may see our errors better than we do. So, if “*eis se*” is omitted, each Christian has the duty to speak with any Christian he/she sees who has committed, or is committing, sin. If the variant **is included** in this verse, then the disciples’ responsibility to act **is narrowed**. When sinned **against, then** the trigger is pulled to begin the discipline process.

The Editorial Committee of the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament retained “*eis se*” in the text, but enclosed them in square brackets. These brackets are used “to enclose words ... whose presence or position in the text is regarded as disputed.”<sup>9</sup> When arguing that these words **should not be included** in the text, Metzger states these words may be “an early interpolation ... perhaps derived by copyists from the use of ‘*eis eme*’ in Ver. 21.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, copyists wanted this verse to be more compatible to Peter’s remark in verse 21, so they added the words “*eis se*.” When arguing that these words **should be** in the text, Metzger gives two possible reasons why some texts have left them out. First, the omission may have been “deliberate (in order to render the passage applicable to sin in general).”<sup>11</sup> Copyists who may have done this would have been expansionists wanting all Christians overseeing all other Christians in matters of deviant (sinful) behaviors. But Metzger entertains a second possibility for the omission of “*eis se*” when he states it may have been “accidental (for in later Greek the pronunciation of ‘a,’ ‘ai,’ and ‘ei’ was similar).”<sup>12</sup> I assume this means that copyists may have improperly heard “*eis se*” being read to them as the previous word, “*hamartasai*,” would have had a similar sounding ending.

When examining the textual witnesses, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus omit this phrase. These are both Alexandrian texts and are “usually considered to be the best text(s)”<sup>13</sup> as they are characterized by “brevity and austerity.”<sup>14</sup> They are also quite early textual witnesses. In spite of this, I lean toward inclusion of “*eis se*” into the text. My reasons are of an internal nature. First, the passage is in greater concord with Matthew 18:21 when Peter says, “Lord, how many times will my brother sin against me and I forgive him?” If it is assumed Peter’s question is immediately following Jesus’ words in verses 15 through 20 (and the introductory, “*tote, (then)*” in verse 21 seems to make this at least a tenable assumption), then Peter is simply repeating a couple of words Jesus had just said. This focuses Peter’s question on the issue of forgiveness without also introducing a second consideration of being the recipient of the sin violation. I think Peter was simply interested in the forgiveness issue and would have been parroting earlier words of Jesus as he was framing his inquiry. But, a second reason I favor inclusion of “*eis se*” is because I believe the overall tenor of the Matthew 18:15-17 passage has a very **personal tone** to it. We will see that the entire process is designed to instruct the individual saint on his/her responsibility when a sin situation occurs. I see this as a procedure for addressing personal offenses between individual saints. If “*eis se*” is omitted, it seems curious that **singular pronouns are retained throughout the entire passage** - especially if the offender remains unrepentant at the end of the process. Rather than a finally impenitent saint to be regarded by you (“*soi*” - singular number) as a Gentile or a tax-gatherer, it seems that an impenitent one should be regarded by the entire church as an outsider. As the committed sin was not necessarily against the individual saint (maybe some sin against an unbeliever to which the prosecuting saint was privy), for Jesus to retain the singular

pronoun, particularly in verse 17, simply is not reasonable. The plural personal pronoun, “*humin*,” should stand in verse 17 as the offender would have betrayed the entire church by his/her sin. I believe this will become more clear by the discussion that follows in the verse-by-verse exposition as the singular pronoun, “*soi*” is discussed in greater detail (pages 14 to 16).

The conclusion to view “*eis se*” as the original reading must be acknowledged as highly subjective. It is based upon personal deduction and intuition. Two of the guiding principles when examining variant readings from an internal perspective (with transcriptional tamperings being suspect), are that “*in general, the more difficult reading is to be preferred*”<sup>15</sup> and “*in general, the shorter reading is to be preferred.*”<sup>16</sup> This is especially true when it appears that a copyist may be trying to smooth out a passage in making it more concordant with another passage. One could certainly make that case when examining the passage that is in question. But, Metzger also states that “*textual criticism is an art as well as a science*”<sup>17</sup> and when stating the two principles quoted above he prefaces both by the words, “***in general.***” When examining the more difficult readings he states that “*sometimes a point is reached when a reading must be judged to be so difficult that it can have arisen only by accident in transcription.*”<sup>18</sup> In this instance, the omission of “*eis se*” seems to make such a reading. Without “*eis se*,” application of this procedure for addressing offenses quickly becomes quite confusing - particularly with the passage’s retention of “*soi*” (“*to you*” - singular). I believe Jesus’ intent in this passage was to provide a procedure ***for an offended saint***, who was offended by another saint, to be able to seek a remedy. To be such a procedure, “*eis se*” needs inclusion in the text.<sup>19</sup>

In turning attention to grammatical considerations, there are two major grammatical veins that run through this passage. The first is the repeated use of “*ean*” with the subjunctive mood and the other is the tense choices of the five imperative verbs.

“*Ean*” is a conjunction. It is a “*combination of ‘ei’ plus ‘an.’*”<sup>20</sup> “*An*” is a particle which indicates “*uncertainty or indefiniteness.*”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it is not unusual if we find “*ean*” “*used with the mood for uncertainty - the subjunctive. It introduces a hypothetical condition. Consequently, a statement introduced by ‘ean’ was not regarded with such certitude as one introduced by ‘ei.’*”<sup>22</sup> Machen defines this construction of “*ean*” with the subjunctive as a future condition. It “*refers to an indefinite future.*”<sup>23</sup> Our three verses of Matthew contain this construction **five times**. It seems to me the English words, “*supposing that*” or, “*let us hypothetically suppose that*” (avoiding a hortatory subjunctive connotation here) fits our context quite accurately. It captures the hypothetical nature of the discourse, its indefiniteness (broad and general without even a hint of present tense finger pointing) plus it captures the deliberate intent of the subjunctive in pointing at a future possible scenario. The real beauty of this construction in this context is that even though offenses will inevitably come (and these instructions will need employment regularly), Jesus puts the scene ***as one that does not have to happen***. Christians do not ***have to sin against one another***. They can choose otherwise. But, “*let us hypothetically suppose that*” they do not choose righteousness - what then? Here then comes the prescribed procedure and remedy. This subjunctive construction is a stroke of genius. The ability of the saint always to choose righteousness ***is given full due***, but the rebelliousness of the saint ***is also acknowledged*** as the Lord enunciates this procedure for dealing with offenses between Christians.

It is also noteworthy that all five of these subjunctives are in the aorist tense. It is quite natural that punctiliar action would be in view as no durative action is called for.<sup>24</sup>

The other primary major grammatical vein running through this passage involves the tense choices of the five imperative verbs. Even though some grammarians question the consistency of New Testament writers’ adherence to the common present, or aorist, Aktionsart while using the imperative mood,<sup>25</sup> I believe these five imperatives contain ***carefully chosen tenses*** of the **common** Aktionsart. The present tense has continued, durative action in view, while the aorist has ***no emphasis on repeated action***. When contrasting the two tenses, Moulton says the present tense imperative is “*less pressing,*

*less rude, less ruthless than the aorist.*"<sup>26</sup> Stated another way, an aorist imperative, in a punctiliar sense, **is a punch** - not a process. He also states that the aorist imperative carries a "*once and for all*" weight,<sup>27</sup> and "*is more or less restricted to precepts concerning conduct in specific cases.*"<sup>28</sup> In short, the aorist imperative is a sharp, clean, clear-cut command that is simply to be done - **not doing - but done**.

