MATTHEW 18.15-20 IN LIGHT OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

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ABSTRACT

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide some remarkable parallel texts to Matthew 18.15-20. In a recent article, F. Garcia Martinez shows that previous studies of these parallels are inadequate because they assume that a dependent relationship exists between Matthew 18.15-17 (as a tradition unit) and 1QS 5.24-6.1. He suggests that further investigation of these parallels would be helpful in understanding Matthew 18.15-17, as a tradition unit and in its literary context. This study seeks to do the latter—to compare and contrast Matthew 18.15-20 (the full unit) in its literary context with parallels from the DSS, in order to come to a better understanding of the correction process in the Matthean community.

Significant differences exist between the Matthean community and the Qumran community. The latter is rigidly hierarchical. It upholds a priestly level of purity within the community. In contrast, the Matthean community’s basic member is a “little one” and must not seek rank or title. Matthew’s Gospel stresses internal, not external purity. Although the communities of Qumran and Matthew have significant differences, they also have equally significant similarities. Both communities view themselves as living out the life of the Age to Come in the present wicked age. Thus, they both need a process of initiation and of correction, in order to distinguish who does and does not belong to the community.

There are three points of contact in the correction processes of the DSS and of Matthew. The first point of contact is the practice of rebuke. Both communities practice rebuke in accordance with Leviticus 19.18. The second point of contact is the use of the law of witnesses (Deut 19.15). Both Matthew and the DSS use witnesses in the correction process, though for different purposes. The third is their understanding of the consequences of correction—in some cases both the DSS and Matthew call for the expulsion of a member of the community. In both Matthew and the DSS, expulsion has eternal implications.
Acknowledgements

First of all, I am deeply grateful for the tremendous help and guidance of my thesis supervisor, Dr. Markus N. A. Bockmuehl. I would also like to extend special thanks to Homero Garcia Cover for graciously translating into English what turned out to be the most important secondary source for my thesis, “La reprension fraterna en Qumran y Mt 18,15-17,” by Florentino Garcia Martinez. I owe the idea for this thesis to Wayne Smith, who first pointed out to me that Matthew 18.20 belongs in the context of 18.15-19. Above all, I wish to thank my wife, Catherine Jane Dunn; even though she was busy working full time and finishing her own Master’s degree, she constantly encouraged me to finish this project.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandfather, Wallace Wilkinson Dunn, Sr. (November 21, 1897 - February 4, 1991), whose financial contributions to my education made this study possible.
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Abbreviations

I follow the abbreviations which the Society of Biblical Literature requires (“Instructions for Contributors,” JBL 107 [1988] 579-596). Others are as follows:

*Ant* - Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*

*B. J.* - Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* (War of the Jews)

*DCD* - *The Damascus Document* = CD

*DSD* - *The Manual of Discipline* = 1QS

*DSS* - Dead Sea Scrolls


*Nat. hist.* - Pliny, *Naturalis historia*

*Ref.* - Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium Haeresium*

Note: Unless otherwise indicated: New Testament translations are my own; all quotes from the DSS are from *DSSE* (since Vermes does not give line numbers I also provide the page number in *DSSE*).
CHAPTER ONE
The Present Need

Just over 40 years ago the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) came to light. Immediately scholars noticed that some of the scrolls evidenced a Jewish sect, which bore some remarkable similarities with primitive Christianity. Though scholars have at times tended to overwork these similarities, nevertheless, the DSS provide important background for the study of first century Judaism out of which Christianity arose. One area of parallel between the sectarian writings of the Dead Sea and the New Testament is community correction. In particular, the DSS exhibit some remarkable parallels with Matthew 18.15-20 which merit consideration. This is especially true since the Rabbinic literature provides no close parallels to Matthew 18.15-20,¹ and those which it does provide must be used with caution because they represent a Rabbinic practice from a later date.²

Now, 40 years later, the relationship between the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls is well-worked ground. Therefore, it is helpful to explain why a re-opening of the issue of correction in the Matthean community and in the DSS might be necessary. The following explanation consists of two parts: (1) The need in scholarship; and (2) the need in the church.


²See G. Forkman, The Limits of the Religious Community (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1972) pp. 87-114, who traces the development of community correction of Rabbinic Judaism. The difficulty in applying the Rabbinic texts lies in determining how much they convey the correction practice of the Pharisees while they were still only one of several competing factions in Judaism, and how much they reflect practices after AD 70, when the Pharisees began to dominate Judaism. E.g., Forkman assigns a third century AD date to the practice of “הרס as an intensified ban” (p. 126).
1.1 **The Need in Scholarship**

W. H. Brownlee’s pioneer translation of 1QS commented on 5.24-6.1 as follows:

The teaching of Jesus in Mat. 18:15-17 gives us the clue for interpreting the passage. Jesus specifies three stages for dealing with an erring brother; (1) personal reproof, v. 15; (2) reproof before witnesses, v. 16; (3) reproof before the Church, v. 17. The first of these corresponds with DSD V,25 f.; the second, with the ‘reproof before witnesses’ of VI,1; the third, with the ‘accusation... in the presence of the Many’ VI,1.3

Thus, Brownlee interprets the practice of rebuke in 1QS according to Matthew 18.15-17. This interpretation implies at least a close relationship between the two correction processes, if not an identification. Many have followed Brownlee in this matter (J. Jeremias,4 J. Gnilka,5 A. R. C. Leaney,6 *et al*).7

However, in a recent article, “La Reprension Fraterna en Qumran y Mt 18,15-17” (1989), F. Garcia Martinez has criticized Brownlee and other scholars, who in the decade following the discovery of the DSS drew too close a relationship between the community correction of the DSS and that of Matthew 18.15-17:

The positions of different authors who studied the subject in that decade can be divided into two categories: the one held by those who maintain the dependency of the Gospel text in relation to the Qumran texts; and the one held by those who see both texts as parallel developments from the same biblical source, albeit, independent from each other. Nevertheless, both positions start with the supposition that both processes of fraternal correction reflect one single reality, a reality which eventually ends up being expressed in a slightly different praxis.8

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4“Qumrân et la théologie,” *NRT* 85 (1963):684. He states, “Egalement, la procédure en trois étapes de la discipline ecclésiastique (seul à seul, devant un ou deux témoins, devant la Communauté assemblée, Mt 18,15-17; cfr Tit 2.10) correspond à l’usage de la secte. Il pourrait y avoir là des influences directes: elles s’expliqueraient par l’hypothèse séduisante de la présence d’Esséniens dans le ‘grand nombre de prêtres’ qui, d’après Ac 6,7, se joignirent à la Communauté.”


8“La reprension fraterna,” pp. 23-24. My fellow student, Homero Garcia Cover, has graciously
Garcia Martinez suggests these and subsequent studies have failed also, since “. . . instead of aiming at a profound analysis of the problem, the problem is just referred to, and because later studies accept this supposition as something proved.”9 He further justifies his own brief study:

It does not seem out of place to consider again the data provided by the Qumran texts, in order to understand the elements which can be useful for a better understanding of the New Testament text. Even more because the Qumran process for fraternal correction is better known today due to the studies of L. Schiffman, who has analyzed it and compared it with the rabbinic *hatra’ah*, and of G. Forkman, who has compared it with the rabbinic *nidduy*.10

Garcia Martinez’s study next examines the relevant texts from the DSS (chiefly CD 9.2-8; 9.17-23; 1QS 5.24-6.1) with Matthew 18.15-17 in view. He shows, for example, that the DSS forbid private rebuke (contrast 18.15). Because a sectarian who failed to rebuke violated the *halakhah* of the community and faced punishment (see p. 30 below), witnesses were necessary for all rebukes, in order to verify that the rebuke occurred “on the day” of the transgression.11

Next, Garcia Martinez examines Matthew 18.15-17, not as it falls into its present context, but as a tradition unit:

What really concerns us is the meaning that the pericope offers as a separate unit, because it is possible only at this level to establish a comparison with the Qumran process of correction defined in order to see whether the supposed influences are real or not.12

He then attempts to trace the development of Matthew 18.15-17, deciding that it is a *halakhah* which has arisen independently of Luke 17.3 and the DSS: “[It] describes a specific legal process for fraternal correction which was deduced through the exegesis of Leviticus 19.17 and Deuteronomy 19.15 . . .” He also believes that it is impossible to trace the origin of the process, though it is likely from “a Jewish group or one with very strong Jewish roots.”13

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9Ibid., p. 24.
10Ibid. Garcia Martinez refers to: Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, BJS 33 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983); and G. Forkman, *Limits*. Forkman’s work is worthy of note because he devotes a section to expulsion in Matthew. However, because of its broader scope, this study gives little by way of comparison and contrast of Matthew 18.15-20 with the Qumran documents.
11“La reprension fraterna,” pp. 30-31. See also p. 38 below.
12“La reprension fraterna,” p. 34.
13Ibid., p. 37.
After briefly overviewing the correction process in Matthew 18.15-17, Garcia Martinez gives his final conclusions:

... both the Qumran law of correction and the one contained in Mt 18.15-17 are legal processes of correction, and in both cases it is understood that the correction must be done before witnesses. But the similarities between these two end here. The differences, on the other hand, seem to me important enough to suggest that the Qumran law of correction has not been able to function as a model or antecedent, much less as an origin, of the law of correction in Matthew 18.15-17. 14

By demonstrating the differences between the Qumran and the Matthean correction processes, Garcia Martinez shows that there is probably no direct relationship between them. He maintains that two processes have developed independently, although in the same milieu of Palestinian Judaism and using the same Torah texts. Thus, Garcia Martinez corrects the premature conclusion of Brownlee and others as outlined above (p. 2). He, however, leaves no room for the possibility of some influence by Qumran on primitive Christianity. Jeremias suggests that among the “large number of priests” who joined the Jerusalem church (Acts 6.7), some may have been Essenes (see n. 4 above). A study of the processes of correction at Qumran and in Matthew 18.15-20 should not too hastily accept or reject the possibility of a kinship between the two.

A relationship between the two is, however, not necessary to make a comparison and contrast helpful. Even Garcia Martinez leaves the door open to further studies of Matthew 18.15-17 in light of the DSS:

This conclusion, however, does not nullify the interest of the Qumran law of correction to better understand Matthew 18.15-17, in its original form and within the context of the gospel [italics mine]. Its existence itself proves to us that the praxis of a legal process of correction of faults committed by the members of a group is not something incredible within the pluriform Judaism of the first century. 15

So while Garcia Martinez’ study is helpful, the present study seeks to contribute in two ways: (1) It will give a more detailed comparison and contrast of the Matthew 18.15-20 and the DSS. (2) It will treat Matthew 18.15-20 in its present context.

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14 Ibid., p. 38.
1.2 **The Need in the Church**

A re-opening of the issue of correction in Matthew 18.15-20 is necessary not only in scholarship but also in the Church. Church discipline has received much recent attention in North American Evangelicalism, with a spate of books and theses written on the topic. When this literature attempts to apply Palestinian backgrounds to Matthew 18.15-20 (and this is rare), it appeals to the Rabbinic literature, and unfortunately pays little or no attention to the parallels in the DSS. This study seeks to correct that wrong by comparing and contrasting Matthew 18.15-20 with the correction procedure of the DSS. While the focus of this study is exegetical, it is hoped that its discoveries will have implications for church praxis. In its conclusion, this study will propose some suggestions on how Matthew 18.15-20 might apply in modern contexts.

1.3 **The Plan**

As stated above, the present study will treat Matthew 18.15-20 in its literary context. Thus, it limits itself to understanding the meaning of the pericope in its final redaction. This limit is particularly justified, for, with the possible exceptions of 18.15 (cf. Luke 17.3) and Matthew 18.18 (cf. 16.19; John 20.23), the pericope has no parallels within the synoptic tradition. There is in the Gospels, therefore, no other setting to which one can compare Matthew 18.15-20 as a unit. Chapter One will consider 18.15-20 in its historical and literary context of Matthew’s Gospel, as well as establish the limits of the pericope.

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In order to prepare for the comparison and contrast with the DSS, Chapter Two will define the “Qumran community” and discuss its initiation procedure and structure. It will then provide an initial comparison and contrast of the communities of Qumran and Matthew.

Part Two will discuss in three chapters the three points of contact that Matthew 18.15-20 has with the DSS, “Rebuke,” “Witnesses,” and “Consequences.” Finally, Chapter Seven will conclude with a summary and with some proposals as to the practical application of Matthew 18.15-20.
CHAPTER TWO
Matthew 18.15-20 in Its Historical and Literary Context

Before embarking upon a comparison and contrast of Matthew 18:15-20 with the DSS, it is necessary to determine the historical and literary context of the pericope. Here the questions are four: (1) Who is the author? (2) For whom was it written? (3) Where does Matthew 18:15-20 fall contextually within the gospel? (4) What are the precise limits of the pericope?

2.1 The Author

Matthew\textsuperscript{17} was likely a Jewish Christian\textsuperscript{18} in Northern Palestine or in Syria\textsuperscript{19} who wrote some 40 years or more after the events of the Gospel. Matthew probably had the task of writing to a community experiencing estrangement from the synagogue and thus, from the majority of Jews.\textsuperscript{20} Two factors may have contributed to this estrangement. First, Jewish Christians refused to take part in the revolt against Rome (AD 66-70) or support other messianic aspirations; thus, many may have viewed them with suspicion. Second, in the aftermath of the War, the Pharisees began to dominate all the various factions within Judaism. The Matthean Christians would not conform to the standards of the Pharisees (especially regarding the halakhah) and would,

\textsuperscript{17}I will refer to the author as “Matthew” for the sake of convenience, although I have doubts as to whether he was the final redactor (that he had his hand in the process at some stage seems likely).
\textsuperscript{18}W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., \textit{A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew}, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), pp. 7-58 have again affirmed Jewish Christian authorship of Matthew against the few dissenters of this position.
\textsuperscript{19}Scholars most often opt for Palestine or for Syria as the local origin of Matthew. See Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, pp. 138-147.
\textsuperscript{20}K. Stendahl states in the preface to the second edition of \textit{The School of Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament} (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. xi: “It is clear that the most obvious polemic in this gospel is directed against ‘the scribes and the pharisees’. . . . They are representatives of the synagogue ‘across the street’ in Matthew’s community. The line between church and synagogue is drawn definitely.”
therefore, alienate themselves from the synagogue. Matthew possibly had a Jewish education in Palestine, for he often uses Jewish methods of exegesis of the Old Testament.\(^{21}\) With little doubt Matthew wrote to instruct and strengthen his community as it faced both external and internal difficulties. Thus, Matthew used the Old Testament and the Jesus tradition to address the concerns of his present community.

2.2 **The Matthean Community**

The issue of community correction inevitably brings up questions of how Matthew’s community defined itself (who belongs in the community?) and what authority structures it had (who exercises correction or expulsion?). Definition is an important issue as the community faces persecution--how does the community keep its integrity and uniqueness in spite of outside pressures to conform? Certainly the community experienced external pressure, not only from the Jewish community (10.17), but also from the gentiles and gentile authorities (10.18). The kind of structure a community has is also important to its internal character. How will the community maintain harmony and deal with discord and sin?

