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Innehåll

Exegetiska dagen 2013/Exegetical Day 2013

Katherine E. Southwood	‘But now ... do not let all this hardship seem insignificant before you’: Ethnic History and Nehemiah 9 1
Blaženka Scheuer	Response to Katherine E. Southwood 25
Denise Kimber Buell	Challenges and Strategies for Speaking about Ethnicity in the New Testament and New Testament Studies 33
James A. Kelhoffer	Response to Denise Kimber Buell: A Plea for Clarity in Regard to Examining Ethnicity <i>in, Based on, or in Scholarship on</i> the New Testament 53
Hans Leander	Hybrid Jews/Judeans: Renarrating Ethnicity and Christian Origins in the Context of Empire.... 61
Mikael Tellbe	Response to Hans Leander: The Complexity of Ethnicity 85

Övriga artiklar/Other articles

Rikard Roitto	Reintegrative Shaming and a Prayer Ritual of Reintegration in Matthew 18:15–20 95
Tobias Hägerland	Prophetic Forgiveness in Josephus and Mark 125
Samuel Byrskog	Birger Gerhardsson in memoriam 141

Recensioner/Book Reviews

Gunnel André	<i>Det står skrivet – med inblickar mellan raderna: Kommentar till Den svenska evangeliebokens gammaltestamentliga texter</i> (LarsOlov Eriksson)..... 147
William Baird	<i>History of New Testament Research: Volume 3: From C. H. Dodd to Hans Dieter Betz</i> (Jan H. Nylund)..... 148

Jennie Barbour	<i>The Story of Israel in the Book of Qohelet: Ecclesiastes as Cultural Memory</i> (Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer).....	151
Michael F. Bird och Jason Maston (red.)	<i>Earliest Christian History: History, Literature, and Theology: Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel</i> (Tord Fornberg)	153
Wally V. Cirafesi	<i>Verbal Aspect in Synoptic Parallels: On the Method and Meaning of Divergent Tense-Form Usage in the Synoptic Passion Narratives</i> (Jan H. Nylund).....	155
John J. Collins och Daniel C. Harlow (red.)	<i>The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism</i> (Cecilia Wassén)	157
Göran Eidevall	<i>Sacrificial Rhetoric in the Prophetic Literature of the Hebrew Bible</i> (Blaženka Scheuer)	159
Mark W. Elliott	<i>The Heart of Biblical Theology: Providence Experienced</i> (LarsOlov Eriksson).....	161
Steven Fine (red.)	<i>The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah: In Honor of Professor Louis H. Feldman</i> (Stefan Green).....	162
Martin Goodman, George H. van Kooten and Jacques T. A. G. M. van Ruiten (ed.)	<i>Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham</i> (Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer)...	166
Deryn Guest	<i>Beyond Feminist Biblical Studies</i>	
Claudia Camp	<i>Ben Sira and the Men Who Handle Books: Gender and the Rise of Canon-Consciousness</i> (Mikael Larsson)	168
Kirsten Marie Hartvigsen	<i>Prepare the Way of the Lord: Towards a Cognitive Poetic Analysis of Audience Involvement with Characters and Events in the Markan World</i> (Bim Berglund O'Reilly).....	172
Tom Holmén (red.)	<i>Jesus in Continuum</i> (Tobias Hägerland)	174
Friedrich W. Horn (red.)	<i>Paulus Handbuch</i> (Walter Übelacker).....	176

Jaeyoung Jeon	<i>The Call of Moses and the Exodus Story: A Redactional-Critical Study in Exodus 3–4 and 5–13</i> (Jan Retsö)	178
Paul M. Joyce and Diana Lipton	<i>Lamentations Through the Centuries</i> (Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer)	181
Thomas Kazen	<i>Emotions in Biblical Law: A Cognitive Science Approach</i> (Colleen Shantz).....	183
Hans-Josef Klauck m.fl. (red.)	<i>Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception. Vol. 4: Birsha – Chariot of Fire</i> (Göran Eidevall).....	186
Lee Martin McDonald	<i>Formation of the Bible: The Story of the Church's Canon</i> (Magnus Evertsson).....	187
vanThanh Nguyen	<i>Peter and Cornelius: A Story of Conversion and Mission</i> (Carl Johan Berglund)	190
Tiberius Rata	<i>The Covenant Motif in Jeremiah's Book of Comfort: Textual and Intertextual Studies of Jeremiah 30–33</i> (Göran Eidevall).....	191
Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard Jr (ed.)	<i>The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul</i> (David Willgren).....	193
Jens Schröter	<i>From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon</i> (Rikard Roitto).....	196
Jens Schröter och Jürgen K. Zangenberg (red.)	<i>Texte zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments</i> (Walter Übelacker).....	198
Naomi Steinberg	<i>The World of the Child in the Hebrew Bible</i> (Mikael Larsson).....	200
Camilla Hélena von Heijne	<i>The Messenger of the Lord in Early Jewish Interpretations of Genesis</i> (Blaženka Scheuer)...	202
Klaus Wachtel and Michael W. Holmes (ed.)	<i>The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research</i> (Jan H. Nylund).....	204
J. Ross Wagner	<i>Reading the Sealed Book: Old Greek Isaiah and the Problem of Septuagint Hermeneutics</i> (Staffan Olofsson).....	206