Another slightly different facet of the aorist imperative is that it "*can be seen as a command to commence some action.*"<sup>29</sup> This seems particularly appropriate in commands three and four where the brushed off offended one should take one or two more on a return visit and if rebuffed again, he should tell it to the church.

Moulton also points out that the "*difference in Aktionsart is best seen when both tenses lie together.*"<sup>30</sup> I believe an example of this tense assertion can be seen in this Matthew passage.

You **keep going** (present)

You reprove **once** (aorist)

You take witnesses **once** (aorist)

You tell the church **once** (aorist)

and you are to **linearly regard** the unrepentant one as an outsider (present).

These tense choices are of great practical importance to this system for addressing offenses. The offended saint is to persist in his pursuit to gain private audience with the offender until he gets that audience. This is then followed by three aorist punches (if needed), to then be followed by a durative condition towards the unrepentant.<sup>31</sup>

Along with these two major grammatical veins, there is also one pervasive syntax pattern. The entire passage is one of, "*if... then,*" statements. All five of the "*if*" clauses are introduced by "*ean*" with the subjunctive (the protasis) introducing a hypothetical situation. The "*then*" clauses are all result clauses (the apodosis) composed of a statement of fact, or else an imperative that is to prompt further action. The main structure is as follows:

**If** your brother sins against you, **then** go and reprove him (resultant commanded action).

**If** he hears, **then** you've won your brother (resultant and end of issue).

**If** he does not hear, **then** take witnesses (and go) (resultant commanded action).

**If** he does not hear them, **then** tell it to the church (resultant commanded action).

**If** he does not hear the church, **then** alienation (a resultant commanded action which also functions as the final result and end of procedural action).

Actually there are two "*if... then*" statements that are omitted from this passage. The first one should follow the confrontation by the offended party with his witness(es). It is implied that "**if** he hears them, **then** you have gained your brother." The same is true following the report to the church. It might be that Jesus did not want to offend his hearer's intelligence through redundancy by the insertion

of the obvious. But I think it is more likely that He wanted this procedure to be as unencumbered as possible in its flow from start to finish. Conciseness of, and obedience to, this process are Jesus' chief concerns. Repentance by the errant Christian at any point in the process ends the procedure.

Before a verse by verse treatment of Matthew 18:15-17, there are five Greek words that need treatment. They are “*elencho*,” “*kerdaino*,” “*rhema*,” “*parakouo*” and “*ekklesia*.”

### **“Elencho”**

“*Elencho*” is translated, “*reprove*,” or “*rebuke*,” in most English translations. Homer used it to mean, “*insult*”<sup>32</sup> or “*to scorn*” or “*to bring into contempt*.”<sup>33</sup> Later it picked up the facet of “*testing, examining, or inquiring into a matter*,”<sup>34</sup> or “*to investigate*.”<sup>35</sup> One was brought to shame through investigative exposure.<sup>36</sup> The Greek philosophers used “*elencho*” to mean, “*the logical exposition of the facts of a matter for the purpose of refuting the ... argument of an opponent. Thus the word developed its principle meaning of convince, refute.*”<sup>37</sup> But, another very important development in the evolution of meaning for “*elencho*” came through the Stoic philosophers. They transformed this concept “*from the intellectual argument to the application of philosophical ethics.*”<sup>38</sup> The impetus became one of “*correcting the practical principles of living.*”<sup>39</sup> The writers of the LXX used “*elencho*” in much the same sense as “*paideuo*” (“*to discipline, rear, or train*”). Thus, they virtually become synonyms - particularly in the wisdom literature.<sup>40</sup> Link points out that these parallel uses of “*elencho*” are brought into the New Testament.<sup>41</sup> Buchsel unknowingly picks up on this “*paideuo*” parallelism when he expounds on the definition of “*elencho*” saying, “*The word does not mean **only** ‘to blame’ or ‘to reprove’ nor ‘to convince’ in the sense of proof, nor ‘to reveal’ or ‘expose’ but ‘to set right’ namely, ‘to point away from sin to repentance.*”<sup>42</sup> In our context, “*elencho*” means, “*to show a person his/her error or fault for what it is - to convince that one intellectually and ethically or practically of its wrongness.*” And the reason for this energy expenditure is for the corrective training of the errant one - in other words, repentance. When a saint is offended, he/she is to go and expose the sin and its consequences as clearly as possible. The attitude is one of an appeal, calling on all the sensibilities of the offender, yet the one offended is not called upon to compromise principle or conviction.

### **“Kerdaino”**

“*Kerdaino*” is rendered, “*won*” or “*gained*,” in most translations. It means, “*to make to profit or gain an advantage, gain something or somebody for something; it can also mean to spare or avoid.*”<sup>43</sup> In Homer's time, the plural use of the verb also picked up a “*sense of ‘crafty counsels,’ ‘cunning,’ etc.*”<sup>44</sup> In the New Testament, “*kerdaino*” is sometimes used in a negative sense as in motives for base gain. But it is also used in a positive sense, as in Paul's missionary efforts with a view of gaining or winning souls.<sup>45</sup> In our context, if the errant one is convinced of his/her error and repents, then that Christian is gained or won. The other meaning of “*to spare or avoid*” is quite interesting, as a realigned saint might not only be spared from the discipline of the church, but might also “*avoid*” discipline **from the Father** if the sin (and possible habit of it) is checked. There is one final consideration of the meaning of “*kerdaino*” in our text. If we can rightly impose a view of “*crafty counsels*” or “*cunning*” in its positive sense, then this word interlocks with, and even enhances, our conception of the word, “*elencho*.” There would be a cunning craftiness (positive sense) to the “*elencho*” process. We would diligently be seeking in this reproof action to speak to that errant saint **in terms of his/her own interests**. We could expose how the error could be potentially detrimental to one's own place in life (and eternity) if it is left unacknowledged and/or persisted in. The gaining or winning of that errant one would have an element of positive cunning.

## “Rhema”

“Rhema” is translated, “word,” almost universally. Debrunner observes the root, “rhe-,” “only exceptionally ... forms a present, though the other tenses are common .... Thus, the sense is clearly nondurative, ‘to state specifically.’”<sup>46</sup> He points out this also holds true with derivatives of “rhema.”<sup>47</sup> The epigram of Simonides used it in reference to “military orders,” and Plato in reference to “pithy saying(s) in contrast to long speeches.”<sup>48</sup> In the LXX, “rhema” and “logos” are used quite interchangeably, but by New Testament times it has regained its specificity with rare exception.<sup>49</sup> So, “rhema” means, “that which is stated intentionally, a word, an utterance.”<sup>50</sup> In our context, one reason for the extra witness(es) is so that “*pan rhema*” - every single word, or each word - might be established. Even though “rhema” is found here as part of an Old Testament quotation, the presence of “pan” (“each, every”) precludes any kind of interchangeableness with “logos” in making “rhema” mean a broad or general accounting of the conversation. **Every word**, of this second meeting with the offender, is to be carefully established by the witness(es) who has been brought alongside the one who has been sinned against.

## “Parakouo”

“Parakouo” is usually rendered, “refuses to listen,” or some similar phrase. It is a compound word that can mean, “to hear amiss” (hear incorrectly), or it can mean, “to overhear.”<sup>51</sup> Eventually, “parakouo” “in the Hellenistic period meant, ‘not to be willing to hear,’ i.e., ‘to be disobedient.’”<sup>52</sup> But perhaps more in keeping with our context, “parakouo” can mean, “leave unheeded; refuse to hear”<sup>53</sup> or “disregard.”<sup>54</sup> There is no question the errant one **has heard and understands the complaint** - especially by the time the offense, and offender, is announced to the church. To “parakouo” the added witness(es), or the church, is an act of leaving unheeded, or refusing to hear, or disregarding their complaint. It might consist of an attitude where he brushes them off lightly, or it could be all the way to the extreme of a violent, passionate opposition to their contentions. But regardless of the attitudes or actions of the offender, one thing is certain - the issue has settled through the sieve of this procedure into two polarized positions.