Matthew 18.1-14 may be key to understanding both the definition and the structure of the community. When asked the question by the disciples, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?” Jesus responds by placing a child in the midst of them:

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Truly I say to you, unless you repent and become as this child, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And whoever receives a child such as this in my name, receives me.
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This teaching admonishes in particular any in the community who have aspirations of leadership. Forkman writes:

The question as to who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven is a fundamental question about what kind of structure is to prevail in the new community. And the answer is just as fundamental. In the new community there is no place for hierarchical thinking.\footnote{Forkman, Limits, p. 121.}

Matthew is very critical of the authority structures among the gentiles and the Pharisees. Of gentile authority Jesus states (Matt 20.25):

> You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them and the great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you, but whoever wishes to be great among you, shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you, shall be your slave.

He also criticizes the desire of the scribes and Pharisees for prestige (RSV):

> . . . they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Matthew rejects both the gentile road to power and the Pharisaic route to prestige. Could this be how he expects the community to define and organize itself in contrast to those outside? The basic member of the community is to be a child or a “little one.” Some of the “little ones” are outcasts from the synagogue; others perhaps are outcasts from gentile society. In the opinion of the Pharisees most of them are probably uneducated; but Jesus exclaims, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will” (11.25, RSV). Matthew tells his community that although they are the “little ones,” God cares for each of them (18.12-14), even the least significant (Matt 25.40,45), and therefore He will condemn anyone who rejects or offends them (18.5,10).

Such a structure would also have internal implications. Everyone in the community, especially the leaders, must care for the “little ones,” because the Father does. The exercise of authority must be responsible and not overbearing, unlike the Pharisees who lay upon their followers heavy burdens but do not help to carry them (Matt 23.4). Leaders are not to seek privilege or titles. Further, since gentiles are the target of disciple making (Matt 28.19),
Matthew’s community may have a significant proportion of gentile members. How would these find a place in the community, who do not have the benefit of a rearing in Torah as do their Jewish brothers? Perhaps Matthew stresses that the basic community member is a “little one” in order to prevent the gentiles in the community from receiving only a secondary status in the community (see p. 23 below).

Finally, how will the “little ones” deal with offenses in the community? Matthew instructs in 18.15-35 how to handle offenses in the community. No mention of community officials or leaders appears in Matthew 18.15-20. Beare comments on Matthew 18.17:

> It is striking that the action is to be taken by the local community, with no hint of a council of elders, let alone an authoritative officer, like a bishop. Matthew insists on the equality of all members: no one is to exercise authority over the others, as in Gentile kingdoms (20:25ff.), and no one is to be called ‘Rabbi’ or ‘Master’, for ‘you have one teacher, and you are all brethren, and you have one master, the Christ’ (23:8,10).  

The silence of Matthew 18.15-20 does not mean that community leaders do not take a part in the correction process. It does, however, imply that every “little one” has an essential role to play. Thus, in light of the thrust of Matthew 18, indeed of the whole gospel, 18.15-20 guides the practice of correction in a community where the basic member is a “little one.”

### 2.3 The Literary Context

The scholarly consensus on Matthew’s structure recognizes five large topical teachings (roughly - 5.1-7.27; 10.1-42; 13.1-52; 18.1-35; 23.1-25.46) interspersed in the gospel narrative. Matthew 18.15-20 falls within the fourth teaching which occurs in the last stage of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Chapter 18 addresses the relationships within the community. Here is the basic breakdown of the chapter:

> Matthew 18.1-3 addresses the question of “who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus declares that the greatest is the one who humbles oneself like the little child.

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24 Davies and Allen, *Matthew*, 58-59, point out that it is here that the consensus also ends, which “does not take us very far.”
Matthew 18.5-9 declares punishment for those who cause such a “little one” to stumble instead of receiving this child in Jesus’ name.

Matthew 18.10-14 is the parable of the shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep behind to find the one that is lost. Unlike the more familiar Lukan context (15.4-7), Matthew applies Jesus’ parable to the “little one” lost from the community. Rather than finding the lost sinner, now the Father cares for every straying community member.

Matthew 18.15-17 instructs the community on how it must handle the sinning brother. The brother who refuses correction undergoes three stages of rebuke, culminating in the community treating him as “a gentile or a tax collector.”

Matthew 18.18-20 now deals with the authority of the community, to “bind” and to “loose,” with the promise of the Father’s intervention and Jesus’ own presence.

Matthew 18.21-22 addresses Peter’s question of how many times he must forgive the sinning brother. Jesus responds “not seven times but seventy-seven.”

18.23-35 gives a unique Matthean parable, the point of which is to say that if the Father forgives His debtors, the members of His community must also forgive their brothers who have sinned against them.

Now three larger sections of chapter 18 appear. The first, 18.1-14, deals with the “little one,” who is the true community member for whom the Father cares. The second section, 18.15-20, deals first with the steps for correction of the sinning brother and the authority of the community, but this is a matter of contention. The third section, 18.21-35, demands that community members forgive one another. Since Matthew 18.15-20 might make up more than one unit, it is now necessary to discuss the limits of the passage.

2.4 **The Limits of the Passage**

Many argue that Matthew 18.15-20 consists of several strands of tradition. For example, S. H. Brooks discerns three separate literary units, Matthew 18.17-15, 18, and 19-20.²⁵

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²⁵See, e.g., S. H. Brooks, *Matthew’s Community: The Evidence of His Special Sayings Material,*
The present study, however, restricts itself to the analysis of the final redaction and seeks the limits of the passage in its present literary context. Has Matthew combined two or three originally distinct tradition units to make a unified teaching? Or has he placed them together only because they relate to the subject of the community, the topic at hand? The analysis breaks down into three considerations.

The first consideration is the matter of conjunctions or transition words. Verse 18 begins “ἀμήν λέγω ύμιν . . .”--a transition which can indicate either a break or an explanation of or response to some preceding thought.26 Verse 19 begins “πάλιν [ἀμήν] λέγω ύμιν . . .” A. Henderson argues that the πάλιν marks a break in thought: “. . . surely πάλιν λέγω (v. 19) marks the introduction of a new subject of teaching (as, e.g., in chs. 5 and 13).”27 While a glance at Matthew 5.33 suggests that Henderson may be correct, Matthew 13.45 and 47 use πάλιν to give a second and third of three parables which illustrate Jesus’ understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven. Πάλιν thus can function to reinforce or to elaborate a preceding idea. This function appears very clearly in 19.23-24, the construction of which is almost exactly that of 18.18-19 (RSV):

Truly, I say to you [ἀμήν λέγω ύμιν; cf. 18.18], it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you [πάλιν δὲ λέγω ύμιν; cf. 18.19], it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 19.23-24 are unequivocally tied in thought, and they use the same introductory words as 18.18-19. This comparison shows that it is possible that Matthew 18.18-20 also coheres.

After 18.18-19, verse 20’s explanatory γάρ links the sentence with what precedes it, as much as the τότε in 18.21 marks a transition to the next unit. Brooks states that γάρ functions “as
a frequently used device for editorially linking two disparate pieces of tradition." Thus, the introductory words allow for the view that Matthew 18.15-20 is a unit.

The second consideration is the recurrence of “two” in Matthew 18.19 and of “two or three” in 18.20; these numbers are reminiscent of the “two or three” witnesses in 18.16. This may be simply a mnemonic device linking disparate traditions for narration. On the other hand, Matthew may be connecting the importance of even two or three community members (18.19-20) with the rebuke by the two or three in 18.16.

The third consideration is the subject matter of Matthew 18.15-35. In 18.15-17, Matthew lays down a procedure for correction, the aim of which is the reconciliation of the brother. Matthew 18.21-22 and 18.23-35 also deal with forgiveness and reconciliation. Therefore, if 18.18 and/or 18.19-20 do not also pertain to correction and reconciliation, then they represent a parenthesis in Matthew’s scheme. However, Matthew 18.18-20 may arguably pertain to the authority of the community, especially since πᾶν ρήμα (18.16) and παντὸς πράγματος (18.19) can both refer to disputes or cases (see pp. 40-45 below). There would, then, be no parenthesis; Matthew moves from the correction of the unrepentant brother (18.15-20) to the mandatory forgiveness of those who do repent. The related subject matter of 18.15-17 and 18.21-35 then is the binding factor which makes it legitimate to treat Matthew 18.15-20 as a single unit in its present literary context. The present study, therefore, will treat Matthew 18.15-20 as a unit.

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29 E.g., The number “twelve” in Mark 5.21-43 possibly serves to link the narrative of the woman who had a hemorrhage twelve years with the little girl who was twelve years old.
Chapter Two outlined some features of the Matthean community. This chapter will attempt to do the same for the Qumran community. However, the scholar immediately encounters difficulties when attempting to define “Qumran community.” Therefore, this chapter will first deal with problems related to understanding and defining the community behind the DSS. Then it will summarize the community’s initiation procedure and structure. Finally, before proceeding to Part Two, this chapter will outline the legitimacy of the comparison and contrast with Matthew 18:15-20.

3.1 The Definition of the Qumran Community

3.1.1 The Problems of Definition

The problem of defining the “Qumran community” arises from four kinds of evidence. First, there is the testimony of ancient writers, Josephus, Philo, and Pliny the Elder.\(^{30}\) They write of a sect within first century Judaism called the “Essenes.” The second kind of evidence is the medieval manuscripts of the *Damascus Document* (CD) discovered in the Cairo Genizah near the turn of this century. Immediately scholars perceived that CD stretched back far into Jewish history, perhaps as far as the Babylonian Exile.\(^{31}\) When, however, the third kind of evidence came

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\(^{31}\) Cf. P. R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant*, JSOTSup 25 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), pp. 5-14 for a summary of “pre-Qumran” research on CD.
to light a few decades later, the DSS themselves, it became clear, from the affinities CD shares with the sectarian scrolls, that a clear relationship existed between them. The discovery of fragments of the Damascus Document in Cave Four confirmed this link. The fourth kind of evidence is from the site of Khirbet Qumran, where excavation has shown the presence of inhabitants from about the late second century BC to ca. AD 70. Since Qumran is in the proximity of the caves in which the DSS were discovered, the inhabitants of Qumran were the likely depositors of the scrolls.

Collating all of this evidence, some scholars have discerned a single movement, which outsiders knew as the Essenes. With the discovery first of CD and later of the DSS, many believe that primary documents from an Essene library have finally come to light. Scholars make this connection on the basis of shared historical figures (Teacher of Righteousness, Seekers of Smooth things, Wicked Priest, etc.) and shared ideologies attested in the Qumran scrolls and in CD, and the similar community practices of the DSS and the Essenes. As well, Pliny the Elder named the location of the Essenes along the West coast of the Dead Sea north of Engedi, which many believe to be the site of Qumran. The DSS were possibly the library of sectarians who inhabited Qumran. Thus, most have seen a more or less unified movement behind the four kinds of evidence.

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32 Callaway, History, p. 51.
33 G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective (London: Collins, 1977), p. 130, states: “The final verdict must therefore be that of the proposed solutions the Essene theory is relatively the soundest. It is even safe to say that it possesses a high degree of intrinsic probability. The only remaining alternative is that the archaeologists have uncovered relics of a hitherto totally unknown Jewish sect almost identical to the Essenes: which reminds one of the story of the Old Testament scholar who would not accept that Joshua led the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan and argued that the real leader was a cousin who happened to bear the same name.”
34 He states, “Below the Essenes was the town of Engag (Engedi), . . . From there one comes to the fortress of Masada, . . .” (Nat. Hist., as cited in Callaway, History, p. 82).
35 See, e.g., Vermes, Perspectives, p. 127. Callaway, History, however, stresses the ambivalence of Pliny’s data (pp. 81-83).
Others, however, are sceptical. They hesitate to identify the community at the Dead Sea with the Essenes. Some also deny that CD originated from the Qumran community (see p. 16 below). The problem then is that no one can be too sure as to what the Qumran community looked like, how big it really was, whether or not they were the Essenes, and whether CD arose out of its circles or predated it.

3.1.2 The Definition of the Qumran Community

The present study understands the “Essenes” as a Palestinian sect with varied expressions, identified by shared ideologies and practices. All four kinds of evidence mentioned above, therefore, shed light on the practices and beliefs of Essenes. How unified the sect was across Palestine in all its expressions is yet unknown. The Essenes may have made up a single unified movement. On the other hand, they may have consisted of many splintered factions. Outsiders, however, might have identified them all with the name “Essene.”

The “Qumran community” then is the specific expression of the Essenes which lived at Khirbet Qumran between the late second century BC and ca. AD 70. The documents discovered there, albeit to varying degrees, shed light on the beliefs and practices of the Qumran community. In particular, 1QS seems to have arisen out of the needs of the community in its cloistered setting.

The “CD community” is the expression of the Essenes as attested in CD. Since the library of Qumran contained copies of the Damascus Document, the CD community shared some ties with the Qumran community. Perhaps, as P. R. Davies suggest, CD community predates the

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36See Vermes, Perspectives, pp. 116-36, who lists the following alternatives for the identity of the Qumran sect: Judeo-Christians, Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots and Essenes.

37Josephus refers to “another order of Essenes” (ἐτερὸν Ἐσσηνῶν τάγμα), which, unlike the others, practiced marriage (BJ 2.160).

38Vermes, Perspectives, states (p. 130), “As for the absence of the word ‘Essene’ from the Scrolls, the title ‘Pharisee’ is likewise generally avoided in rabbinic sources. Both names appear to have been coined and used by outsiders.”
Qumran Community. On the other hand, Vermes shows that CD, 1QSa, 11QTemple, and 1QM also attest to a dispersed community, while 1QS indicates a cloistered community. Thus, Vermes discerns a single, unified sect which had both a cloistered and a dispersed expression. While this study will not attempt to define the precise relationship the CD community had with the Qumran community, it will nevertheless maintain a distinction between them.

3.2 The Initiation Procedure and Structure of the Qumran Community

The Qumran sect formed a community within Palestinian Judaism which saw itself as the only faithful and true people of God. Like other Jews of the first century, they divided history into two great ages, this age and the coming Messianic age. “Satan” had dominion over the present age and also over both unfaithful Jews and gentiles. The Qumran sect saw themselves as the new covenant community, who alone obeyed God’s Torah: “All those who embrace the Community Rule shall enter into the Covenant before God to obey all His commandments so that they may not abandon Him during the dominion of Satan because of fear or terror or affliction” (1QS 1.16-18; p. 62). They were the sons of Light and all others were sons of Darkness, headed for destruction.

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39 P. R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant*, pp. 1-47, for a summary of views on CD. He himself comes down to saying that “The document achieved its outline and substantially its present form before the foundation of the Qumran community, and betrays an organised, well-developed community with a clearly expressed ideology and historical traditions” (p. 202); and, “The Qumran community arose out of this earlier community, prompted by the arrival of a person who claimed to be (or was accepted as) a figure expected by the original community to appear ‘at the end of days’” (p. 203).

40 Vermes, *DSSE*, pp. 4-18. He states (p. 9): “The Damascus Rule and the Temple Scroll, as well as the Messianic Rule [1QSa] and occasionally the War Rule, are concerned with a style of religious existence quite at variance from that at Qumran.” He cites the following texts which support this view: CD 12.19,23, concerning “towns” and “camps”; CD 1.22, 11QTemple 45.11-12, concerning the visiting of the Temple; 1QSa 1.9-11,12-13, concerning the marriage and advancement of young men who grew up in the community. These texts suggest that the community had some contact with the rest of humanity. In contrast to this, 1QS called for existence in the desert away from the “habitation of ungodly men” (1QS 8.12-13; p. 73).
3.2.1 The Initiation Procedure

Since they were the new covenant community, they needed to draw lines of division: Who belongs? Who does not? Thus, clearly in the Community Rule (1QS) are two kinds of dividing markers: (1) entrance requirements and (2) a code of discipline.

To enter the covenant, the initiate must first be examined. If deemed worthy, he may enter the community, but must not partake of the “pure food” of the community for one year. Then, the community once again examines him, and if he passes, he turns his belongings over to the bursar, who holds them until the end of the next year. He may now touch the pure food but must not touch the drink of the congregation. At the end of the second year, if he gains the community’s approval, he becomes a full member and his belongings become community property. Otherwise he departs with them. Thus, the initiation includes two stages: the first year requires abstinence from both the pure food and the drink of the congregation, the second, abstinence only from the drink.

This initiation process reveals a dominant concern of the DSS. The stages of becoming a full-member relate to purity. M. Newton suggests that the concept of purity at Qumran is indeed central to the community’s religious and moral consciousness. Purity was necessary to ensure God’s continued presence in the community. Newton points out that for Qumran, the community replaced the Jerusalem Temple as the point of God’s presence on earth:

It becomes a “holy house for Israel and a foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron” (1QS 8.5,6) and “a dwelling of the holy of holies for Aaron . . . and a house of perfection and truth for Israel.” While most translators render qodesh qodashim as “most holy” they recognize that this passage sees the community comparing itself to the interior of the Temple, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, the most sacred part of the Temple. It was here that the highest standards of purity were required and it was in the Holy of Holies that the presence of God dwelt.

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41 These entrance requirements appear in 1QS 6.13-23 (pp. 69-70) and apply to those entering the cloistered community at Qumran.
This purity was not that typically required of a layman in Torah, but that required of priests, since anyone joining the community came into the Holy of Holies which was only open to the High Priest. The novice could not quickly attain such a high standard, as Newton further explains:

The two years which lapse before his full participation are to enable his complete purification. We must remember that the new member has come from outside where, according to the sect, all is impure. The long-drawn-out novitiate in one respect protects them from this outside pollution.44

The community’s desire to protect its own purity also explains the stricter rules concerning the pure drink: liquids could become contaminated more easily. Schiffman writes:

Licht explains that according to tannaitic halakhah, purity regulations regarding the mashqim, liquids, are in some senses stricter than those regarding solid foods (okhelim). The tannaim understood that even the smallest amount of liquid which is impure can render clothing, food and drink, or vessels impure.45

Thus, the lengthy novitiate protects the purity of the community. Purity also affects the new member’s rank in the community, for when he enters the community, “then he shall be inscribed among his brethren in the order of his rank for the Law, and for justice, and for the pure Meal; . . . “ (1QS 6:21-22; p. 70). Rank is an important aspect of the Qumran hierarchy, the next subject.

3.2.2 The Structure of the Qumran Community

The DSS testify to a community structure which is rigidly hierarchical: “This is the Rule for an Assembly of the Congregation[:] Each man shall sit in his place: the Priests shall sit first, and the elders second, and all the rest of the people according to their rank. . . . “ (1QS 6.8-9; p. 69). This hierarchy exhibits two defining characterics: it is (1) priestly and (2) military. These two characteristics are inseparable, as they both speak to the sect’s eschatological vision: they look forward to the day when God will establish His priestly community over all mankind through a holy war.

44Ibid., p. 13.
3.2.2.1 The Priestly Character of the Qumran Hierarchy

At every turn the priests (כוהנים) carry out important roles in the Qumran community. They must preside over meals (1QS 6.5)\(^46\) and the assembly (1QS 6.8). There must be three priests in the Council of the Community (1QS 8.1), which seems to be an inner circle of leaders. At least four of ten judges had to be priests or Levites according to CD 10.4-7. The Qumran community may have had its start as a group of Zadokites, who viewed themselves as the legitimate heirs of the high priesthood and therefore broke off from mainstream Judaism because of the Hasmonean usurpation of the high office.\(^47\) This makes good sense of the prominent position of the Sons of Zadok in the scrolls. This priestly emphasis is particularly acute in the sect’s eschatology, for they envision two messiahs, one priestly (the messiah of Aaron) and one Davidic (the messiah of Israel). However, the priest-messiah takes priority over the Davidic in the eschatological banquet (1QSa 2.17-21; p. 102):

And [when] they shall gather for the common [tab]le, to eat and [to drink] new wine, when the common table shall be set for eating the new wine [poured] for drinking, let no man extend his hand over the first-fruits of bread and wine before the Priest, for [it is he] who shall bless the first-fruits of bread and wine, and shall be the first [to extend] his hand over the bread. Thereafter, the Messiah of Israel shall extend his hand over the bread . . .

Furthermore, the priests were to instruct the messiah (the Branch of David) in the Torah, or so indicates one fragment as amended and translated by Vermes (4Q161 268; p. 168):

And as for that which He said, He shall not [judge by what his eyes see] or pass sentence by what his ears hear: interpreted this means that . . . [the Priests] . . . As they teach him, so will he judge; and as they order, [so will he pass sentence].

Thus, the priests have priority in the Qumran hierarchy, even over the Davidic messiah.

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\(^{46}\)In the CD community it was not always assumed that a qualified priest would be available (CD 13:2-4; p. 97): “And where the ten are, there shall never be lacking a Priest learned in the Book of the Meditation; they shall all be ruled by him. But should he not be experienced in these matters, whereas one of the Levites is experienced in them, then it shall be determined that all the members of the camp shall go and come according to the latter’s word.”

\(^{47}\)See Vermes, DSSE, pp. 19-35, for an example of the Maccabean hypothesis; and Callaway, History, who expresses reservations concerning the certainty in identifying any character in the DSS with anyone previously known.
3.2.2.2 The Military Character of the Qumran Community

The Qumran community not only saw itself as replacing the Holy of Holies, but it viewed itself as an army. This comes out nowhere more clearly than in the War Scroll (1QM) which speaks of an eschatological war in which God will smite all Israel’s enemies by the hand of the community. In this war the priests will play lead roles (cf. 1QM 5)—thus, the two aspects of the hierarchy, the priestly and the military, are integrally tied.

The DSS also frequently describe a community organized in divisions of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.\(^{48}\) 11QTemple 57.3-7 aptly illustrates the military implications of this structure (p. 151):

He shall install at their head captains of thousands, captains of hundreds, captains of fifties and captains of tens in all their cities. He shall select from among them one thousand by tribe to be with him: twelve thousand warriors who shall not leave him alone to be captured by the nations.

In contrast to the instructions given in Torah (Deut 17), the king’s first duty is to appoint officers over an army of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Thus, this everyday organization reveals that the sect understood itself as an army.

One other item hints concerning a military aspect of the Qumran community; it had rigid requirements concerning the sort of person it admitted. Only those showing both mental and physical prowess could enter the covenant (CD 13:11; 97): “He shall examine every man entering his Congregation with regard to his deeds, understanding, strength, ability and possessions, and shall inscribe him in his place according to his rank in the lot of L[ight].”\(^{49}\) Further, concerning members excluded from participation, Forkman provides the following chart:

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\(^{48}\) 1QS 2.21; 1QM 4.1-5 of the Merari clan in the war; 1QSa 1.14; 1.29-2.1; CD 13.1.

\(^{49}\) Cf. C. Rabin, *Qumran Studies*, p. 5, who compares CD 13.11 to Josephus, “Note that here he is examined about his military prowess, too, since the units of the sect are also military units, . . . This is particularly interesting in comparison with the Essenes, who tested their neophytes for ἐγκράτεια and καρπερία, self-control and endurance (*BJ* II.viii.7 [138]).”
These lists concern the purity of the community, since the excluded are mainly those who are not allowed by the Torah to function as priests (Lev 21.17-23). 1QM 7.6 shows why they wished to maintain priestly purity in the community: “for the holy angels shall be with their hosts” (p. 112).

Newton states aptly:

The eschatological Temple, the camps during the war against the Sons of Darkness and also the present community may admit no one who is suffering from any impurity or who is in danger of becoming impure because, it is stated, the angels are resident amidst the community. This is nothing more than saying that the rules of purity must be kept because God is present and he will only remain present as long as his dwelling place is kept pure.”

Thus, the sect desired to maintain a fit and pure army for the eschatological war in order to assure God’s presence with them.

3.2.3 The Communities of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew

Stark contrasts now stand out between the structures of the Matthean community and of the Dead Sea sect. The Matthean community consciously avoids moves toward prestige and power. Qumran, however, tends in the opposite direction. So Forkman observes concerning the contradiction between 1QS 5.3, which states that the priests and “the multitude of the men of the Community” shall make “decisions concerning doctrine, property, and justice” (p. 67) and 1QS 9.7 which gives only the priests (אהרון בני רק) this prerogative: “We have to assume partly that CD is directed towards another more laymen-oriented branch of the sect than 1QS, partly that the development within the sect was towards a greater concentration of power in the hands of the...

\[50^{50}\]Forkman, Limits, p. 76. Cf. CD 15.15.

\[51^{51}\]Purity, p. 51.
priests, and that 1QS V 3 and 1QS IX 7 reflect different stages in this development.\textsuperscript{52} In the case of Qumran, the long novitiate corroborates the trend toward hierarchy, since no such novitiate appears in CD.\textsuperscript{53} At some point, the Qumran community felt the need to increase the difficulty of joining the inner circle. Again Forkman observes:

> With this long novitiate the number of novices must have been considerable. The large number of examinations had quite likely resulted in a number of people being retained on the novice level. If the community 1QS describes had the characteristics of a brotherhood in which the members lived as celibates, in an economic unity of some kind, with joint religious services, meals and legal assemblies, it is quite likely that many members never attained higher than an associated membership.\textsuperscript{54}

The long novitiate, thus, tends to increase the distance between new members and the leadership. This tendency may also explain why “proselytes” play no part in the community at Qumran. Whereas CD 14.5-6 states the order of ranks as “first the Priests, second the Levites, third the Israelites, and fourth the proselytes. . . . “ (p. 98), 1QS makes no provision for proselytes at all. In fact, in order to become even a novice in the Qumran community, one must be “born of Israel” (1QS 6.13; מֵיָיָהוּ).

In the Matthean community, on the other hand, the prime target of “disciple” making are the gentiles (28.19; τὰ ἔθνη). As Chapter Two argued, Matthew defines the basic member of the community as a “little one,” partly to prevent the gentiles in the community from receiving only a secondary status in the community (see p. 10 above). The very fact that the CD community places proselytes last in their hierarchy and the Qumran community does not envision proselytes in the community at all, illustrates the tendency among Jews to denigrate gentiles, even those who

\textsuperscript{52}Forkman, \textit{Limits}, p. 52. Bo Reicke (“The Constitution of the Primitive Church in the Light of Jewish Documents,” in \textit{The Scrolls and the New Testament}, ed. K. Stendahl [London: SCM Press, 1957], however, states that though the priest always ranks the highest, “Still, the group decides as a whole questions of every sort, . . .” (p. 150). 1QS 5.3 would then mean that the priests have a representative authority.

\textsuperscript{53}CD requires an oath from the initiate, and the Guardian (כִּבְרָיו) must examine him (15.7-11). The Guardian also has the power of admitting new members, “Whoever enters the Congregation shall do so according to his word, each in his rank” (14.10-11; p. 98). Thus it would appear that the CD community immediately enrolled the initiate into the community.

\textsuperscript{54}Forkman, \textit{Limits}, p. 64.
have embraced the faith. The hypothesis that Matthew attempts to equalize the community in order to avoid such problems is all the more plausible in this light.

The military aspect is also missing in the Matthean community. Jesus will surely judge the nations and the wicked will suffer, but the disciple is to be a peacemaker and to “turn the other cheek” (Matt 5.9,39). Jesus tells Peter, “Put away your sword, for everyone who takes up the sword will perish by the sword” (Matt 26.52).55 So the community in no way resembles an army.

Further, Matthew differs from the DSS with respect to purity. Matthew requires purity of the heart (5.8) and the internal keeping of Torah (5.21-48). Matthew 23:25-27 shows, however, that outward purity is still important (RSV):

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortition and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside may be clean.

Inward purity results in outward purity (cf. Matt 15.18-20). While inward purity is also important in the DSS, the stress is upon outward or ritual purity. Also in Matthew there appears to be no long novitiate designed to protect communal purity. This difference in stress also affects the correction process—Matthew’s accent is upon winning the brother (18.15), whereas in the DSS, the accent is upon communal purity (see Chapter Four below).

The Matthean community, then, differs significantly from the Qumran community. This in itself should bring into question the legitimacy of a comparison of Matthew 18:15-20 with the DSS. Is there then any common ground upon which to make a comparison?

3.3 The Legitimacy of a Comparison of the DSS with Matthew 18.15-20

The legitimacy of a comparison of the DSS with Matthew 18:15-20 arises out of the sectarian nature of the communities of Qumran and early Christianity. Both were exclusive, tight-

55Cf. Gnilka, “Die Kirche des Matthäus,” p. 51, who also notices this contrast between Matthew’s community and Qumran. In particular he points out Jesus’ refusal to call angels to his assistance in Matt 26.53: “Hier wird bestätigt, daß die Schar der Himmlischen bereitsteht, um dem Gerechten zur Seite zu sein, auf die Bitte des Messias hin würden sie zu dessen Schutz eingreifen, aber Jesus hat - so will Mt seinen Lesern sagen - diese Hilfe abgelehnt, weil sein Messiasbild nicht das des eschatologischen Kriegsmanns ist.”
knit groups, which envisioned themselves as the legitimate heirs of the promises which God made to Israel. Both Christianity and Qumran originate from the same environment, Palestinian Judaism, and recognize the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures.

In particular they each view history according to two ages, the present age, which is dominated by sin, death, and Satan, and the coming age, when God would establish his rule over all things, reign forever through His people, and judge the wicked along with Satan and his hosts. Although most first century Jews envisioned these two ages, Qumran and primitive Christianity share this further similarity: God has already inaugurated the coming age in the community. In the New Testament, the advent of Jesus the Messiah--his death, resurrection and ascension--and the coming of the Holy Spirit inaugurate the new age, but the full consummation of the Age to Come only occurs at the Messiah’s return in power. Likewise, H. Ringgren contends that, although Qumran’s two messiahs (priestly and Davidic) have not yet appeared, the Teacher of Righteousness and his founding of the community inaugurate the Age to Come:

In any case this much is clear: The Teacher of Righteousness was not understood as a Messiah but rather as a prophetic forerunner to the two Anointed Ones. . . . Doubtless he is a figure who was considered to have inaugurated or at least prepared for the new, messianic era.

Because in both Matthew and the DSS the community participates in the Age to Come during the present, evil age, it must establish two lines of division--initiation and correction--in order to distinguish more clearly who belongs and who does not. Initiation brings in new members from outside. Correction maintains the integrity of the community. While the Qumran community requires a lengthy novitiate, Matthew requires baptism as the mark of initiation (28.19). Further, both Qumran and Matthew have correction processes, the most severe result of

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which is expulsion from the community. Both Qumran and Matthew apply Deuteronomy 19.15
(the law of witnesses) to the correction process.