## “Ekklesia”

“Ekklesia” is generally translated, “church.” The use of this term in Matthew 18:17 (and an earlier use in Matthew 16:18) has generated a great deal of controversy. As the church had not yet been created, there are some who maintain this term **was imposed on Jesus** by Matthew or some other writer in the early church. Bultmann states that “some words were attributed to Jesus which had originated in the community”<sup>55</sup> and he believes “ekklesia” to be one such word.<sup>56</sup> He also believes the entire Matthew 18:15-17 account to have been “created independently by the Church.”<sup>57</sup> In a similar vein, Walter Bundy maintains the entire passage “breathes a spirit very different from that found in many authentic words of Jesus.”<sup>58</sup>

Others believe “ekklesia” should “be understood in terms of a reference to the Synagogue.”<sup>59</sup> Plummer states, “evidently ‘the Church’ here cannot mean the Christian Church which Christ intends to build (16:18). It means the Jewish assembly.”<sup>60</sup> In rebuttal to this position, Harold Fowler states, “if the Lord meant ‘synagogue,’ why did He avoid using the word instead of church (‘ekklesia’)? No, He speaks proleptically, by anticipation, i.e. representing the future fellowship as if it were even then a present reality.”<sup>61</sup> Schmidt observes that the word “‘church’ is now so loaded a term that we cannot make do with it alone. Perhaps ‘church community’ might be recommended as a term to describe the ‘assembly (of God).’”<sup>62</sup> I believe this is an important observation to begin with - if one is going to be

able to look at the word “*ekklesia*” in a more objective light.

The basic meaning of “*ekklesia*” is “*an assembly*.”<sup>63</sup> It is a gathering together of people for some common purpose. The purpose of a “*called out*” group (a literal rendering of the preposition, “*ek*” and the verb, “*kaleo*”) can be either for **a secular theme** or, as in this case, for a spiritual Christian gathering.<sup>64</sup> Luke even uses this term **for the mob of Ephesus** that wanted Paul’s blood (Ac 19:32, 39, 41). When Jesus is instructing His disciples to take some unresolved situation to the church (“*ekklesia*”), I believe it is improper to impose some “*church*” concept upon His words. He was speaking to His disciples in simple terms they could readily grasp and apply. All He meant here, in my opinion, is that if the offender has brushed off this second reproofing party, then go ahead and tell it to your whole “**called-out**” group of which you all are participants. Jesus was using the term “*ekklesia*” in its simple meaning of “*a gathering*.” In this case, the purpose of the gathering happens to be the things of God - but this theme should not be imposed on the word itself.

## Verse-By-Verse Exposition

### **“And if your brother sins (against you) ....”**

“*Ho adelphos sou*” (your brother) - Notice this whole passage is in the context of brothers. Hence, this is a procedure to be used when offenses have occurred between two professing Christians.

“*Hamartasa*” (sins) - As an aorist subjunctive, there is no reference to durative action. It only takes one sin to trigger this entire procedure.

### **“go and reprove him”**

There is no conjunction between the imperatives, “*hupage elengxon*” (you go - you reprove). Two imperatives together form a syntactical device called an asyndeton.<sup>65</sup> Robertson states this construction “*often gives emphasis*.”<sup>66</sup> He also says, “*Winer finds asyndeton frequent in cases of a climax in impassioned discourse ... (and the) absence of the connective (i.e., “kai” [and]) gives life and movement*” to the particular text.<sup>67</sup> Moulton concurs there “*are probably asyndetic additions to the normal imperative*” citing “*hupago*” as one of those verbs often found in such constructions.<sup>68</sup>

### **“in private”**

The words are, “*metaxu sou kai autou monou*.” Literally this says, “*between you and him alone*.” Moulton maintains that this entire phrase is an Aramaic idiom meaning, “*privately*.”<sup>69</sup> That is undoubtedly correct, but in this instance a word-for-word translation can justify its awkwardness if the word order is retained. The word, “*monou*” (alone) stands at the end of the phrase emphasizing the total privacy of the meeting. “*Between you and him*” should sufficiently capture the private nature of the meeting, but the addition of “*alone*” syntactically emphasizes a cardinal rule in the first stage of this process. This meeting is to be totally private.

“*Sou*”(you) is an emphatic, singular personal pronoun. The offended saint is to act in solo. This initial stage calls the injured saint to act on his/her own initiative. There is risk involved, and it does take courage to follow and obey Jesus Christ.

### **“If he listens to you, you have won your brother ... ”**

This conversation will end in one of two ways. Supposing he hears you, then the case is closed. And you have won your brother. “*Kerdaino*” (have won), is in the aorist tense and Robertson believes the use of the aorist in this context is an example of the dramatic aorist.<sup>70</sup> which Dana and Mantey describe as an idiomatic “*device for emphasis*.”<sup>71</sup> Robertson also thinks this may possibly be a

gnomic aorist whereby emphasis in the text is then **not** a factor.<sup>72</sup> But in either case, the aorist would indicate a present sense. I prefer to see it emphatically - “*if he hears you, you win your brother!*” Success!

**“but if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you ...”**

There is an implied present tense imperative in this verse. You do not simply take beside yourself one or two witnesses (“*paralabe*”) but you also go (“*hupage*”) with them - **keep going with them** - until you attain this second meeting. We really have an implied asyndeton where I believe the emphasis of an asyndeton is abandoned for the more important syntactical/grammatical structure of the whole passage. The string (syntax) of aorists (grammar) at this point would be broken (reprove ... take ... tell) thus possibly clouding the “*boom! boom! boom!*” nature of the heart of this commanded procedure. The syntactical structure and grammatical nature of the use of the aorist tense outweighs the value of emphatic intermediate asyndetons in this verse and verse 17 as well.

“*Sou*” (you) is again singular. The pressure for singular initiative is retained.

**“in order that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.”**

“*Hina*” (in order that) introduces a purpose clause. The reason for the witness(es) is to establish **every** word.

The rest of this clause is a quotation from Deuteronomy 19:15. In that context, the judicial process was in view for the nation Israel. To be used in this context **validates the judicial nature of this procedure** when an offense has occurred.

“*Epi stomatos*” means, “*upon the mouth.*” This is “*picturesque phraseology*”<sup>73</sup> whereby “*the idea of ‘basis’ is a natural metaphor.*”<sup>74</sup>

It is syntactically significant that “*pan rhema*” (every word) is at **the end** of the sentence. This is often an emphatic device. “*Pan,*” as a singular, often means, “*every*” or “*each.*” When this is coupled with the definiteness of the word “*rhema,*” all falling at the end of a sentence, and also with the authority of an Old Testament quote - the impact is quite intensive. The seriousness and sobriety of the matter at hand is clearly expressed in this construction.