These similarities make a comparison between the DSS and Matthew 18:15-20 legitimate. This study will not argue for a direct relationship between Matthew and the DSS, either on literary or other grounds. It will argue in Part Two only that Matthew 18.15-20 will come into clearer focus in the light of comparison and contrast with the DSS.
CHAPTER FOUR
Rebuke

4.1 Texts

They shall rebuke one another in truth, humility, and charity. Let no man address his companion with anger, or ill-temper, or obduracy, or with envy prompted by the spirit of wickedness. Let him not hate him [because of his uncircumcised] heart, but let him rebuke him on the very same day lest he incur guilt because of him. And furthermore, let no man accuse his companion before the Congregation without having first admonished him in the presence of witnesses.

1QS 5.24 - 6.1 (pp. 68-69)

They shall rebuke each man his brother according to the commandment and shall bear no rancour from one day to the next.
CD 7.2-3 (p. 88)

And concerning the saying, You shall not take vengeance on the children of your people, nor bear any rancour against them (Lev. xix,18), if any member of the Covenant accuses his companion without first rebuking him before witnesses; if he denounces him in the heat of his anger or reports him to his elders to make him look contemptible, he is one that takes vengeance and bears rancour, although it is expressly written, He takes vengeance upon His adversaries and bears rancour against His enemies (Nah. i,2). If he holds his peace towards him from one day to another, and thereafter speaks of him in the heat of his anger, he testifies against himself concerning a capital matter because he has not fulfilled the commandment of God which tells him: You shall rebuke your companion and not be burdened with sin because of him (Lev. xix,17).
CD 9.2-8 (p. 93)

If your brother sins,58 go, rebuke him just between you and him. If he listens to you, you

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58 B f3 pc sa bo Origen Basil3/6 Cyril (NA26 and UBS3) omit εἰς σε (against you). If the longer reading were original, a scribe may have conformed it to the shorter reading in Luke 17.3 (which has its own textual variation), or he may have attempted to universalize the text to give the authority of rebuke to anyone who observes or learns of a sin. According to B. M. Metzger, an accidental omission of εἰς σε might occur because “...in later Greek the pronunciation of η, η, and ei was similar” (A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, corrected ed. [Stuttgart: UBS, 1975], p. 45). However, a scribe might just as easily have added the εἰς σε on account of a mistake of hearing. It seems more likely that the very familiar phrase, “sin against you,” (cf. Lk. 17.4; Mt. 18.21 [εἰς ἐμέ]; T. Gad 6.3) would impose itself had a scribe made a slip of hearing. If the shorter reading were original, a scribe may have conformed the reading to 18.21 or would have naturally understood the context to refer to sins which occur between two people, especially in light of the use of the second person singular. The shorter reading is probably more difficult to explain in light of the context (cf. W. G. Thompson, S.J., Matthew’s Advice to a Divided Community, AnBib 44 [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970], p. 176, n. 1); this reading would
Rebuke in the Dead Sea Scrolls

In the DSS, rebuke seems to have four purposes. First, it serves the peace of the community, by keeping the members from harboring grievances against one another. A person who fails to rebuke his companion breaks the commandment, “You shall rebuke your companion and not be burdened with sin because of him” (CD 9.7-8; p. 93). CD interprets Leviticus 19.17 to mean that the person will be burdened with the sin of holding a grudge and of seeking revenge which belongs to the Lord (Nah. 1.2). The rebuke must not tarry “from day to day” (ליום ליום; CD 9.6). 1QS 5.26 specifies (p. 68-69), “but let him rebuke him on the very same day” (ביום כי יוכיחנו; cf. CD 9.22). The one who fails to rebuke “on the day” incurs guilt upon himself. On this, CD and 1QS agree.

The following stipulation for the Master (משכיל) reinforces that rebuke serves the peace of the community (1QS 9.16; p. 75): “He shall not rebuke the men of the Pit nor dispute with them.” The Master may only rebuke fellow sectarians, because rebuke is a sign of covenant love for the brother. 1QS 5.25 states that the sectarians must rebuke one another in “truth, humility and loving kindness” (trans. mine). Such loving rebuke is a sign of God’s true community in the present age, as CD 20.15-18 also indicates (pp. 90-91):

And during that age the wrath of God shall be kindled against Israel; as He said, There shall be no king, no prince, no judge, no man to rebuke with justice (Hos. iii,4). But those who turn from the sin of Jacob, who keep the Covenant of God, shall then speak each man to his fellow, to justify each man his brother, that their step may take the way of God.

Though Israel’s official leadership is defunct, God remains active in the community through the members’ constant correction of one another. Forkman writes concerning rebuke in the DSS:

agree also with the preferred Egyptian reading.

Forkman attributes CD 20.15-18 to the “ideal Israel” (Limits, p. 47). However, it does not apply to the ideal Israel, but to the time before the end: “From the gathering in of the Teacher of the Community until the end of all the men of war who deserted to the Liar there shall pass about forty years” (1QS 20.13-15; p. 90).
“It was a privilege, a sign of brotherhood. But one was not allowed to show this mark of favour to those who stood outside the limits of the community.”

The second purpose of rebuke is to help keep track of the transgressions of the members. In CD 9.2-6 and 1QS 6.1, the brother must rebuke the sinner in front of witnesses, before bringing charges before elders (CD) or the Congregation (1QS). CD 9.16-23 states that rebuke must occur before the Guardian (variably), who records the sin. According to L. Schiffman, the rebuke before witnesses and before the Guardian are different aspects of the same procedure:

Reproof was a formal process which took place in front of witnesses and before the examiner [i.e., the Guardian]. This official also recorded the fact of such reproof in the legal archive of the sect. Presumably, he also recorded who the witnesses were. Only in cases wherein such official records existed was it later possible to bring the violator to court.

C. Milikowsky, however, criticizes Schiffman’s tendency to harmonize and hesitates to conflate CD 9.2-6 with 9.16-23:

Given, however, that (1) only witnesses are mentioned in CDC IX, 2-8 and only the examiner in CDC IX, 16-23, and (2) the problem just noted concerning the report of the crime and the “reproof,” [sic] it is not at all clear that these two texts should be combined. Are they perhaps dealing with different formal procedures, even though the language used is so similar? I do not know. Note also that the second passage refers specifically to “DBR MWT” [a capital offense].

It is therefore questionable whether Schiffman’s analysis stands up to the evidence.

CD 9.4 also mentions the reporting of the offender to “his elders” (variably) before rebuking him in the presence of witnesses. This practice may correspond to 1QS 6.1 which likewise warns (p. 69), “... let no man accuse his companion before the Congregation [𐤕Snackbar] without having first admonished him in the presence of witnesses.” Ḥone in CD might be equivalent to Ḥone in 1QS. However, both the rebuke before witnesses and that before the Guardian (CD 9.22) must occur on the day of the crime; there is no great time lapse between

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63Ibid., p. 244.
them. Schiffman is likely correct in his conflation with the exception that perhaps only capital offenses must appear before the Guardian. Therefore, a slight modification of Schiffman’s view is in order: First, a rebuke before witnesses occurs on the day of the crime. In the CD community, rebukes for capital offenses must also occur before the Guardian, who makes a record. Second, when a case can be made against the violator, it is tried before the elders (CD) or the Many (1QS). 

The third purpose of the rebuke, argues Schiffman, is to warn the person of the seriousness of his transgression: “The biblical ideal of reproof was available, and through clever exegesis the sect was able to create the institution of reproof to solve the legal problem of ensuring that the accused fully understood the nature and consequences of his crime and therefore was to be considered a purposeful offender.” The community expels the man “who deliberately or through negligence transgresses one word of the Law of Moses” (1QS 8.22; p. 73); but if the sin is inadvertent, he must do penance for two years (1QS 9.1). Therefore, at the time of reproof those involved would likely determine if the sin were inadvertent.

The fourth purpose of rebuke is so that the rebuker might not also become guilty. When a brother fails to rebuke an offender, he not only defiles himself but potentially the community. For this reason, the one who fails to rebuke faces exclusion from the pure meal for either six months or a year (1QS 7.8f.; CD 14.22). According to CD 9.6-7, anyone who fails to rebuke on the day and later brings charges against someone, is guilty of a capital offense (מות דבר).

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64 This step probably occurs only when there are enough witnesses to bring a person to conviction. This will receive more discussion in Chapter Five.

65 Schiffman, Sectarian Law, p. 98. He compares it to the Tannaitic practice of hatra ah (warning), which however, must occur before the offense is committed (pp. 97-98).

66 Schiffman (Sectarian Law, p. 96) translates 1QS 7.8: “And whoever bears a grudge against his neighbor which is not according to the regulation(s) [ללא משפטים] shall be fined for six months (one year) [correction above the line of manuscript (see his n. 89 on p. 109)]. And thus also for him who takes vengeance for himself (regarding) any matter.” He rightly relates למשפטים to the sectarian regulation forbidding the bearing of a grudge (CD 9.2-8).

67 Schiffman, Sectarian Law, pp. 96-100. Schiffman’s translation of CD 14.22 (restored by C. Rabin) reads (p. 97): “[Whoever bears a grudge against his neighbor which] is not just [shall be punished] for [one] year.”
DSS make no distinction between sins against a brother and those which a brother merely witnesses. He who witnesses the sin can incur guilt merely for failing to rebuke the offender. Thus, any sin which a brother witnesses is an offense against him as one who belongs to and represents the community, and the Torah obligates him to take action.

4.3 Rebut in the Matthean Community

In Matthew 18.15, none of the four purposes of rebut, which appear in the DSS, come out explicitly. Purpose one, to maintain peace, is possibly implied. In the Septuagint, Leviticus 19.17 uses the same word for “rebuke” (ἐλεγχεῖν ἔλεγξεν) as Matthew (ἐλέγξον). So it is likely that CD 9.7-8 and Matthew have in mind the same text. Elsewhere in the New Testament, one must rid oneself of anger before the sun goes down, in order to keep peace in the community (Eph 4.26).

Matthew 5.23-24 shows also that peace in the community is a priority (RSV): “So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go, first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” The parable immediately following Matthew 18.20 also shuns unforgiveness among God’s people. Like the DSS, Matthew understands rebut as a practice carried out only within the community. Thus, rebut must occur when the brother, the community member (ὁ ἀδελφὸς σου), sins.

Here Matthew 7.1-5 also helps (RSV): Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

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68 Rebuke serves the peace of the community also in Did. 15.3: ἐλέγχετε δὲ ἀδελφόν μη ἐν ὀργῇ, ἀλλ’ ἐν εἰρήνῃ, ὡς ἔχετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ (“Rebuke one another not in anger but in peace, as you have in the gospel”). T. Gad 6.3 also accents peace: “Love one another from the heart, therefore, and if anyone sins against you, speak to him in peace. Expel the venom of hatred, and do not harbor deceit in your heart. If anyone confesses and repents, forgive him” (H. C. Kee, trans., OTP, 1:816).

69 It is a truism to insist that here ἀδελφὸς is not a literal brother, but a fellow community member. E.g., Matt 12.50 states: “For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother and sister and mother” (cf. Matt 23.8).
“Judge not” cannot mean that no one in the community may correct another. “Matt. xviii. 15 really annuls the too literal understanding of Matt. vii. 1, which had forbidden all judging of others.” Matthew 7.1-5 therefore means that the rebuker must first search his own heart before correcting another.

The Talmud contains an interesting parallel (b. ‘Arak. 16b [Epstein, p. 94]):

It was taught [in a Baraitha]: R. Tarfon said, I wonder whether there is any one in this generation who accepts reproof, for if one says to him: Remove the mote from between your eyes, he would answer: Remove the beam from between your eyes! R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: I wonder if there is one in this generation who knows how to reprove! R. Johanan b. Nuri said: I call heaven and earth to witness for myself that often was Akiba punished through me because I used to complain against him before our Rabban, Gamaliel Beribi, and all the more he showered love upon me to make true what was has been said: 

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; reprove a wise man and he will love thee [Prov 9.8].

Although R. Tarphon may have taken the above saying from the Jesus tradition, its application in ‘Arakin 16b illumines the practice of rebuke. One must take the beam out of own one’s eye first, otherwise the rebuke will be rejected. ‘Arakin 16b and Matthew use a common metaphor to describe rebuke without hypocrisy. Further, the wise one shows love for the rebuker, whereas the “scorner” hates him. Matthew 7.6 also states after 7.1-5: “Do not give something holy to dogs nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn and tear you to pieces.” Because of its present context, this saying might apply to rebuke: One does not rebuke “dogs” or “swine,” who like the scorner despise correction. “Dogs” and “swine” indicate people who are outside the community of faith. In Matthew, as in the DSS, one rebukes only

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71It resembles Paul’s injunction in Gal 6.1 (NIV): “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”
72See Davies and Allison, Matthew, p. 671, n. 6.
73It would apply then neither to the prohibition of the gentle mission (Cf. W. D. Davies, Setting, p. 326; contrast Matt 10.6) nor to the exclusion of the unbaptised from the Lord’s Supper (cf. Did. 9.5).
74Cf. S. Brooks, Matthew’s Community, p. 92: “Within rabbinic texts, ‘dogs’ were frequently used as an unkind metaphor for the Gentile world, and ‘pigs’ frequently symbolized Rome.” In the Matthean community, which seeks to make disciples of Gentiles (28.19), these metaphors now mean “outsiders.”
the fellow community member, from whom one expects a loving response.

The evidence suggests that as in the DSS, one purpose of rebuke is that no one hold hatred or anger against a brother, so that there might be peaceful relations in the community of God. The Matthean community, likewise, reserves rebuke for those inside the community of faith.

The second purpose of rebuke in the DSS, to keep track of the violation, seems very far from Matthew’s purpose. Matthew 18.15 says that if the brother listens, the rebuker has gained him. However, the DSS require a record of sins, in order to establish a case against a repeated offender and to exclude some from the pure food and drink. Matthew requires immediate and complete forgiveness of the repentant sinner, even the one who sins repeatedly (Matt 18.21f.). Matthew also says nothing about temporary exclusions.

Thus, the rebuke of Matthew 18.15 must occur privately (metaq so· kaφ a·to·). The Lord instructs concerning prayer, “For if you forgive men their transgressions, your Father in heaven will also forgive you; but if do you not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions” (6.14,15). Members of the Matthean community must be quick to forgive, because God is (18.35). True forgiveness according to Matthew means not counting a brother’s sins: “Then Peter approached and said to him, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times’” (18.21-22). In contrast, the members of the CD community must rebuke sinners before witnesses and the Guardian in order to keep a record. A primary concern is purity, to keep the pure meals from defilement and to assure God’s presence in the community. Since

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75 1 Cor 5.12 is similar: “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.”
76 Had the sinner offended one but was rebuked by another in private, it does not mean that he need not make amends with the one against whom he sinned; Matthew would hardly consider an issue settled had the sinner not made peace with an offended party (Matt 5.23-24; cf. above p. 31).
77 εβδομηκοντα ἕπτα reads the same as LXX Gen 4.24, which unambiguously means “seventy seven” not “seventy times seven.” Cf. F. W. Beare, Matthew, p. 381.
reconciliation, not purity, is Matthew’s first aim, public awareness of the sin is unnecessary, once the offender repents.

Furthermore, since Matthew envisions a community of “little ones,” who have equal standing, no rebuke need appear before an official like the Guardian. Rebuke between “little ones” is sufficient. Each member of the community carries out a role before the others, which in the DSS is reserved for a priestly leader like the Guardian.

The third purpose of rebuke, to warn the offender, may also play a role in Matthew 18.15.\(^{78}\) Considering the grave consequences (Matt 18.6-9) of causing offense, warning potential offenders is certainly a concern of Matthew 18, and thus, the rebuke could also function as a warning. Matthew outlines three steps in correction, which aid the community in knowing for sure that the offender is recalcitrant and in giving him opportunity to repent.

Matthew 18.15 is silent about the fourth purpose of rebuke in the DSS, that the rebuker might not become guilty. In Matthew 18.15 one aims at “gaining” the brother, not at avoiding the guilt of failing to rebuke.\(^{79}\) The parable of the lost sheep accents this desired outcome (18.12-14): since the Father desires to find the lost sheep (community member), so also the community must care for those straying. The hope is that the brother will immediately repent, and the correction process need proceed no further. On the other hand, in Matthew, as in the DSS, the mere act of witnessing sin affects the witness, whether or not the sin is against him personally. The witness is sinned against because offenses cause “little ones” to stumble (18.6) and because they harm the peace of the community.\(^{80}\)

\(^{78}\)Titus 3.10 (RSV) supports this contention in another Christian community: “As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him.” 1 Tim 5.20 states in contrast, “Rebuke those who sin before all, in order that the rest also might have reverence.” Here the rebuke serves to warn the community, not specifically the rebuker. Also, 1 Tim 5.20 seems to differ from Matt 18.15 because it requires no private rebuke.

\(^{79}\)Cf. Garcia Martinez, “La reprension fraterna,” p. 40 (summary), “The reason for the obligation in Mt is the desire to ‘gain’ his brother; in Qumran, that of not falling into the same fault.”

\(^{80}\)This might help to resolve problems caused by the textual variant in Matthew 18.15 (see p. 27, n. 58). The shorter reading may be the more likely original, because it can explain how the other reading came about: The scribe may have wished to make what was implied by the context explicit, namely that sin is not neutral and violates the one witnessing it.
Matthew requires that the goal of rebuke be to win the brother. It demands immediate forgiveness of the repentant. Matthew, as in the DSS, probably views sin as affecting the whole community; thus, the offender sins against the witness of the offense. Now when the brother does not heed the rebuke, the gospel also requires further action from the community. This action brings into play “one or two” others, and this is the subject of the next chapter, “Witnesses.”
CHAPTER FIVE
WITNESSES

5.1 Texts

And furthermore, let no man accuse his companion before the Congregation without having first admonished him in the presence of witnesses.
IQS 6.1 (p. 69)

Every sin which a man commits against the Law, and which his companion witnesses, he being alone, if it is a capital matter he shall report it to the Guardian, rebuking him in his presence, and the Guardian shall record it against him in his presence, and the Guardian shall record it against him in case he should commit it again before one man and he should report it to the Guardian once more. Should he repeat it and be taken in the act before one man, his case shall be complete.

And if there are two (witnesses), each testifying to a different matter, the man shall be excluded from the pure Meal provided that they are trustworthy and that each informs the Guardian on the day that they witnessed (the offence). In matters of property, they shall accept two trustworthy witnesses and shall exclude (the culprit) from the pure Meal on the word of one witness alone.
CD 9.16-23 (p. 94)

But if he doesn’t listen, take with you in addition one or two others, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every case may be established. But if he disobeys them, tell the congregation . . . Again I tell you, that if two of you agree on the earth concerning any case, whatever you ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there I am in their midst.
Matthew 18.16-17a, 19-20

5.2 Witnesses in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Both the DSS and Matthew have the same Torah passage, Deuteronomy 19.15, as their point of departure: “A single witness shall not prevail against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed; only on the evidence of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained” (RSV). This law is applied to capital

\[81\] Vermes reads רון (“other,” “different”) while others read יון (“one”). See e.g. L.H. Schiffman, *Sectarian Law*, p. 82, n. 13. He translates it, “If, however, two witnesses testify to one case, he (the offender) shall only be removed from the pure food provided they are reliable (witnesses)” (p. 73).
crimes in Deuteronomy 17.6 (RSV; cf. Num 35.30): “On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses he that is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.”

The Damascus Document offers an interesting interpretation of the law of witnesses (CD 9.16-23). If a person commits a crime before a single witness, that witness must report the transgressor by rebuking him in the presence of the Guardian (قضاء). If the offender commits the crime again before another witness, it shall be similarly reported. But it takes a third transgression and witness to bring him to the full consequences of his act. Such is the case with crimes worthy of the death penalty (موت דבר). If, however, two witnesses attest to different matters (or the same crime, see n. 81 above), then the person must refrain from the pure Meal of the congregation.

Thus, three witnesses are needed for the death penalty, but only two for exclusion from the meal. However, for matters involving property, which are not as severe in their penalty, only two witnesses are necessary for full conviction--but only one to exclude the offender from the meal.

This interpretation adds two twists to the original passage. First, when the Torah specifies that two or three witnesses must testify, the Rule interprets this to mean that for the lesser crime only two witnesses are necessary, but for theموت דבר, three are needed. Secondly, if the person commits the crime repeatedly, only one witness needs to see it each time.

CD 9.20-23 also contains stipulations which involve the pure meal. According to Schiffman, only an adequate suspicion of uncleanness was enough to exclude a person from it:

The reason for which fewer witnesses were accepted for separation from the pure food is that this was simply a sectarian sanction and not conviction for violation of a biblical prescription. Whenever a person could be shown, even with a minimum of testimony, to have transgressed, he was prohibited from contact with the pure food. For as will be shown, the sect fervently believed that transgression rendered the offender ritually impure. Hence, he had to be removed to prevent his rendering the food of the other members of the group ritually impure.82

The sect required fewer witnesses for exclusion from a pure meal, than for a conviction of a crime. It thus freely interpreted Deuteronomy 19.15 to make it apply to its own particular needs.

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82Sectarian Law, p. 76.
5.3 **Witnesses in Matthew 18.16, 17a**

According to Matthew 18.16, when a brother refuses a rebuke, the rebuker must bring one or two others for a second confrontation with the offender. 18.16 now makes a direct appeal to Deuteronomy 19.15. The total number who will participate in the rebuke will be two or three. Although the first rebuke must occur in private, Matthew calls for witnesses of the second rebuke. What exactly are they witnessing? They were not present for the actual crime. According to J. Gnilka, the witnesses come to make the rebuke more forceful, not to bear witness against the sinner:

Falls dieser Verweis ergebnislos verläuft, sollen gemäß der Zeugenregel Dt 19,15 zwei oder drei andere [sic]83 Gemeindemitglieder beigezogen werden, nicht um als Zeugen gegen den Sünder aufzutreten, sondern um dem Verweis des einen mehr Geltung zu verschaffen.84

The use of παρακούω in 18.17, instead of ἀκούω (18.15,16), may support Gnilka’s contention. Παρακούω is often used of disobedience to authority.85 In 18.15 and 16 use akoσχ of the heeding (or not heeding) the rebuke of the brother, whereas 18.17 uses παρακούω, a strengthened form, of the offender’s disobedience to the two or three and to the ἐκκλησία. The intensive κατ in 18.17 also tends to liken the disobeying of the two or three to that of the community: “If he disobeys the ἐκκλησία also . . .” This may indicate that the two or three represent the authority of the community to the offender. Since Jesus is in the midst of “two or three,” one member alone may not have the same authority (see p. 42f. below).

However, in contrast to the view of Gnilka, these witnesses will likely bear testimony against the sinner too. As seen in Chapter Four, the DSS require witnesses of all rebukes (1QS 6.1; CD 9.3). In the DSS the witnesses of the rebuke probably serve to protect the rebuker himself, who could suffer punishment for failing to rebuke. They may later have to verify that the

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83 The text says to bring along “one or two” others, not “two or three” others! Clearly the rebuker of 18.15 also acts as one of the witnesses.
85 Παρακούω is used of disobedience to a king (Esther 3.3, 3.8 [LXX]), to God (Josephus, Ant. 1.190, 6.142), to the commandments of God (Tob 3.4; 2 Clem. 3.4, 6.7), and to a prophet (Ant. 6.141; T. Dan 2.3).
rebuke did indeed occur “on the day” of the crime.\textsuperscript{86} In Matthew also, the two or three who witness the rebuke may later verify that the correction procedure was carried out properly.\textsuperscript{87} However, they also witness the reaction of the brother. Since a positive response to rebuke results in “gaining” the brother (18.15), the offense which merits expulsion from the community is the continual rebuff of rebuke, not the offense which initiated the correction process. Therefore, the two or three may have to bear testimony against the offender to the community, not concerning the original offense, but concerning the offender’s stubborn refusal to accept correction. The one or two others of the second rebuke, then, do not serve to protect the rebuker from the consequences of failing to rebuke the offender; he in fact is one of the two or three witnesses. Also, in keeping with Matthew 18’s call to forgive the repentant sinner, Matthew does not call for the cumulation of witnesses of separate crimes (as in CD 9.16-23).

The next two sections will treat Matthew 18.19 and 20. Matthew 18.19-20 might very well be an elaboration of the authority of the community in 18.18, and would then specify the minimum number of community members needed to effect an expulsion or else refer to the authority which any two or three have in general. While the text is ambivalent, it seems better to stress the repetition of the words “two” (18.19) and “two or three” (18.20). As argued above, the two or three procure a more forceful rebuke, for they exercise an authority which is more representative of the community than that of a single rebuker. Later, in the context of bringing the case before the community, the two or three probably bear witness against the brother. It is possible at this stage that the two or three have a significant role to play, and this is why 18.19-20 picks up the language of “two or three.” Because of this, the next two sections will treat 18.19-20 in the present chapter concerning the role of witnesses.

\textsuperscript{86}M. Sota 1.1-2 requires that the warning of a suspected adulteress also occur before witnesses, probably in order to verify later that the warning did in fact occur.  
\textsuperscript{87}Cf. Garcia Martinez, “La Reprension Fraterna,” p. 36.
5.4 The Meaning of Matthew 18.19

Matthew 18.19 addresses prayer to the Father by two community members in agreement. Matthew applies to the context of community discipline what may have at one time been a more general saying concerning prayer. J. D. M. Derrett argues that 18.19 is traditionally mistranslated:

The word *pragma* really should not be translated ‘thing’ as in ‘anything’. The English word ‘thing’ no doubt has a very wide scope. But *pragma* means ‘business’, ‘affair’, ‘property’, and, in particular, ‘lawsuit or litigation’. . . . Correspondingly *sumphonein* does not mean merely to be harmonious or united, but implies agreement about a financial matter, such as a price. It also means to agree to a settlement or an accord, to come to terms on an arrangement.

Πράγμα is of particular importance. While many say πράγματος in 18.19 means “all things” in general, the context of community correction suggests that its more restricted legal nuance is in use.

Παντὸς πράγματος therefore corresponds to πᾶν ρῆμα in 18.16. Both πράγμα and ρῆμα have רֵצָת as their Hebrew equivalent. Why would Matthew employ πράγμα instead of ρῆμα, if he meant legal disputes or cases by each? Perhaps it has to do with Matthew’s tendency to smooth out Semitisms in the tradition and to use better Greek (assuming the tradition does not already use πרְכֶפֶם). In the first instance he uses ρῆμα because his Greek Bible uses ρῆμα. In the second

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88Cf. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.9.1; Josephus, *Contra Apion*, 2.177; 1 Cor. 6.1; and MM, s.v. “πράγμα,” which has numerous examples of the word’s legal nuance.
89Derrett overstates his case slightly. Συμφωνέω does not always carry a legal nuance and can merely mean “harmonious” or “united.” Where it does carry a more contractual or legal nuance is important for this study. See especially Diodorus Siculus 12.25.3, who states “... also in case the tribunes could not agree among themselves, the will of the interceding tribune must not be prevented” (C.H. Oldfather, trans., 1946, LCL IV:424-425). Cf. also Diodorus Siculus 14.26.3 and selected papyri in MM, s.v. “συμφωνέω.”
90“‘Where Two or Three are Convened in My Name...’: A Sad Misunderstanding,” *ExpTim* 91 (1979):85-86.
91See, e.g., C. Maurer, “πράγμα,” *TDNT* 6:638-640, states that in 18.19 the word means “all possible things.” He uses the plural, “things,” to define πράγματος which is singular.
92LXX Deut 19.15 differs only slightly from Matt: “ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ ἐπὶ στόματος τριῶν μαρτύρων σταθήσεται πᾶν ρῆμα.”
instance he uses the far more common Greek word for a legal matter, πράγμα, since ῥῆμα with legal nuance is a Hebraism.\textsuperscript{93}  Allen states concerning Matthew’s style:

The Greek of the Gospel is not so full of Aramaisms and of harsh constructions due to translation from Aramaic as is the Greek of the Second Gospel.  Nor, on the other hand, has it the Septuagintal and, so, Hebraic ring of the language of the Third Gospel.\textsuperscript{94}

Thus, παντὸς πράγματος is probably not “all possible things,” but every “case,” “dispute,” or “matter” which requires the attention of the community and to which the law of witnesses (Deut 19.17) applies.  Matthew 18.19 does not address prayer about just anything, but prayer concerning the offenses of an unrepentant brother.

Matthew 18.10 may add to this argument: “See to it that you do not despise one of these little ones.  For I tell you that their angels in heaven are always beholding the face of my Father in heaven.”  The angels of the “little ones” have constant access to the King of heaven.\textsuperscript{95}  Tobit 12.15 may serve as an important background text (BA recension): “I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, who bear up the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the Holy One.”\textsuperscript{96}  In Tobit, seven angels present the prayers of the earthly saints to God.  In Matthew, the angels bring the petitions of the “little ones” to God, to whose presence they have continual access.  Thompson states:

Whatever the precise nuance, this doctrinal statement teaches that through their angels in heaven “these little ones” constantly enjoy a special relationship to the Father.  Since this privilege indicates their true value, they are not to be disregarded or despised.\textsuperscript{97}  Thus, Matthew 18.19 further emphasizes the direct access to the Father of two (the minimum number of witnesses), who have witnessed the offender’s unrepentance and despising of the

\textsuperscript{93}See BAGD, s.v. “ῥῆμα,” 2, “... after Hebrew thing, object, matter, event...”


\textsuperscript{95}Beare, \textit{Matthew}, p. 377, states: “In this figure, God is pictured as an oriental monarch surrounded by such ceremony that not even his courtiers are permitted to see him except when they receive special permission (cf. Esther 4:11).”

\textsuperscript{96}Thompson, \textit{Advice}, p. 160, n. 9, refers to Tob 12.15.  Codex א has more simply (NAB), “I am Raphael, one of the seven angels, who enter and serve before the Glory of the Lord.”  Still, Raphael had brought Tobit and Sarah’s prayers before the Lord (12.12).

\textsuperscript{97}Thompson, \textit{Advice}, pp. 154-55.
members of the community. Their requests concerning the recalcitrant brother meet a direct and immediate response from the heavenly Father.

5.5 **The Meaning of Matthew 18.20**

It is possible that that the Jewish concept of *minyan* explains the meaning of 18.20. B. Englezakis states:

> What Jesus does in Matt. xviii.20 is to divine the *minyan* of his congregation, the requisite number of faithful for the congregational worship. . . . In Matt. xviii.16 Jesus, distinguishing between fraternal and judicial correction, differentiates between the congregation (ἐκκλησία) and the “two or three.”