This stage of the procedure should ferret out false “*offenses.*” Some people imagine offenses when none have actually occurred. The witnesses are hopefully objective and wise enough to discern the legitimacy of the entire matter at hand. John Gibson makes a further observation saying,

“*Our Lord is not dealing with ordinary quarrels, where there are faults on both sides, in which case the first step would be ... to acknowledge our own (fault), but ... [it is] all on the other side.*”<sup>75</sup>

But even an imagined offense, if not dealt with, is a very real matter. Relationally, it has the same result as a genuine offense - a fractured relationship. So, the second stage of this procedure can provide a great service in identifying **unfounded offenses**. It is impossible for us to know how many saints have gone through their sojourn thinking they were sinned against by another saint when objective spiritual saints could have exposed the ungrounded nature of their offense taking.<sup>76</sup>

**“And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church let him be to you ...”**

Robertson refers to these two subjunctive clauses as “*concessive clauses.*”<sup>77</sup> And in this context they are “*climacteric.*”<sup>78</sup>

The most significant word in this verse is “*soi*” (to you). “*He must be to you ....*” In fact, this may be the most important word of the entire passage. “*Soi*” is a second person, personal pronoun, but the important element is its **singular number**. Jesus began this discourse by telling an offended person what he/she should do if sinned against by another professing Christian. The entire process has had primary focus on that singular sinned-against saint. That saint was to initiate **each step** in this process as he/she sought remedy for the violation. By the time “*soi*” is used here in verse 17, the process has been exhausted and the offender has continued in obstinacy - even in the face of the entire church’s condemnatory assessment. With this use of “*soi*,” it appears that Jesus is addressing His final imperative **to that saint who was originally sinned against** - just as He had done with each of the previous imperatives. But it is precisely at this point that commentators vary greatly among themselves on whether to treat “*soi*” as a **singular** pronoun or as a **plural** pronoun. If “*soi*” is interpreted as a singular, **then only the offended saint** is commanded to ostracize the impenitent saint. But, if “*soi*” is interpreted as a plural, **then the entire church** is commanded to ostracize the impenitent saint. Obviously, the practical consequences of one’s chosen position is great. Because of this, I believe it is of great importance to examine the varying positions in some detail.

There are three basic positions taken in relation to this word. The first position treats “*soi*” as a second person, plural pronoun. Its singular number is not even acknowledged. The second position acknowledges “*soi*” as a singular, but believes it is to be understood in a plural sense. The third position acknowledges “*soi*” as a singular pronoun that is to be understood as such.

### **Position One: “*Soi*” (“to you”) as a Plural Pronoun**

Interpreters of this group are either **unaware** that “*soi*” is singular - or else they are so convinced that “*soi*” is to be interpreted as a plural that **they do not even relate its singular number to their readers**. Since English does not have a written distinction for the pronoun “*you*” in the singular or plural, this type of gloss is easy to accomplish. The result of interpreting “*soi*” as a plural is as follows. Once the process has been exhausted the unrepentant one is to be deemed by “*you all*” - **the whole church** - as an outsider. As Gardner states, he is “*one who stands outside the circle of faith.*”<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, there is “*a radical redefinition of the relationship .... The community will no longer relate to the person as a fellow disciple, but as someone of the world.*”<sup>80</sup> Similarly, a commentary edited by Orrin Root, states that the unrepentant “*can no longer be considered a member.*”<sup>81</sup> If there is no repentance after the public hearing, the sin is considered grievous enough to result in expulsion from the Christian community. Hendriksen echoes this sentiment by stating, “*because of his own stubbornness he has lost his right to church membership, and it has now become the church’s painful duty to make this declaration.*”<sup>82</sup> When abstracting an article by R. Loria on this passage, John J. Collins says, “*the excommunication implicit ... applies both to the external forum (the member is cut off from this visible church) and to the internal forum (the sinner ceases to be a living member of the Christian body).*”<sup>83</sup> Laney also concurs with this position as he concludes, “*when the church leaders and congregation have made every effort to bring the sinner to repentance without results, they must then disassociate the offender from the church fellowship.*”<sup>84</sup> As an example of church polity use, the Mennonite Church places Matthew 18:15- 17 “*under nonconformity where the passage (is) applied to gossip.*”<sup>85</sup> This was to counter anyone who might “*gainsay the decisions of the bishops.*”<sup>86</sup> Constitutionally, this passage is used with “*soi*” being understood as a plural pronoun.

### **Position Two: “*Soi*” (“to you”) Acknowledged as a Singular but Applied as a Plural**

This position acknowledges that “*soi*” is a singular. The unrepentant offender is to be to you - singularly - an outsider. But proponents of this position maintain that **the original transgression is no**

**longer the primary issue.** Anyone going through this process without repenting is now guilty of a more grievous offense. Fowler states,

*“his obstinate attitude is divisive, separatist, dismembering, because he resists every try at dealing with the mini-schism separating him from one brother! Why should this virtual pagan contaminate the rest by his obstinate impenitence?”*<sup>87</sup>

In a similar vein, Lewis says,

*“the man who refuses to be reconciled to his fellow disciple has cut himself off from the church and while in this condition is not to be regarded as a true member of it.”*<sup>88</sup>

Gundry believes “*soi*” is singular primarily because of a parallelism “*with preceding instructions*”<sup>89</sup> and that “*all the disciples are to join in the ostracism.*”<sup>90</sup> Lenski maintains that “*soi*” “*mentions only the brother originally sinned against, but certainly what applies to him applies to all the rest, even as they finally act jointly, and the brother acts only in accordance with the verdict of his other brethren.*”<sup>91</sup>

Calvin stated that one who goes through this process without repenting is “*a despiser of the church*”<sup>92</sup> and should “*be removed from the believers’ fellowship.*”<sup>93</sup> But he does modify this position when he also states that the church should distinguish if the original offense was a “*crime*” or simply “*a fault.*”<sup>94</sup> The latter is a lighter offense for which “*verbal chastisement is enough.*”<sup>95</sup> “*But,*” he adds, “*shameful acts need to be chastised with a harsher remedy.*”<sup>96</sup> That remedy would be banishment from the church “*until repentance*” occurs.<sup>97</sup>

### **Position Three: “*Soi*” (“*to you*”) as a Singular Pronoun and Used as Such**

This is undoubtedly the minority position. John Lightfoot and Matthew Henry are the only two I found espousing this position. In speaking of Jewish custom, Lightfoot acknowledges that those who “*were obstinate ... after public admonition ... [had] a mark of infamy set upon them.*”<sup>98</sup> But Lightfoot calls his readers to recognize that Jesus said, “*Let him be ‘to thee’... not, Let him be ‘to the church’*”<sup>99</sup> as a Gentile or a tax-gatherer. Lightfoot believes this procedure is for private Christian-to-Christian offenses and though the offended one may be loosed “*from the law of brotherly obligation*”<sup>100</sup> others in the church do not have “*the same reason.*”<sup>101</sup> Matthew Henry takes this position but with a modification. In his commentary he expounds this entire passage **twice**. The first exposition comments on the procedure when addressing “***quarrels among Christians.***”<sup>102</sup> These are lesser offenses of the more personal and private nature. If the quarrel remains unresolved (and the offense is not in itself of an excommunicative nature), he maintains the offended one can “*break off thy friendship and familiarity ... [and] choose whether thou wilt have any dealings with him.*”<sup>103</sup> Henry then addresses all three verses again, but this time with “***scandalous sin***” constituting the offense.<sup>104</sup> He concludes this exposition by stating that if the offender remains impenitent, “*let him be cast out of the communion of the church.*”<sup>105</sup>

Although Position One has the majority of proponents, I believe it to be an unsatisfactory gloss. Position Two’s weakness is that an original “*minor*” offense balloons into an excommunicative offense just by moving through this procedure in Matthew 18:15-17. It gets swallowed up by a new sin. I am not at all convinced that an unrepentant offender automatically becomes “*a despiser of the church*”<sup>106</sup> or schismatic just because he/she fails to yield to a public pronouncement on some lesser sin. That offender would obviously be marked by the fellowship as stubborn or obstinate, but new charges worthy of excommunication should only be levied with the greatest of care and humility. Position

Three as held by Lightfoot is closer to the mark, but fails to take into account the original sin's nature. There are excommunicative sins that can occur **on the personal and private level** that should result in excommunication if the offender fails to repent. Matthew Henry's modification of position three seems to me to be the most reasonable. The personal and private lesser offenses can be addressed to a satisfactory conclusion without having the obstinate offender automatically excommunicated. But if the offense is of an excommunicative level, the impenitent reaps that result. Henry's modification on the third position makes this procedure practical for all levels of offense. Also, by treating "soi" as the singular pronoun that it is, the text is allowed to stand in its literal form. I believe this was Jesus' intent in the first place. This whole passage has a very singular personal tone to it from beginning to end. He is speaking as though to one person, an offended person, and is giving that one person instructions on how to deal with an offense from start to finish. His focus on that one has been consistently retained in the whole procedure. I believe that was quite intentional.

### ***"like a Gentile and a tax-gatherer."***

"Hosper" is translated, "like" or in some versions, "as." In this compound word, the particle "per" serves to "augment and bring out the force of 'hos.'" <sup>107</sup> "Hos" very often functions as "an adverb of comparison" <sup>108</sup> and in this context Jesus is making a comparison of an unrepentant Christian to the Gentile and tax collector. As a conjunction, "hos" can "introduce consequence' meaning, 'so that.'" <sup>109</sup> It seems to me that "hosper" is carrying **both** the adverbial sense of comparison and a conjunction sense of consequence.

Gentiles and tax collectors were two distinct groups. I assume the tax collector in this context is a reference to a Jew who was working for the Romans - collecting taxes from his fellow Jews. And Matthew knew this group well! My point is that if "kai" is simply translated "and," you actually have two parallel illustrations. But, if it is translated "even," **you have a progression of disdain.** "Let him be to you as a Gentile, an outsider, one ignorant and alienated from the things of God - but, **even worse, a tax gatherer - a traitor!**" The intensifying degree of disdain for the unrepentant, convicted-by-all offender, should be maintained in this comparison. The disciples felt this into the depths of their hearts - penetrating as a deep stake in light of that contemporary culture and political/religious atmosphere.

## **Resultant Translation and Conclusion**

The resultant expanded translation is as follows:

*"And hypothetically suppose that your brother sins, even singularly, against you. You must continue going until you gain an audience, expose his fault, while convincing him of its improprieties, between you and him alone. In this one-time private meeting, if he hears you, you win your brother! But, supposing that he does not listen, take with you one or two witnesses for the purpose that by the mouth of two or three witnesses this might be established - every single word. Supposing he brushes them off, you tell it to the church. And if he brushes off the church, then he must duratively be to you like a Gentile - even a tax collector; that is to say, like an ignorant outsider - even considered a despicable traitor."*

It is not the object of this procedure to damn an offender. The object is to provide a systematic progressive platform for addressing offenses between Christians. Reconciliation and repentance are the desired goals, but if these are not forthcoming **the offended saint is publicly vindicated** and relieved of

commanded pursuit of Christian duties toward that one. On the other hand, a repentant offender is to be forgiven, and all parties should strive to begin all things again fresh. Repentance, with accompanying forgiveness, equals healing and newness in relationship.

I believe Jesus gave the church a procedure for dealing with offenses between Christians that is fair and of great value. It is a simple procedure that covers almost all contingencies, regardless of human actions or reactions, with justice, mercy, and righteousness always being highlighted and sin always being exposed. All the complexities of human personality can be fairly accommodated under this procedural umbrella and all extenuating circumstances can be justly countenanced. The application of this process protects and honors God's name and reputation to those inside *and* outside the church. It also protects (and even honors) saints who have been violated by another Christian - and it grants an accused offender due process to be protected from false charges. Just about any and every offense situation, from the most "*minor*" to the most grievous, can be effectively addressed by obedience to the simple commands in Matthew 18:15-17.<sup>110</sup> But, that is indeed the catch. Like all the rest of the wisdom which God puts at our disposal, it is completely wasted if ignored.

I believe that the leadership of a church, or mission work, has the responsibility to see that offenses between saints are addressed properly. I believe they will be held accountable to God for their failure to do this - or rewarded for creating the climate in which this service to the saints is optimally provided. This entire procedure should be viewed, and promoted, *as one of the means of grace*. It can help erring Christians by providing a chance for repentance (thus sparing them from a more severe discipline from God) *and* it can bring healing to a sinned-against saint. The following recommendations are suggestions for the implementation of this procedure in any setting of a group of Christians.

A formal system within the church or mission through which offenses are to be addressed should be instituted. One facet of this system would be the appointment of Christians who were deemed "*spiritual*" (after the pattern in Galatians 6:1) - who would be available for the second stage in the process. They might be viewed as "*troubleshooters*" and serve in that position for a year at a time.

When attempts at private reconciliation fail, the offended saint would know that these troubleshooters were then to be called upon as the second meeting was to be pursued. There are several reasons why it would be advantageous to have these troubleshooters pre-appointed. For one, an offended saint would be more likely to continue the "*prosecution*" of the offender. The offended saint is already under the burden of the offense, and by stage two, he/she has the *additional burden* of a failed private meeting. Pre-approved troubleshooters would make it much easier for a rebuffed, offended one to be encouraged to move forward with the complaint.

Another reason for having pre-approved, pre-appointed troubleshooters in place is that it would be difficult for an offender to charge that the offended saint has gathered friends to then *gang up on him/her* with trumped-up charges. These troubleshooters have already been acknowledged for their objectivity, spirituality, and wisdom when they were commissioned in the first place. And, as one reflects further, why burden a rebuffed saint with having to decide who should accompany him/her in this second stage? Pre-appointed troubleshooters smooth the way for continued commanded action and also free the offended saint from worrying over whom the saint chooses to go with him/her. The appointment of troubleshooters before any incident has occurred, and before the emotional intensity of an offense situation occurs, *is a great service* for leadership to provide a group of Christians.

Along with these appointed troubleshooters, there does need to be some definition given to stage three. How is the offended one (supporting troubleshooters) to "*tell it to the church*"? Is this to be announced in the Sunday morning service when announcements are called for from the floor? Is a flier to be inserted in the bulletin? These are indeed absurd remarks, but how is this *telling* to be done? In my opinion, the leadership of the church/mission should be briefed, and then an agreed upon way to

tell the whole body should be pursued. Along with this announcement, a method should be forwarded so the whole church/mission can let the offending saint know of their **support of the findings and position** of the leadership of the church/mission (by this time, the offended one and the troubleshooters have established a solid case on the innocence of the offended one - and guilt of the offender). Perhaps this could be accomplished by means of a letter with signatures of the other saints. Also it should be clearly stated what repercussions the offender should expect if the impenitence is retained. For example, a private offense will mean the offended one has been vindicated by the church/mission and is relieved of pursuing Christian duties toward the offender. It may be worth remarking that this will have the effect of also naturally operating as a warning to other saints about involvement with the offender. If the offense is major, excommunication should then be explained.

Now what if the finally impenitent one refuses to leave the church or mission (assuming the offense was major)? I do not know what should be done in that case. Probably the offender will not want to continue being present anyway, but that circumstance would just have to be handled if it did indeed arise. Perceived possible future difficulties should not negate an implementation of this procedure in present settings. The benefits far outweigh the risks.

In outline form, here is the general format to be introduced and forwarded in a church/mission.