J. Sievers, however, argues against Englezakis’ contention that Matthew 18.20 refers only to liturgical gatherings. He contends instead that the context concerns disciplinary, not liturgical matters; that συνάγω is rarely used for liturgical gathering and never for such in Matthew’s 24 uses of it; and that Mishnah ‘Abot 3.2 and other rabbinic passages “do not presuppose a liturgical setting or any *formal* gathering.”

Sievers thus presents Mishnah ‘Abot 3.2 as a key background text:

> If two sit together and no words of the Law [are spoken] between them, there is the seat of the scornful, as it is written, *Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* But if two sit together and words of the Law [are spoken] between them, the Divine Presence rests between them, . . .

Sievers considers the concept of *Shekhinah*, the “Divine Presence” of God, as the key to Matthew 18.20. Mishnah ‘Abot 3.6 is also important:

> R. Halaffa b. Dosa of Kefar Hanaiya said: If ten men sit together and occupy themselves in the Law, the Divine Presence rests among them, for it is written, *God standeth in the Congregation of God.* And when [do we learn this] even of five? Because it is written, *And hath founded his group upon the earth.* And whence even of three? Because it is written, *He judgeth among the judges* [םלוה; Ps. 82.1]. And whence even of two?

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98 Benedict Englezakis, “*Thomas, Logion 30,*” NTS 25 (1979):264, who further suggests the reason for reducing the number from the ten that both Qumran (1QS 6.3) and the Rabbis required (m. Sanh. 1.6): “The fact that Jesus, according to the gospel tradition, always expected to have a very small number of followers, a ‘little flock,’ makes the probability that he reduced the *minyan* of his congregation more than plausible.”

99 This seems a strange argument since the word for “synagogue,” the very place of Jewish worship, is a cognate of συνάγω.

100 Sievers, “*Shekinah*,” p. 177.

Because it is written, *Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard.* And whence even of one? Because it is written, *In every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee.*

For the present study, the most intriguing point of *Mishnah Abot* 3.6 is the presence of the *Shekhinah* with three who are judging and its use of Psalm 82.1. Sievers states: “The Presence of the *Shekinah* among three or more judges is a recurrent theme in rabbinic literature. It is assumed in criminal and civil cases as well as during their deliberations concerning the fixing of the calendar.”

Although R. Halafta b. Dosa is dated in the second half of the second century, it reflects an understanding of the need of God’s presence in judging which is biblical.

The citation of Psalm 82.1 in 3.6 may reflect an early understanding of this psalm. No matter how one reads שדים (gods/judges), Psalm 82 emphasizes God’s role in all judging. It is ultimately His prerogative to judge (82.8; RSV): “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to thee belong all the nations!” This is recurrent in the Old Testament. In Exodus 22.9 two disputing parties must bring their case before God (שדים) and He will make a decision. Translators sometimes render אלהים “judges” (e.g., NIV; KJV), as does Danby in *Abot* 3.6 above. God and his judges are so intimately related in the thought of the Old Testament, that the rejection of a decision of a priest or a judge, who ministers before God, earns the death penalty, for it is tantamount to rejecting God Himself (Deut 17.12; cf. Josh 17.18; *m. Sanh.* 11.1).

The theme of God mediating his judgment through members of the community also appears in the DSS. In particular, 1QSb 3.22-27 so blesses the priests (p. 236):

The M[aster shall bless] the sons of Zadok the Priests, whom God has chosen to confirm His Covenant for[ever, and to inquire] into all His precepts in the midst of His people, and to instruct them as He commanded; who have established [His Covenant] on truth and watched over all his laws with righteousness and walked according to the way of His choice.

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103 Sievers, “*Shekinah*,” p. 173.
105 Cf. however, Jesus’ citation of the Ps. 82.6 in Jn. 10.34-35. He says that God called “gods” (θεοι) those “to whom the word of God came.” Thus, Jesus’ own understanding שלוה in Ps. 82.1 and 6 may have something to do with the Jewish leadership, the authoritative receivers of Torah (cf. Mt. 23.2: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses”).
May the Lord bless you from his holy [Abode]; may He set you as a splendid jewel in the midst of the congregation of the saints.

May He [judge all] the leaders by your works, and all [the princes] of the peoples by the words from out of your lips!

God sets the sons of Zadok in the midst of the people not only to mediate the covenant and “His precepts” (משפטין) but also His decisions of judgment. God’s judging “in the midst” also appears in 1QpHab 10.3-5 (p. 288):

And as for that which He said, By cutting off many peoples you have forfeited your own soul: Interpreted this concerns the condemned House whose judgment God will pronounce in the midst of many peoples. He will bring him thence for judgement and will declare him guilty in the midst of them, and will chastise him with fire of brimstone.

God is the ultimate judge of all (1QS 10.18; p. 77): “I know that judgement of all the living is in his hand, and it is He who will render to man his reward.” Since the theme of the God judging in the midst of humanity, appears in rabbinic, Old Testament and Dead Sea texts, it would hardly be surprising if it appeared in Matthew’s Gospel too.

Matthew 9.1-8 aptly exhibits this theme. Even though it omits the phrase, “Who can forgive sins except God alone?” (Mark 2.7; cf. Luke 5.21), the context shows that the people understood that only God could forgive sins. The final statement of 9.8 exclaims, “And having observed [the healing], the crowds were afraid and glorified God who gave such authority to men.” So Matthew recognizes that it is God who gives men the authority to judge, in this case to forgive sins. The phrase, τὸν θεόν τὸν δόντα ἔξουσιαν τοιαύτην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (9.8), is uniquely Matthean and indicates the Matthean community’s God-given authority to forgive sins.

Matthew 18.20 might address a similar need. Although the original saying might have redefined the minyan of Jesus’ congregation, Matthew weaves it into the present context and so

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106 The tendency of Matthew to shorten Mark explains this omission; his rendering of this story is much shorter, and thus leaves room for the five discourses.

107 This follows from the fact that Matthew uses τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, a plural. Matthew does not state that they people gave glory to the God, who gives authority to the one man Jesus, but “to men.” This plural most probably refers to the Matthean community. E. Schweizer (“Matthew’s Church,” in The Interpretation of Matthew, G. Stanton ed., IRT 3 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], p. 132) states: “When 9.8 speaks of authority given to ‘men’ . . . , it is certain that Matthew has the community in view, where forgiveness of sins is still practised.”
applies it to the presence of divine authority in the judgment of an unrepentant brother. Jesus, to whom all authority in heaven and earth is given (28.18), promises his presence with the “two or three” gathered in his name. Jesus’ presence fulfills the need for the divine Shekhinah in the community’s judgments.\textsuperscript{108} If this understanding of how 18.20 fits into its context is correct, it may imply that the community may not ignore the testimony of two or three witnesses. In the Old Testament, the rejection of the decision of those who mediated God’s judgments merited the death penalty (see above p. 43). In the Matthean community, Jesus’ presence in the midst of the two or three likewise mandates an action from the community and should also bring fear of God in the heart of the offender.

5.6 \textbf{The Significance of Witnesses in Matthew 18.19-20}

Matthew 18.19-20 may indicate that the two or three act not only as witnesses, but in a sense as the judges (or jury), who make a decision on the case with the approval of the congregation (ἐκκλησία). On the other hand, the DSS designate judges (CD 10.4-7; p. 94):

\begin{quote}
And this is the Rule for the Judges of the Congregation

Ten shall be elected from the congregation for a definite time, four from the tribe of Levi and Aaron, and six from Israel. (They shall be) learned in the Book of Meditation and in the constitutions of the Covenant, and aged between twenty-five and sixty years.
\end{quote}

Thus, CD requires judges, who were doubtless full members in good standing, with at least four of the ten being Levites or priests. 1QS designates a “Council of the Community” which consisted of “twelve men and three priests” (1QS 8.1; p. 720). Although the details concerning this council are unclear, it likely heard charges made against offenders.\textsuperscript{109} Having a more sophisticated judicial structure, the courts did not also use witnesses as judges.

\textsuperscript{108}Jesus also promises his presence in Mt. 28.18-20: “All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the gentiles, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all the things I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.” In this context Matthew again addresses the question of both authority and his presence. The authority to make disciples, to baptize, and to teach comes from the abiding presence of Jesus, to whom God has given all authority.

\textsuperscript{109}See Vermes \textit{DSSE}, pp. 4-5.
Matthew 18:15-20 does not specify who the one or two others must be, and yet seems to bestow great authority upon them. Since everyone in the community is a “little one,” no leader, elder, or priest, has any special prerogative to be a witness. In contrast CD 9.23-10.3 instructs:

No Judge\textsuperscript{110} shall pass a sentence of death on the testimony of a witness who has not yet attained the age of enrolment and who is not God-fearing.

No man who has willfully transgressed any commandment shall be declared a trustworthy witness against his companion until he is purified and able to return.

A member serving probation concerning the “purity” could not serve as a witness, and this may eliminate those who are at a novice level as well. Schiffman assumes that, because the witness must be “god-fearing,” the CD 10.1 means that “those who were in the various stages of the novitiate were permitted to serve as witnesses in financial matters, while only those who had been accepted as full-fledged members of the sect might testify in capital members.”\textsuperscript{111} Members serving probation and novices of the community were disqualified from the most important cases. On the other hand, Matthew gives specific qualifications for the witnesses. Likely, any “little one” of the community may serve as a witness.

J. D. M. Derrett proposes the following parallel from the Rabbinic literature in an attempt to demonstrate the function of the two or three:

The customary Jewish procedure in disputes was for the parties, if they found themselves irreconcilable, to nominate each his own ‘judge’, a layman known to him and having a reputation for impartiality (Jews boasted a wider spread of legal competence than could Greeks: Josephus, c.Ap. 2.177-8). These two would get together and attempt to settle the problem. If they failed, by ordinary methods, they approached a third person unconnected with the parties, and these formed an informal ‘court’.\textsuperscript{112}

This procedure is found in Mishnah Sanhedrin 3.1f. Closer examination, however, demonstrates that it is less of a parallel than Derrett contends, for the judges chosen to settle a property dispute do not also act as witnesses. They are chosen to consider the testimony of the various witnesses. Further, three judges may not try capital offenses, since twenty-three are required (\textit{m. Sanh}. 1.4; 4.1). Nevertheless, the rabbinic parallels in Mishnah Sanhedrin and 'Abot 3.6 do demonstrate the

\textsuperscript{110}The Hebrew for “Judge” is plural (. . . לׁשופטים).

\textsuperscript{111}Schiffman, \textit{Sectarian Law}, p. 60.

\textsuperscript{112}“Where two or three,” pp. 84-85
idea that as few as three judges may exercise divine authority. In Matthew, the witnesses seem to exercise a special authority, but they are also true witnesses, for they bear witness to the brother’s recalcitrance. Further, Matthew 18:15-20 deals with cases which are more severe in their consequences than property disputes (see Chapter Six below).

The two or three witnesses of Matthew 18.15-20 seem, therefore, to have the following significance. They rebuke and bring the case of the unrepentant brother before the community. They give testimony to the community and request the Father to bring justice to the offender, who has despised the “little ones.” Both the offender and the community must keep two realities in mind: (1) The Father’s concern for as few as two little ones (18.19) means that He will grant their request concerning this dispute; (2) Jesus himself is present in the midst of the two or three who rebuke and testify against the offender. The offender should therefore stand in fear. Also the community may not lay aside the witnesses’ report—God himself grants their request and Jesus backs them up with his own authoritative presence. The community will now lay upon the unrepentant brother the full consequences of his actions. The next chapter will show what these consequences are.
6.1 **Texts**

If one of them has lied deliberately in matters of property, he shall be excluded from the pure Meal of the Congregation for one year and shall do penance with respect to one quarter of his food.

1QS 6.24-25 (p. 70)

If any man has uttered the [Most] Venerable Name even though frivolously, or as a result of shock or for any other reason whatever, while reading the Book or praying, he shall be dismissed and shall return to the Council of the Community no more.

1QS 6.27 - 7.2 (pp. 70-71)

And no man among the members of the Covenant of the Community who deliberately, on any point whatever, turns aside from all that is commanded, shall touch the pure Meal of the men of holiness or know anything of their counsel until his deeds are purified from all falsehood and he walks in perfection of way. And then according to the judgement of the Congregation, he shall be admitted to the Council and shall be inscribed in his rank. This rule shall apply to whoever enters the Community.

Every man who enters the Council of Holiness, (the Council of those) who walk in the way of perfection as commanded by God, and who deliberately or through negligence transgresses one word of the Law of Moses, on any point whatever, shall be expelled from the Council of the Community and shall return no more; no man of holiness shall be associated in his property or counsel in any matter at all.

1QS 8.16-19,20-24 (p. 73)

But no man who strays so as to profane the Sabbath and the feasts shall be put to death; it shall fall to men to keep him in custody. And if he is healed of his error, they shall keep him in custody for seven years and he shall afterwards approach the Assembly.

CD 12.3-6 (p. 96)

But if he disobeys the church also, let him be to you as the gentile or the tax collector. I tell you the truth: Whatever you bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 18.17b-18

6.2 **Consequences in the Dead Sea Scrolls**

The consequences of discipline are related to the overall attitude of the Qumran community. Since they believe that they alone keep the Covenant and are sons of Light, and that all others are under Satan’s dominion, the expulsion of a brother is in fact more severe than death itself—it decides the eternal destiny of that one (1QS 2.11-12,15-17; p. 63):
Cursed be the man who enters the Covenant while walking among the idols of his heart, who sets up before himself his stumbling-block of sin so that he may backslide! . . . God’s wrath and His zeal for His precepts shall consume him in everlasting destruction. All the curses of the Covenant shall cling to him and God will set him apart for evil. He shall be cut off from the midst of all the sons of light, and because he has turned aside from God on account of his idols and his stumbling-block of sin, his lot shall be among those who are cursed forever.

Expulsion, therefore, is a punishment which the community did not apply lightly. As noted in Chapter Five, in matters involving death, three witnesses must testify to a crime for a conviction. Not only so, but the community did not necessarily apply the Torah consistently. Whereas 1QS requires permanent expulsion of one who even accidentally speaks the “Venerable Name” (1QS 6.27-7.2), CD 12.3-6 penalized the Sabbath breaker with seven years probation, instead of with death (cf. Num 15.32f.). 113 1QS 8.16-19 further allows “members of the covenant of the Community” who sin deliberately to return after a probationary period. 1QS 8.20-24, however, does not allow those who have entered the “Council of the Community” to return. It is possible that the latter is an inner circle who are given harsher treatment if they fail, 114 for the Qumran community also expelled permanently those who betray the community after belonging for ten years or more (1QS 7.22-25). Perhaps the assumption is that those who have belonged for so long know better and are therefore more culpable (cf. Jas 3.1).

113 There is some question whether the Qumran community was actually a bit more lenient in practice. Josephus remarks concerning expulsion from the Essenes: “Those who are convicted of serious crimes they expel from the order; and the ejected individual often comes to a most miserable end. For, being bound by their oaths and usages, he is not at liberty to partake of other men’s food, and so falls to eating grass and wastes away and dies of starvation. This has led them in compassion to receive many back in the last stage of exhaustion, deeming that torments which have brought them to the verge of death are a sufficient penalty for their misdoings” (BJ 2.143-44 [H. St. J. Thackeray, trans., LCL, 2.377-379]).