When an offense occurs:

1. Go in private to the offender.
2. If still unresolved, contact the troubleshooters and have them go with you for a second meeting with the offender.
3. If still unresolved, bring the matter to the church/mission leadership. The entire church/mission will be formally told of the infraction and the entire group will again appeal to the offender to repent (through a signed letter, etc.). Repercussions for continued impenitence will also be forwarded in this communique. A date for the offender to respond will be included.
4. If he/she still continues in his/her impenitence, then the forewarned repercussions will be implemented.

At this point, it may be asked how offenses by Christians **toward outsiders** (e.g. unbelievers) should be addressed. Remember, that by inclusion of “*eis se*” into the text, I opted for this passage to be viewed as instructions for Christians to deal with offenses **among themselves**. But, what if a Christian commits some sin **against an unbeliever**? What should be done? When discussing such a situation, Alexander Campbell states that “*those privy to it [should] notify the elders of the church ... of the fact, and of the evidence on which they rely.*”<sup>111</sup> The procedure I have forwarded could be altered slightly and be used in the above situation. If a saint knew of something another saint had done, he/she could notify the elders with the information, and one of the troubleshooters could be employed in the first private meeting. Obviously, the elders and/or troubleshooter need to approach such a situation quite carefully and gather information (perhaps even contacting the one[s] offended). This initial stage should be one of attempting to gather facts rather than approaching the situation in an accusatory manner. But the procedure outlined above could then be employed as written.

I believe that many, many Christians leave churches/missions quite often **because of unresolved, offense situations**. I am afraid that many times the situation has never even been

addressed on the private level. This creates several unfortunate and destructive scenarios. If the offended one simply leaves because an offense has no way for resolution, then the Christian group loses “*the good guy*” - and “*the bad guy*” continues operations within the fellowship. I am afraid, even at the moment of this writing, that my church has a longstanding member who has run off **many a saint** by his offenses. I believe I am beginning to pick up a pattern of behavior in which he targets individuals he wants out of the church. I have been told of this (by other longstanding members) and I did not really entertain this seriously until just very recently. My point is that I am beginning to fear that many solid saints have been lost to this particular church because this one saint has never been properly confronted, warned, and dealt with in the past.

On the other hand, I am also quite convinced that **offenders** often leave a group of Christians and simply go to another group - **without ever facing up to their deeds**. What should be done in this circumstance? I see two sides to this problem. First, I have long maintained that a receiving church/mission **does bear** the primary responsibility to know whom they are receiving into their midst. Did the transferring person leave their previous group in a sound moral disposition? I know this is rarely questioned as most churches/missions assume the best about newcomers. Also, I am afraid that when letters of transfer are requested, the old group may be so glad to have the offender leave, that they simply respond in a kind manner - optimistically hoping, and maybe assuming, the offender has changed. This leads to my next consideration. If an offender does leave with impenitence, does **the original body** have any responsibility to warn sister churches/missions when they know the offender is coming to them? I believe I can best address this by two examples from my own experience.

Several years ago, I was a staff person in a male Christian alcohol and drug rehabilitation program. The director (with board approval) innocently hired a convicted male child molester. He was from another area of the state, and apparently falsified his resume and application. The director received a call from an outside Christian who knew of this man’s background - and supplied the director with the names and numbers of authorities and others who knew firsthand of the objective findings. The director immediately followed up on this, and later that day I was delegated the duty to drive this new staff person back to his area. This was not a pleasant experience, but indeed necessary, and to this day I feel confident the “*informant*” saint provided our mission a great service.

On another occasion, a practicing homosexual was seeking to buy a street gospel mission where I worked. When his homosexuality was discovered and confirmed, the director would not sell to him. Weeks later, when I learned this man, and some of his companions, were going through membership classes at a large local church, I felt compelled to call the minister in charge of new members (it was a 5,000 member church) and let him know of our experiences with these men. Based upon his own inquiry, membership was denied and that area minister was extremely grateful to me. My point is that circumstances will dictate proper procedure and attitude many times, and I believe that each situation needs to be approached on a case-by-case basis with petitions for wisdom from on High.

A final duty that leadership must continually do is to make sure all the Christians of their group **use** the implemented system. The saints **must be taught** of its existence and purpose. This should be done in an exhaustive manner when a Christian **first enters the fellowship** of the church/mission. Then reminders should regularly go forth through the bulletin, Sunday School classes, preaching messages (or asides), etc. There are at least three reasons for this constant education. First, this procedure must be seen as “*the way*” to go about addressing offenses between the saints. They must be persuaded of its propriety and also internally commit themselves to it. Second, if Christians are not willing to pursue grievances in this prescribed manner, then they must simply be exhorted **to drop the matter entirely**. A system has been provided for grievance address and if he/she is not willing to use it, then his/her offense must not really be that important. The matter should be dropped, and the saint should get on about his/her Christian duties - and leave that “*offender*” alone. Finally, with a procedure like this in

place, there is no room for gossips or slanders of one saint toward another. If all the Christians of a given group would become committed to a procedure like the one outlined above (or at least the bulk of the Christians in a given group), when someone starts complaining about another saint, the complainer could immediately be directed to a proper way to handle that complaint. One could simply ask, *“Have you gone to talk to him/her about this thing that has offended you?”* If the answer is *“No,”* then the saint who is having his/her ear filled with the perceived offenses can direct that errant saint to handle the complaint in a proper way. I really believe that a concentrated effort to call saints to a proper understanding of Matthew 18:15-17 (with a purposing to practice it) would stifle much Christian pettiness - and call the saints to a higher level of Christian behavior. Great vigilance is necessary to keep Christians interacting with one another in integrity and respect.

I will be the first to assert that my proposed system may have opened up more questions than I have even begun to address. Also, it is possible that I have opened up some areas for mistakes to be made on several levels - as the pursuit for exposing sin is engaged. But, I am also convinced that even though mistakes might be made in the process of addressing offenses, if offenses are ignored between saints - ***that is nothing but a mistake.***

Jesus calls his followers to conviction, courage, righteousness and graciousness. All of these elements, in all their appropriate balances, are called into action when offenses do occur between saints. Any church, or mission, that has educated its members on the proper way to address offenses between saints, and then has also implemented a well organized procedure - has done themselves, and their members, a great service. This forethought and preparation will avoid a compounding of pain in situations already painful enough. It is my hope that the Church lives up to all of her high callings, and I hope this labor contributes to that effort.

## Appendix

It is in this context that I believe a proper understanding of one of the nuances of “*agapao*” (love) can be extremely important and helpful in the promotion of healthy Christian interpersonal relationships. But, before stating my position, a brief synopsis of the variant views of the word may be helpful.

There is a substantial linguistic debate among scholars on the meaning of “*agapao*.” In an attempt to define it, “*agapao*” is often examined by its own contextual and etymological roots and then contrasted with “*phileo*.”

When referring to pre-biblical Greek usage of “*agapao*,” Stauffer states that “*in the word ‘agapan’ the Greek finds ... little of the warmth of ‘philein.’ Its etymology is uncertain and its meaning weak and variable.*”<sup>112</sup> Among many varied examples of contextual meanings, Stauffer includes connotations of “*honoring, esteeming or preferences.*”<sup>113</sup>

Thayer maintains that “*agapao*” “*by virtue of its connection with ‘agamai,’ properly denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem*”<sup>114</sup> and should be viewed in this manner in its New Testament uses. Thayer is arguing that “*agapao*” should be viewed more as ***an act of the will*** - an act one can choose - which can even be commanded. There is almost a stoic element in this concept of love as one volitionally chooses whether one will respect, value or esteem (love) some person or thing. On the other hand, Moulton and Milligan take another approach. While they ***do*** acknowledge “*agapao*” in pre-biblical Greek ***as ambivalent*** in meaning, they then assert:

*“This is emphatically a case where the needs of a new subject take up a rather colorless word and indefinitely enrich it. In NT, ‘agapan’ is purged of all coldness, and is deeper than ‘philein ....”*<sup>115</sup>

This is a huge leap. Basically, this position would maintain that “*agapao*” is now heavily laden with ***the emotional element of love*** and is in no way inferior, or less intense, than any emotional rendering of the love found in “*phileo*.”

When defining “*phileo*,” Thayer says that it “*denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion.*”<sup>116</sup> Similarly, G. Abbott-Smith identifies a linguistic assertion that depicts “*phileo*” as a “*spontaneous natural affection, emotional and unreasoning.*”<sup>117</sup> He later defines “*agapao*” as “*the love of duty and respect,*” and “*phileo*” as “*the love of emotion and friendship.*”<sup>118</sup>

Louw and Nida hesitate to draw too sharp a distinction between “*agapao*” and “*phileo*” in their lexicon, but they do admit; “*There are probably some significant differences in certain contexts; that is to say, ‘phileo’ and ‘philia’ are likely to focus upon love or affection based upon interpersonal association, while ‘agapao’ and ‘agape’ focus upon love and affection based upon deep appreciation and high regard.*”<sup>119</sup>

While there are some instances where “*agapao*” and “*phileo*” seem to be used synonymously (i.e., 1Thes 4:9), there are many instances when these words are expressing different ideas. Moulton and Milligan infuse “*agapao*” with new meanings that have nothing to do with this word’s actual history. They impose their own New Testament theology of God’s love and nature upon “*agapao*.” This is tremendous license.

In opting for a simpler etymological progression of the uses and meanings of “*agapao*,” I have come to the following position. Christians ***can choose*** to value, respect or esteem one another (“*agapao*” a more stoic nature) without being required to love each other ***in some emotional sense*** (“*phileo*”). This is a critical element to Christian unity, Christian tolerance and Christian cooperation. God ***does not command*** that I ***emotionally*** love (“*phileo*”) some brother or sister (or even Himself),

but He **does command** that I **respect** him/her, **esteem** him/her, and **value** him/her ("*agapao*") - and Him, too! I can do that, and I have done that and, by His grace, will continue to do that - as that is an act of **my will**. Personally, I have found great freedom in these renderings of "*agapao*" and "*phileo*." When I have not felt **an emotional love** toward someone, I have found that I can respect, value or esteem that person - if for no other reason than the fact that God made him/her. I believe that "*agapao*," in this sense, is the true base upon which lasting Christian relationships can be built. And if one is committed to respecting others, then this procedure for addressing offenses becomes even more attractive. The entire process treats each individual **with respect** - while never compromising truth or righteousness.

## End Notes

All bolding (for emphasis) in all quotations have been added by me.

1 - John Calvin, "*Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: A New Translation*," Vol. 1, trans. A. W. Morrison, ed. David W. Torrence and Thomas F. Torrence (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans's Publ. Co., 1972), 186.

2 - Homer A. Kent, Jr., "*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*," ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 938.

3 - Sherman E. Johnson, "*The Interpreter's Bible*," Vol. 7, ed. Nolan B. Harmon (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1951), 296.

4 - I do think a case can be made that this Galatian account can be read as including a situation like the one described in the Matthew account. To be specific, a Christian who is refusing to repent in stage two or three of the procedure in Matthew (and that Christian has been clearly exposed as being in the wrong), he/she could be viewed as one who is caught, or entangled, in a trespass. If one can accept such a reading of this Galatians account, then the spiritual qualifications of the additional Christians as enunciated by Paul can be directly applied to the additional Christians of the Matthew account.

5 - Raymond T. Stamm, "*The Interpreter's Bible*," Vol. 10, ed. Nolan B. Harmon (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1951), 573.

6 - F. Roy Coad, "*The New Layman's Bible Commentary in One Volume*," ed. G.C.D. Harley, F. F. Bruce, H. L. Ellison (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 1501.

7 - While it is possible that Jesus addressed His disciples in Aramaic, I have assumed that the writer of this account was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax are all open to investigation for authoritative instruction even if Jesus did not speak this in Greek.

8 - "*The Analytical Greek Lexicon*," (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 2.

9 - Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, eds , "*The Greek New Testament*" (West Germany: United Bible Societies, 1975), xii.

10 - Bruce M. Metzger, "*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*," (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), 45.

11 - Ibid.

12 - Ibid.

13 - Ibid., xvii.

14 - Ibid.

15 - Ibid., xxvi.

16 - Ibid., xxvii.

17 - Ibid., xxviii.

18 - Ibid., xxvii.

19 - Obviously, because I am maintaining here that the shorter reading is what makes this passage too difficult so as to be viewed as the original, then the guiding principle to lean towards shorter readings as more valid is rejected as the shorter reading is, in this instance, being viewed as the problem itself - making for too difficult a reading. It may seem that I have pressed the material too aggressively in attempting to make a case for “*eis se*” to be included in the text. I probably have. But, it may be that the retention of the singular pronoun, “*soi*” throughout the entire passage makes a case for “*eis se*” to be understood even if it was never a part of the original text.

20 - H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, “*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*,” (New York: MacMillan Publishing Corporation Inc., 1955), 245.

21 - Ibid.

22 - Ibid.

23 - J. Gresham Machen, “*New Testament Greek for Beginners*,” (Toronto, Ontario: The MacMillan Company, 1951), 132-133.

24 - A. T. Robertson, “*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*,” 2d ed. (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1914), 848-851.

25 - C. F. D. Moule, “*An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*,” (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), 20-21, 135-136.

26 - James Hope Moulton, “*A Grammar of New Testament Greek*,” Vol. 2, Accidence and Word Formation (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1963), 75.

27 - Ibid., 76.

28 - Ibid., 74.

29 - Ibid.

30 - Ibid., 77.

31 - It must be admitted that often there are tense mixes that do not comply with the common Aktionsart. This is particularly true with many asyndetons and such a case could be made in reference to the first two imperative verbs in this passage. But, it is still just as possible that all the verbs of this passage do have deliberate and instructive Aktionsart of the common nature.

32 - Colin Brown, gen. ed., *“The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), s.v. *“Guilt, ‘elencho,’”* by Hans-Georg Link, 140.

33 - Gerhard Kittel, ed., *“Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), s.v. *“elencho,”* by Friedrich Buchsel, 473.

34 - Link.

35 - Buchsel.

36 - Ibid.

37 - Link.

38 - Ibid.

39 - Ibid

40 - Buchsel; Link, 140, 141.

41 - Link, 141.

42 - Buchsel, 474.

43 - Colin Brown, gen. ed., *“The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), s.v. *“Recompense, ‘kerdos,’”* by Burghard Siede, 136.

44 - Gerhard Kittel, ed., *“Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), s.v. *“Kerdos, kerdaino,”* by Heinrich Schlier, 672.

45 - Siede, 137.

46 - Gerhard Kittel, ed., *“Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), s. v. *“lego,”* by Albert Debrunner, 75.

47 - Ibid.

48 - Ibid.

49 - Colin Brown, gen. ed., *“The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan ; Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), s.v. *“Word, ‘rhema,’”* by Otto Betz, 1119-1121.