114 Forkman, Limits, p. 61: “The contradiction between 1QS VIII 16-19 and VIII 20 - IX 2 seems to be able to be solved if one assumes that the earlier subsection gives the regulations for the outer circle of the sect, those who have applied and who have entered into the covenant but who are still on the novice level, while the later subsection gives the rules of membership for the perfect members, the men of holy perfection, who have gone through the whole novitiate, been incorporated in the economic community and had a seat and a voice in the council of the sect.” Schiffman, Sectarian Law, sees no contradiction (p. 167). 1QS 8.16-19 “deals with offenses against the miswah, the sectarian legal principles derived through biblical exegesis, . . . ” while 1QS 8.20-9.2 “deals with laws explicitly stated in the Torah, . . . ”
CD 9.23-10.2 also refers to the death penalty (p. 94): “No Judge shall pass sentence of death [למית] on the testimony of a witness who has not yet attained the age of enrolment and who is not God-fearing.” However, many scholars tend to doubt whether the community actually practiced the death sentence. For example, Vermes states:

In regard to the capital cases, to which should be added apostasy in a state of demonic possession (CD XII, 2-3), the adultery of a betrothed girl (4Q Ord. 2-4:10-11), slandering the people of Israel and treason (TS LXIV, 6-13), it is highly unlikely that either the Jewish or the Roman authorities would have granted any rights of execution to the sect. So this is probably part of the sect’s vision of the future age, when it is Israel de jure would constitute de facto the government of the chosen people.\footnote{DSSE, p. 12.}

Even if they did practice the death penalty secretly, it is hard to imagine that they could have thought it worse than expulsion. It is possible therefore that expulsion was a substitute for the death penalty which other authorities forbade.\footnote{See William Horbury, “Extirpation and Excommunication,” VT 35 (1985): 16 and 38, who contends that excommunication exclusion was “a surrogate for, or preliminary to, the death penalty” in non-sectarian Judaism.}

Other sins, however, called for a lesser penalty--separation from the pure meal of the sect for periods of time corresponding to the severity of the crime. This penalty placed the person back into the category of a novice. With some crimes, it meant undergoing the full novitiate again (1QS 8.24-9.2).

6.3 **Consequences in Matthew 18.17**

Matthew 18.17 requires the assembly to treat the unrepentant brother as though he were a gentile (ὁ ἑθνικός) or a tax collector (ὁ τελωνής). The only other place in Matthew where these two words occur together points to those normally considered outside the realm of God’s favour (5.46-47, RSV):

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

The use of the terms “tax collector” and “gentile” for those outside suggests that the Matthean community retained a good deal of its Jewishness, which is in keeping with other
aspects of the Gospel. The very terms for outsiders are shaped by Jewish purity customs (cf. Matt 7.6). In Judaism tax collectors and gentiles were considered unclean and stood outside God’s favour, and thus, in the dominion of Satan, who controlled all the kingdoms of the world (Matt 5.8). Therefore, many Jews did not consider it proper to eat with tax collectors\textsuperscript{117} and gentiles\textsuperscript{118} (cf. Matt 9.10-11; Gal 2.12). Paul took a similar attitude towards the unrepentant sinner in 1 Corinthians 5.5-11. He instructs the Corinthians to hand this one over to Satan (5.5) and to regard such persons as unfit to eat with (5.11), but in the ultimate hope that they would return. Thus, Matthew 18.17 probably also calls the community to regard the unrepentant brother as unclean and no longer a part of the community.\textsuperscript{119}

Though such persons might now be outside God’s favour they may not have been beyond hope.\textsuperscript{120} In Matthew, Jesus pays special attention both to tax collectors (e.g., 9.10-11; 11.19) and to gentiles (e.g., 24.14, 28.19). According to Matthew 18, the members of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} Tax collectors were among the “Despised Trades” which carried the greatest stigma, according to the Rabbinic texts; J. Jeremias (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, F. H. and C. H. Cave, trans. [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969], pp. 310-12), states concerning these trades (e.g., gambler, usurer, herdsman, tax collector): “But it was to [these] trades . . . that greatest stigma was attached, and it meant nothing less than the loss of civil and political rights. In this list are gathered the trades which were based entirely on trickery and were therefore banned de jure” (cf. m. Sanh. 3.3; b. Sanh. 25b). A tax collector made a house unclean simply by entering it (m. "ohar. 7.6).
\item \textsuperscript{118} Emil Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135), ed. Géza Vermès et al., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 2.83-84, writes: “The separation of Judaism from Paganism was further intensified by the notion that Gentiles were unclean because they did not observe the purity laws. . . . No law-abiding Jew would partake of Gentile fare (Dan. 1:8; Jud. 10:5; Tob. 1:10 f.) or eat at a Gentile table (Jub. 22:16; Act. 11:3; Gal. 2:12).”
\item \textsuperscript{119} Forkman (Limits, pp. 121-24) suggests that Matt 18.8-9 is also an expulsion passage, in contrast to the logion’s application to self-discipline in Matt 5.29-30 and Mark 9.43-47. In Matt 18.8-9 the logion applies to cutting off the offending member of the body, i.e., the community: “. . . we have here in Matt 18:8-9 a passage which advises the church to expel members who have committed a given offence” (p. 124). His interpretation is at least plausible, and if correct, would lend force to understanding 18.17 as calling for expulsion.
\item \textsuperscript{120} In Rabbinic Judaism also, gentiles could become proselytes and tax-collectors could repent and make restitution for what they had stolen (cf. Lk. 19.1-10). See O. Michel, “τελωνία,” in TDNT (1972) 8:101-103; and b. B. Qam. 94b: “Come and hear: ‘For shepherds, tax collectors and revenue farmers it is difficult to make repentance, yet they must make restitution [of the articles in question] to all those whom they know [they have robbed]” (Epstein, p. 550).
\end{itemize}
community forgive the repentant sinner, perhaps without distinguishing the severity of the sin.\textsuperscript{121} The language of 18.15 (“if he hears you, you have won your brother”) might suggest that this community does not require a probationary period; about this, however, the text is silent. The text might allow for the restoration of one who becomes as a tax collector or a gentile; but again it is silent.\textsuperscript{122} One large difference, therefore, between correction in Matthew and in the DSS is that it is not nearly as developed; it has not designated categories of sin, lengths of probation, nor in what cases expulsion is permanent. The relative youth of the Matthean community compared to that of the Qumran community may in part account for this difference. In both, though, some offenses called for the expulsion of a member, and the community considered them now to be in the realm of Satan. Against the stubborn offender Matthew’s community exercises great power, that of binding and loosing.

6.4 **Binding and Loosing**

While Matthew 18.18, along with its parallels (16.19; John 20.23), has received a great deal of attention, the DSS have received very little attention in an attempt to explain the concept of binding and loosing.\textsuperscript{123} The focus, on the contrary, has centered on the rabbinic concepts of binding and loosing. These include the idea of “‘binding’ (אסר) and ‘loosing’ (התיר) or ‘opening’ (פתח) a vow”\textsuperscript{124}; of “‘prohibit’ (אסר) and ‘permit’ (רואה)”\textsuperscript{125} in authoritative teaching; and of

\textsuperscript{121} Only one sin in Matthew is unforgivable--the enigmatic “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” (12.31-32). One must wonder, however, whether a person having committed this crime is even capable of repentance.

\textsuperscript{122} The imprecation of Matthew 18.6-7 might support the notion of a permanent expulsion (RSV): “. . . whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” However, this stern warning might only suggest that expulsion has eternal consequences if the offender never repents.


\textsuperscript{125} Duling, “Binding,” p. 9. See for example, *m. Zer*. 5.4; *m. Yeb*. 1.4.
“excommunication from (אסר), and readmittance to (ᑲু), the community.”

Only the last of these fits the context of Matthew 18.18, but it is the least well attested.

More attractive is R. H. Hiers’ thesis which connects binding and loosing to authority over evil spirits. In the present age Satan is “loosed” to wreak havoc during the present age (CD 6.13; Rev 20.3). In the eschaton the evil spirits will, however, be “bound” in the prison of hell, along with all the reprobate (I Enoch 10.4, 13; cf. Rev 20.1-3; Isa 24.22). He argues that a common expectation of the future age was that God would give His people the authority to bind evil spirits. The Testament of Levi 18.10-12 states: “And Beliar shall be bound by him. And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits.”

In fulfillment of these expectations, Jesus binds demons (Matt 12.29) and looses the sick from the grip of Satan (Luke 13.16; cf. Mark 7:34-35). Jesus also gives his disciples power over the evil spirits (Luke 10.19; RSV): “Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you.” Thus, Hiers relates binding and loosing to the breaking in of the Kingdom of God which results in the overthrow of the wicked spirits.

However, Hiers’ suggestion does not suit the context of Matthew 16.19 and 18.18, the very texts he attempts to explain. Hiers states: “Our suggestion, then, is that the sayings about binding and loosing in Matt 16:19 and 18:18 may derive from an earlier statement or statements by Jesus authorizing Peter and the twelve to exorcise demons.” While Matthew 16.19 involves spiritual warfare (see p. 55f. below), Matthew 18.18, on the other hand, gives no suggestion whatsoever that binding and loosing has to do with exorcism. Thus, Hiers claims on the basis of Matthew 18.19 (παντοτες πρωματος) that Matthew has generalized the authority of binding and loosing: “Matthew may have intended his authorization to encompass not only matters of doctrine but also excommunication, and even determination of the ultimate destiny of church members.” He has not prepared the reader for this sudden shift in the meaning of binding and

126 Duling, “Binding,” pp. 8-9. See b. Mo’ed 16a, which is, however, the only such example. Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, Kommentar, pp. 738-39.
loosing. Nevertheless, he is right to point out that the metaphor of binding and loosing often concerns the eschatological conflict between the present kingdom of Satan and the coming Kingdom of God.

6.4.1 Binding and Loosing in the Dead Sea Scrolls

A parallel in the DSS which may shed light on Matthew 18.18 is CD 13.10 (p. 97): “He shall loosen all the fetters which bind them that in his Congregation there may be none that are oppressed or broken.” This falls within the rule of the Guardian of the camp ( désormך למחנה), and thus sets out this leader’s responsibilities. The Guardian’s duties include the restoration of straying members and the initiation of new members; it is in this context that CD 13.10 falls (13:9-13):

And he shall “take pity upon them like a father upon his sons,” and “shall [bring back] all them that have strayed129 of them . . . like “a shepherd his flock.” He shall “loosen all fetters” that tie them, that there be not one “oppressed and broken” in his congregation.

And everyone that is added to his congregation, let him examine him about his actions and his understanding and his strength and his courage and his property; and they shall write him down in his place according to his status in the lot of light. Let no man of the members of the camp have authority to bring any man into the congregation against the will of the camp overseer.

The loosing of fetters in CD 10.13 probably relates to restoration and to initiation. The metaphor would make the most sense if the sect believed true freedom only existed in the community. Thus, the Guardian “looses” both those who are restored and those who enter for the first time. To be outside the community means to be “bound.”

CD 14.1-2 speaks of the protection of belonging to the covenant: “. . . but for whoever shall walk in these (precepts), the Covenant of God shall stand firm to save him from all the snares

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129 Rabin emends נודחבם (Them that have strayed), while S. Schechter, ed. and trans., *Fragments of a Zadokite work* (Cambridge: University Press, 1910), p. 84, suggested מרדתם (“their rebellion”). Vermes appears to read [שא] (“he shall carry”) instead of [שיב] (“he shall bring back”) and so translates “. . . shall carry in all their distress, like a shepherd his sheep” (p. 97). Does he get “distress” from either המשקה or משקה? Rabin’s suggestion seems to fit the pastoral metaphor best, although it is a radical emendation. Cf. E. Lohse, trans. & ed., *Die Texte aus Qumran* [Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1971], pp. 93-95: “Und er soll . . . alle ihre Verstreuten zurück[bringen] wie ein Hirt seine Herde.”
of the Pit, whereas the foolish shall be punished.” To obey the covenant means to be saved from the “snares of the pit.” The “pit,” שחת, in the scrolls is closely related to שאול (Sheol). The meaning of שאול in the OT is the place of the dead, and so figuratively stands for death. It is a prison which ensnares those outside the covenant in an already realized death. Outsiders are the “sons of the pit” (CD 6.15; 14.15) or the “men of the pit” (1QS 9.16,22). The DSS refer to salvation (CD 14.2) and forgiveness of sins (1QH 5.5-6) as deliverance from the pit.\textsuperscript{130}

The concept of שחת as a prison most clearly appears in the Thanksgiving Hymns (1QH 3.17-18; p. 172):

\begin{quote}
And the gates [of Hell] shall open
[on all] the works of Vanity;
and the doors of the Pit shall close
on the conceivers of wickedness;
and the everlasting bars shall be bolted
on all the spirits of Naught.
\end{quote}

The sect expected God to lock up the wicked and the evil spirits in Hell. So the “pit” imprisoned all who did not belong to the Covenant, although the full realization of this “binding” was still to come. Thus, the meaning of CD 13.10 becomes clear: the community enjoyed a freedom from the Pit, an already realized death--to join or to return to the community meant to be loosed from the chains of hellish bondage.

6.4.2 Binding and Loosing in Matthew 18.18

What clues are there within the gospel itself to understanding Matthew 18.18? Its immediate context would suggest that it has something to do with treating the unrepentant brother as a tax collector or a gentile. It also repeats part of the Jesus bestowal of authority upon Peter in 16.17-19:

Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in Heaven. What is more, I tell you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my congregation [την ἐκκλησιαν] and the gates of Hades shall not overcome it. I will

\textsuperscript{130}11QMelch also ties liberty from captivity with the forgiveness of sins. Melchizedek will bring liberty to captives (p. 301; cf. Isa 61.1), “. . . [or He will cast] their [lot] amid the portions of Melchize|dek, who will return them there and will proclaim liberty, forgiving them [the wrong-doings] of all their iniquities.”
give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16.19 employs the second person singular and is a unique bestowal of authority upon Peter. Matthew 18.18, on the other hand, employs the second person plural. This contrast is particularly vivid considering that 18.15-17 uses the second person singular. Matthew 18.18 extends to the ἐκκλησία, the same authority which had been given to Peter; the dispute appears before the ἐκκλησία, which is now the final authority: “And if he even disobeys the ἐκκλησία, let him be to you as a tax collector and a gentile.” It is therefore relevant in attempting to understand 18.18 to look at what binding and loosing mean in Matthew 16.17-19.

Four metaphors appear in Matthew 16.17-19. The first, “upon this rock I will build my congregation,” suggests the sturdiness of Jesus’ community built upon the rock.131 The following text from 1QH may help illustrate the meaning of the rock metaphor (6.26-28; p. 183):

For Thou wilt set the foundation on rock
and the framework by the measuring-cord of justice;
and the tried stones [Thou wilt lay]
by the plumb-line [of truth],
to [build] a mighty [wall] which shall not sway; . . .

For no enemy shall ever invade [it
since its doors shall be] doors of protection
through which no man shall pass;
and its bars shall be firm
and no man shall break them.
No rabble shall enter in with their weapons of war
until all the [arrows] of the war of wickedness
have come to an end.

In 1QH 6.26, the Qumran community is likely what God sets upon a foundation of rock.132 The text describes an impregnable fortress, against which no enemy may prevail (cf. Ps 18.2). Jesus also builds his church upon the rock so that the enemy, Hades, cannot prevail against it (Matt 16.18). A house founded upon rock stands up under all conditions (Matt 7.24-27).

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131 I purposely do not enter the debate about what or who the “rock” in Matt 16.17 is, for I only want to describe the meaning of the rock metaphor in relationship to the other metaphors in Matt 16.17-19.
The second metaphor of Matthew 16.17-19 is “the gates of Hades shall not overcome it.” While some see merely a metaphor for death (cf. RSV; Isa 38.10), “gates of Hades” signifies much more. Hades is the opposite of heaven for Matthew (11.23), and thus belongs to the age of the dominion of Satan (4.8-9). *Psalms of Solomon* 16.2 states (trans. mine): “For a moment my soul was poured out unto death, near the gates of Hades with the sinner.” Sinners also belong to the Gates of Hades. The gates are those of a fortress, out of which an attacker launches an offensive. Hades and death along with Satan will meet their final demise at the consummation of the age (Rev 20.14). In the meantime, Hades may launch an offensive against the εκκλησία, but because the εκκλησία has a foundation of rock, Hades shall not overcome it.

The third metaphor is, “I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.” The possessor of a key had the power to open and shut an entrance, and thus the power to say who may or may not cross it (cf. Isa 22.22; Rev 3.7). Thus, Jesus gives Peter the authority to say who may and may not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This is particularly clear because the verbal cognate of κλείς, κλείω, appears in Matthew 23.13: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! because you shut up [κλείστε] the Kingdom of Heaven ahead of men; for you yourselves do not enter nor do you even let others enter” (cf. Luke 11.52). Those who sit on the seat of Moses (23.2) keep themselves and others from entering the Kingdom of Heaven. This would explain why Jesus promises this authority to Peter instead of them.

Now comes the fourth metaphor, of binding and loosing. Binding and loosing are probably related to the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. J. Jeremias writes:

"... we should recall that the three verses Mt. 16:17-19 are so constructed that in each a theme is elucidated by antithetical parallelism. V. 19a is thus to be seen in the light of v. 19b c, where we have a new image. The power of the keys consists in full authority to bind and to loose."  

The binding and loosing metaphor, like the key metaphor, would thus concern the authority to say who may or may not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Peter plays a role similar to that of the

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133 See, e.g., 1QH 6.31: “... and the everlasting gates shall send out weapons of war” (p. 183).
Guardian in CD 13.9-13: Peter has the authority to loose the fetters of those who come in,\textsuperscript{135} and to bind, by either forbidding someone entrance into the community or by sending someone away into the realm of Satan.

Although Jesus bestows the keys of the Kingdom uniquely to Peter in Matthew 16.17-19, in 18.18 the community now exercises the authority to bind and loose.\textsuperscript{136} A similar meaning for the metaphor is appropriate in this context. The ἐκκλησία has the authority to bind, to forbid entrance or to send away. It also possesses the authority to loose, to allow entrance or to restore. Tied into this metaphor also is the authority to forgive sins, for the community lives in God’s forgiveness. John 20.23, then, may have originated from the same Aramaic saying of Jesus as Matthew 16.19 and 18.18 (RSV): “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” The community has the authority to forgive the sins of its members (cf. 9.8; 18.21f.). Since the ἐκκλησία is also set on the rock, the attacks of the enemy and attempts to oppress the people of the community will be of no avail. In the community is true freedom from oppression and sin. However, the community may also refuse forgiveness to the unrepentant sinner. Binding occurs when the community bars such a member from the forgiveness of sins and thus treats him as an outsider.

Furthermore, this binding and loosing exercised “on earth” has a corresponding response “in heaven,” for the ἐκκλησία is the focal point of the Kingdom of Heaven in the present age.\textsuperscript{137} Thus, when the community treats the unrepentant brother as a tax collector or gentile, not only...

\textsuperscript{135}Cf. Luke 13.16, which uses the terms “binding” and “loosing” of a woman set free from Satan’s hold, “Was it not necessary to loose [λυθηναι] this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound [δησεν] now for eighteen years, from this bond on the Sabbath day?” See Hiers, “‘Binding’ and ‘Loosing’,” p. 238.

\textsuperscript{136}Would this not signify a transfer of Peter’s authority to the ἐκκλησία? Peter was almost certainly dead before the writing of Matthew. The Gospel affirms for the church both the unique place of Peter and the abiding presence of Jesus’ authority.

does he move out of the community back into the realm of Satan, but he loses his place in the Kingdom of God.

Both the DSS and Matthew exercise expulsion as the most severe consequence of correction. Whereas in some cases the DSS do not permit a person back again, there may still be the possibility of later repentance and readmittance in Matthew. The metaphor of binding and loosing appears to have a similar meaning in both: those on the outside or those being sent away are in the realm of Satan and thus “bound”; those coming in are forgiven their sins and loosed from the fetters of Satan. True life and freedom from sin and oppression exist only in the community.
CHAPTER SEVEN
Conclusion

7.1 Summary

This study has sought to compare and contrast correction in the DSS and Matthew 18.15-20. Though many scholars have seen a direct relationship between the two correction processes, Garcia Martinez argues that no dependent relationship exists between Matthew 18:15-20 and the DSS. Further, stark contrasts stand out between the Qumran community and the Matthean community. Qumran maintains a strict hierarchy, while Matthew gives every member of community the rank of “little one.” Qumran is a priestly community which seeks to maintain a high standard of communal purity. Matthew accents internal purity rather than external. These contrasts bring into question the legitimacy of a comparison between the two communities and their correction procedures. However, because the Qumran community and early Christianity view themselves as the community of the Age to Come living in the present wicked age, they both need to distinguish between insiders and outsiders. They draw lines of division, through initiation and correction. Both communities also recognize the authority of the Scriptures and interpret the law of witnesses (Deut 19.15) to meet the particular needs of their community. Both communities also arise out of the same milieu, first century Palestinian Judaism. Thus, this study found it legitimate to make the foregoing comparison and contrast, and it did so according to three points of contact, “Rebuke,” “Witnesses,” and “Consequences.”

The first point of contact between Matthew 18.15-20 and the DSS is the practice of rebuke. CD 9.2-8 makes use of Leviticus 19.18, and Matthew may have also. In the DSS, rebuke has four purposes: (1) to maintain peace in the community; (2) to keep track of sins; (3) to warn the offender; and (4) to protect the rebuker himself from guilt. Rebuke in the Matthean community also serves the peace of the community, seeking the reconciliation of an erring brother. It must be done without hypocrisy (7.1-5). As in the DSS, Matthew probably restricts rebuke to
the community, when a “brother” sins--one does not cast pearls before swine (7.6). Matthew 18.15-17, with its three steps, also seeks to warn the offender and to know for sure whether he is unrepentant. Matthew, however, keeps no record of sins; instead, Matthew 18.21-22 requires the community to show unlimited forgiveness to the repentant offender. Thus, the rebuke must occur privately in the first instance--no one else needs to know about the rebuke, if the brother repents. The DSS evidence a great desire to keep pure meals free of stain, which is one of the reasons for the Guardian to keep track of sins. The Matthean community, however, may not have practiced temporary exclusions, for if the brother repents, the issue appears to be settled. Again, in Matthew, the rebuker aims to win the brother, not to keep himself from guilt of failing to rebuke.

The second point of contact between the correction process of the DSS and that of Matthew is that they both make use of the law of witnesses (Deut 19.15). The DSS allow for cumulative testimony of single witnesses against a repeated offender. Rebukes must occur before witnesses, first to aid the recording process, and second, to protect the rebuker against later accusations that he had failed to rebuke. The Guardian records the proceedings for all “capital matters.” When there are enough witnesses to make a case, then it appears before a court of judges.

In Matthew witnesses serve first to make the rebuke more forceful. When the rebuker fails to win the brother, he brings one or two others with him to fulfill the requirement of two or three witnesses in Deuteronomy. The two or three represent the authority of the community to the offender; the offender can “disobey” the two or three and the community likewise (18.17). If the offender still refuses to repent, the matter appears before the community, and the witnesses will lay their testimony against the brother’s unrepentance.

The offender should not despise the two or three, for when any two “little ones” agree on a “dispute” or “case,” the Heavenly Father will grant their request (18.19); and their angels give them continual access to bring their petitions to the Father (18.10). Moreover, Jesus is also with the two or three who gather in his name (18.20). Jesus himself provides the divine presence and authority to judge or to forgive sins in the midst of the community. Although the two or
three are witnesses, they also exercise a special authority in the judgment of the offender. For the same reason, the community and its leaders shall also take seriously the testimony of the two or three. The community dare not set aside the dispute when it involves two or three “little ones.”

The third and final point of contact between the DSS and Matthew 18.15-20 is the consequences of correction. In the DSS, some crimes merit expulsion; the community sends the offender back into the realm of Satan, never to return again. Other crimes merit only exclusions of varying length from the “pure meal.” The Matthean community also practiced expulsion, by treating the unrepentant offender as a tax collector or gentile. Matthew’s text, however, does not specify periods of probation nor whether an offender may return, though he was probably not completely beyond hope.

CD 13.9 provides an interesting parallel to Matthew 18.18; the Guardian looses the fetters of those who enter or return to the community, for true freedom from sin and oppression and from the Pit exists only in the community. Likewise, in Matthew 16.17-19, Jesus bestows upon Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and the power to bind and loose; he, like the Guardian, has the authority to decide who may or may not enter the community. In Matthew 18.18 the community now appears to exercise the authority given to Peter. The community may forgive sins (cf. John 18.18; Matt 9.8) or it may practice expulsion. Only in the community is there freedom from sin and from the powers of Hades (Matt 16.18). In both the DSS and Matthew, the community lives out the life of the Age to Come in the present wicked age. They both view expulsion as having eternal consequences; the offender leaves the community to re-enter the realm of Satan.

The practice of community correction in Matthew 18.15-20, therefore, becomes a little clearer in light of the DSS. Perhaps the starkest contrast has to do with the authority Matthew gives to the “little ones” of the community. The Qumran community is much older and has developed its correction procedure; it has officials, courts, qualifications for witnesses and judges, and degrees of penalties for offenses. Matthew’s community is young and seeks to maintain its identity in the face of both external and internal pressures. Matthew bestows great worth and
dignity upon every “little one” in the community. No one, inside or outside the community, may despise or offend one of the “little ones” without suffering grave consequences (18.6). If a community member sins, the “little ones” will rebuke him. If he refuses to repent, he too offends the community. The community must then remove the offender by treating him as an outsider.

7.2 Application

On the basis of the exegesis in the previous chapters, I would like to make some proposals for the application of Matthew 18.15-20 in the Church today. I will now focus only upon a North American application, since this is the environment with which I am familiar. Given the vast differences between the Matthean community and today’s church, one must tread carefully, since what was applicable to a first century community, may not have direct application for today. Further, today’s church must also take into account what the rest of the New Testament teaches concerning community correction, such as in the Pauline and Johannine corpora, for they differ significantly from Matthew 18:15-20. Nevertheless, I will propose here four suggestions which may contribute to the praxis for correction in the modern setting.

First, the Matthean practice of rebuke could very much help the church today. The ordinary lay people of the church, like Matthew’s “little ones,” should rebuke one another, and the minister need not become involved. Given the typical minister’s busy schedule, correction would only occur in extreme cases if left up to the professional ministry. One to one correction is still the most effective. Rebuke should be a sign of love and community. Rebuke needs to occur only within the community and without hypocrisy. If a private rebuke fails, then the rebuker should follow Matthew 18.16 and bring one or two others, and confront that person again. The one or two others need not be church leaders, but rather any with good standing in the church. The one or two extra will make the rebuke more forceful and can later, if need be, testify to the congregation of the offender’s recalcitrance.

Second, the authority of “two or three” (Matt 18.16,19-20) might also correct the misunderstanding that church discipline is mainly the responsibility of the minister. If indeed Jesus
is in the midst of two or three carrying out a rebuke or witnessing to the community concerning recalcitrance of a brother or sister—if indeed the Father hears the request of any two who have agreed concerning a matter of correction, should not the church and its leadership respond? I suggest that a church leader may not ignore or stand in the way of the attempts by two or three church members to correct an erring brother or sister.

Third, Matthew 18:15-20 may help the crisis which has occurred when excommunicated members claim the church has violated their privacy. Excommunicated church members have sued their former churches for millions of dollars. In Matthew the offense which merits expulsion is the unwillingness to accept correction. Today, those who bring a case of correction before the church need only testify that the offender is recalcitrant and uncorrectable, and thus no longer wants to be a part of the fellowship. They should say as little as possible about the person’s private affairs. Buzzard and Brandon suggest, “... it is appropriate for a church to limit the information to what is specifically relevant to the audience under the particular circumstances. ... The church should keep in mind the legitimate aspects of personal privacy.” If the person then refuses the pleas of the church to accept correction, then the church may break fellowship with that person.

Fourth and finally, I think it would be good if the church today renewed its understanding of the consequences of expulsion. The exegesis of Matthew 18:15-20 suggests that the community was to treat the unrepentant brother as one who does not belong, now sent back into the present, evil age, and thus, bound by Satan. If the church understood expulsion in this way, then it would not apply such discipline lightly (as some are afraid might happen), nor

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139 Ibid., p. 247.
140 I recognize that under many circumstances, my proposal may not be entirely adequate. A church needs legal advice before attempting to excommunicate a member, in order to protect itself from possible legal repercussions. Any attempt to apply Matthew 18:15-20 should take into account the culture, laws of the country, and the circumstances of the case at hand. Matthew 18:15-20 is a guideline for a community which had conditions which are unrepeatable in the twentieth century, and thus, we today should not apply it too rigidly.
would the members of the church associate with those who now belong to Satan, until they demonstrate repentance and can be reconciled to the church. I would apply this in particular to the case of a prominent minister in my own denomination, who, even though the presbytery dismissed him for not accepting correction, claims a rather large following to this day. If the members of his church had understood the consequences of correction implied in Matthew 18:15-20, perhaps they would have refused to associate with this man. Taking seriously the consequences of correction would also mean not accepting new people into the church, without knowing whether they have left their last fellowship in good standing. When excommunicated persons seek church membership elsewhere, the new church should seek to reconcile them with their former church before admitting them.

Each of my proposals has in some way focussed upon the duty of every church member and has diminished the visible role of the church leader or minister. Correction must be the task of the community, not simply the leaders. Church leaders cannot impose correction upon the church, for only when the whole community takes part in correction is it truly effective--all members must treat the recalcitrant brother as a “tax collector or gentile,” not just the leadership.

Church leaders, however, are responsible to teach and equip the members of the church, and thus to help create an environment in which true community correction might occur. This can only happen when loving fellowship occurs within the church, which in turn will normally require developing small groups whose members can trust one another and thus hold one another to accountable. Creating such an environment is likely the most significant challenge in our attempts to apply Matthew 18.15-20. Nevertheless, we should strive for no less than the ideal for which both the Matthean and the Qumran communities strove: “They shall rebuke each man his brother according to the commandment and shall bear no rancour from one day to the next” (CD 7.2-3; p. 88). Instead of bearing rancour against one another, we should put Matthew 18.15 into practice: “If your brother sins, go, rebuke him just between you and him. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” A renewed practice of community correction will bring vitality to today’s Church which too often sacrifices truth for a superficial harmony.
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