50 - Ibid., 1119,

- 51 - Gerhard Kittel, ed., *“Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), s.v. *“akouo,”* by Gerhard Kittel, 223.
- 52 - Ibid.
- 53 - Colin Brown, gen. ed., *“The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan ; Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), s.v. *“Hear, Obey,”* by Wilhelm Mundle, 175.
- 54 - *“The Analytical Greek Lexicon,”* 304.
- 55 - Rudolf Bultmann, *“Jesus and The Word,”* trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934), 125.
- 56 - Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed., *“The Expositor’s Bible Commentary,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), s.v. *“Matthew,”* by D. A. Carson, 369.
- 57 - Rudolph Bultmann, *“The History of the Synoptic Traditions,”* trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 146.
- 58 - Walter E. Bundy, *“Jesus and the First Three Gospels: An Introduction to the Synoptic Tradition,”* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1955), 325.
- 59 - Gerhard Kittel ed., *“Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), s.v. *“ekklesia,”* by Karl Ludwig Schmidt, 526.
- 60 - Alfred Plummer, *“An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), 253.
- 61 - Harold Fowler, *“The Gospel of Matthew,”* Bible Study Textbook Series (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1978), 3:747.
- 62 - Schmidt, 531.
- 63 - Thayer, 196.
- 64 - For examples of various uses, see Walter Bauer, *“Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,”* trans. F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 240.
- 65 - Robertson, 427.
- 66 - Ibid.
- 67 - Ibid., 428.
- 68 - Moulton, Vol. 3, Syntax, 342.

69 - Moulton, Vol. 2, Accidence, 467.

70 - Robertson, 842.

71 - Dana and Mantey, 198.

72 - Robertson.

73 - Ibid., 649.

74 - Ibid., 604.

75 - John Gibson, "*An Exposition of the Bible*," (Hartford, Connecticut: S. S. Scranton Co., 1904), 4:762.

76 - As an example, when I was a brand new Christian, the choir director of our church heard me singing one evening. He became convinced that I was supposed to be part of his choir. I had no desire to join the choir, but over the months he made it clear he felt I was burying talents, being unresponsive to his eldership (rebellious), etc. He gradually took offense at me (made known in several ways over the next three years). That was over a decade ago, and to this day I have no doubt in my mind that his offense was ungrounded. If he had been committed to this procedure, and if accompanying witnesses had been objective spiritual people, I am confident my reasons for nonparticipation would have been acknowledged favorably and my liberty in Christ would have been extended me in his presence. Conversely, had I been aware of this procedure and pursued it (he did malign me on a couple of occasions) I could have exposed his error. In my defense though, not only was I very young in the faith, I also did not initially realize he was really offended at me over this. My point here is that I believe unfounded offenses towards other saints have abounded throughout history - and continue to do so today. Christians have gone to their graves offended at some Christian - only to then find out they were unrighteously judging and/or censuring their brother or sister. I believe that proper use of this procedure would expose much more Christian pettiness and self-righteousness than we would like to believe is so.

77 - Robertson, 1027.

78 - Ibid., 1026.

79 - Richard B. Gardner, "*Matthew*," Believers Church Bible Commentary, eds. Elmer A. Martens and Howard H. Charles (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1991), 281.

80 - Ibid.

81 - Orrin Root, ed., "*Matthew*," Standard Bible Commentary (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing, 1967), 146.

82 - William Hendriksen, "*New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*," (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973), 701.

83 - John J. Collins, ed., An Abstract on R. Loria's, "*Legare e sciogliere' nella Chiesa primitiva alla luce della dottrina del Corpo Mistico*," Palcler 46 (15-16, 1967): in, *New Testament Abstracts* 12, no. 2 (Winter 1968):187.

84 - Laney, 361.

85 - Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, "*Defensive Structuring and Codification of Practice: Franconia Mennonite Conference*," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 20, no. 3 (July 1986):443.

86 - Ibid., 442.

87 - Harold Fowler, "*The Gospel of Matthew*," Bible Study Textbooks Series (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1978),3:749.

88 - Jack P. Lewis, "*The Gospel According to Matthew: Part II: 13:53 - 28:20*," *The Living Word Commentary*, ed. Everett Ferguson (Austin, Texas: Sweet Publishing Company, 1976), 58-59.

89 - Robert H. Gundry, "*Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*," (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 368.

90 - Ibid.

91 - R. C. H. Lenski, "*The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*," (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 702.

92 - John Calvin, "*Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*," vol. 2, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 21 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1231.

93 - Ibid.

94 - Ibid., 1234.

95 - Ibid.

96 - Ibid.

97 - Ibid.

98 - John B. Lightfoot, "*A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*," vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), 255.

99 - Ibid., 256.

100 - Ibid.

101 - Ibid.

102 - Matthew Henry, *“Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible,”* (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d. ), 5 :258.

103 - Ibid.

104 - Ibid.

105 - Ibid., 260.

106 - Calvin, 1231.

107 - Thayer, 682,

108 - Ibid., 680.

109 - Ibid., 682.

110 - The reason for the qualifiers above (*“almost”* and *“just about any”*) is due to at least one scenario with which I am not comfortable. On one occasion, a married Christian woman sinned against me. She had slanderously reported a situation to the Chairman of the Board of a home mission in which I was employed. The Chairman of the Board proceeded to demand an accounting from the Director, and the Director came to me, visibly shaken, demanding an accounting as well. In reality the Chairman of the Board and the Director were both in the wrong for their handling of the situation, but the root of the problem was the slander by the married Christian woman. As I pieced together the incident, it became clear that I needed to confront the offending woman. The amazing thing is I had never met her and I really felt I needed to talk to her and her husband. Maybe a married male is to go in private to a married female (and in some situations relationships have been familiar enough that I felt comfortable with that) but on this occasion I at least wanted the husband present so he would be able to know his wife was not being *“attacked.”* To be sure, this thinking on my part would be viewed by many as sexist, and if so ... so be it. But I believe it is appropriate to acknowledge at this point that even though this paper has been purged of all sexist language, it still stands that Matthew 18:15-17 was addressed to males and the passage is masculine in vocabulary and gender use. It is obvious that the third person singular verbs, in isolation, could be given a feminine rendering and several of the plural pronouns could be rendered feminine, but the only feminine noun in the passage is the word for *“church.”* My point is that there may indeed be an appropriate exception to this first *“private”* meeting when opposite sexes are involved, especially if married and if the parties are unacquainted or very nominally so. I think it would be proper for a church or mission work that seeks to employ this offense addressing procedure to look into this *“exception clause”* I am here forwarding and decide if it is valid or not. I believe it to be so.

111 - Alexander Campbell, *“The Christian System,”* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Company, 1901), 71.

112 - Gerhard Kittel, ed., *“Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), s.v. *“Agapao,”* by Ethelbert Stauffer, 36.

113 - Ibid.

114 - Joseph Henry Thayer, "*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*," corrected ed., (New York: American Book Company, 1889), 653.

115 - James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, "*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*," (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 2.

116 - Thayer.

117 - Abbott-Smith, "*A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*," (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1981), 3.

118 - Ibid., 470.

119 - Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., "*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*," (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), s.v. "25. Attitudes and Emotions."

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\_\_\_ . S.v. “*akouo,*” by Gerhard Kittel.

\_\_\_ . S.v. “*ekklesia,*” by Karl Ludwig Schmjd.

\_\_\_ . S.v. “*elencho,*” by Friedrich Buchsel.

\_\_\_ . S.v. “*kerdos, kerdaino*,” by Heinrich Schlier.

\_\_\_ . S.v. “*lego*,” by Albert Debrunner.

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# **Matthew 18:15-17 as a Procedure for Addressing Offenses Between Christians**

By Robin C. Calamaio

A master's thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Divinity Degree  
Dr. Bruce Shields, Advisor

Emmanuel School of Religion Johnson City, Tennessee 1992

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