Cecilia Wassén (red.)	<i>Dödahavsrollarna. Innehåll, bakgrund och betydelse</i> (Tord Fornberg).....	209
Magnus Zetterholm and Samuel Byrskog (ed.)	<i>The Making of Christianity: Conflicts, Contacts, and Constructions: Essays in Honor of Bengt Holmberg</i> (Donald A. Hagner)	210
Till redaktionen insänd litteratur		215

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Reintegrative Shaming and a Prayer Ritual of Reintegration in Matthew 18:15–20

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An Initial Reading of Matt 18:15–20

The argument of this article is that Matt 18:15–20 aims to form a practice that can reintegrate offenders and manifest the offender’s reintegration in a prayer ritual. By introducing reintegrative shaming theory and a number of ritual theories into the analysis, a deepened understanding of how the practices promoted in the passage might have worked in the Matthean community emerges. However, before we analyze Matt 18:15–20 as a reintegrative practice, we need to establish that it is reasonable a) to read Matt 18:15–20 as a unit, b) to read the promises in vv. 18–20 as ritual instructions, c) to understand the prayer in v. 19 as the practical way to perform the binding and loosing mentioned in v. 18, and d) to interpret binding and loosing in v. 18 as mediating forgiveness of sin (that is, not just as making halakhic decisions).

Matt 18:15–20 has two distinguishable yet connected parts. The first part (vv. 15–17) instructs how to reprove a sinning brother. The goal is to make the sinning brother “listen,” but if all efforts to talk to him fail, “he should be to you like a Gentile and tax collector.” The second part (vv. 18–20) consists of two promises on the theme that God will back up the community whatever they do, and a concluding assurance of presence among them. Whatever they “bind” or “loose” (v. 18), whatever they pray for (v. 19), God will make it happen.

At first glance, vv. 15–17 may look unrelated to vv. 18–20. However, recurring catchwords and sentence structures in the passage justify thinking that Matthew intended it to be read as a literary unit, and thus that the prayer in 18:19 should be understood as connected to the reproof in 18:15–17. The passage is most probably composed from disparate traditions, but Matthew has clearly made an effort in his redaction to show that he thinks of the parts as connected (Thompson 1970, 175–202; Luz 2001, 448). First, the theme of “two or three” (vv. 16, 19, 20) connects vv.

15–17 with vv. 18–20. Second, all sentences but one (v. 20) in the passage have subordinate clauses beginning with *ean*, “if,” or *hosa/hou ean*, “whatever,” which gives the passage a sense of repetitive continuity. Third, within vv. 18–20, the promise about binding and loosing in v. 18 is connected to the promise about prayer in vv. 19 by the recurring phrases “on earth” and “in heaven.”

It seems, then, that in 18:15–20 we have a passage that first instructs on how to reprove an offender (vv. 15–17), and then instructs how to follow up the reproof ritually by binding or loosing with prayer (vv. 18–20). To such an interpretation one might object that vv. 18–20 is formulated as promises, not as ritual instructions. Admittedly, before the sayings in vv. 18–20 were put in their literary context by the Matthean redactor, the promises may very well have been transmitted as disparate generally assuring sayings (cf. Luz 2001, 423, 448–49; Davies and Allison 1991, 752, 781), but when Matthew puts them in this context and binds them together with repeated catchwords, the sayings function as instructions. The greater part of the speech in chapter 18 (vv. 12–35) motivates and instructs on communal practices of reintegration and forgiveness. The verses preceding vv. 18–20 (vv. 15–17) contain instructions for reproof and the following verses (vv. 21–22) consist of instructions for forgiveness. That is, the literary context of vv. 18–20 is communal instructions. Assuming that Matthew for no reason whatsoever changes the subject in vv. 18–20 to general assurances that have nothing to do with the theme of the rest of the chapter does not make sense. It is more reasonable to assume that Matthew uses existing saying traditions to give instructions.

Within vv. 18–19, the repetition in v. 19 of phrases from v. 18 (“on earth,” “in heaven”) makes sure that the reader understands that the promise about prayer in v. 19 elaborates how the binding and loosing in v. 18 should be done—it should be done through prayer involving at least two or three persons. Thus, in its context, the promise about efficient prayer in v. 19 functions as a ritual instruction for how they should loose or bind the sinning brother. I will argue in this article that a loosing prayer functioned as a reintegrative ritual, and that a binding prayer functioned as a denigrating ritual.

The meaning of binding and loosing in v. 18 has been discussed unceasingly by scholars, but I suggest that that the cryptic words in v. 18 make most sense in the literary context of Matt 18 as a whole if “bind” means “not mediate divine forgiveness of sins” and “loose” means

“mediate divine forgiveness of sins”. Richard Hiers (1985) summarizes four types of possible cultural backgrounds for the terms “bind” and “loose” suggested by scholars—vows, authority to make halakhic decision, bans, and forgiveness of sins—and then adds his own suggestion that the language ultimately comes from the language of binding and loosing demons. What Hiers in my opinion shows is that the metaphorical potency of these verbs is enormous and that the range of possible associations to the terminology of binding and loosing is so wide that the meaning of the words for Matthew cannot be determined by inter-textual comparisons. Hiers himself speculates that Jesus might have used the words “bind” and “loose” in his exorcisms, but rightly concludes that if this is the case, then the meaning must have mutated before the expression was placed in Matt 16:19 and 18:18 respectively. Therefore, the expression must be understood in the light of the preceding and following verses. We should not even be too hasty to assume that the meaning of the phrase is identical in the two occurrences in Matthew. Even though binding and loosing can reasonably be interpreted as the authority to make general halakhic decisions in 16:19, the immediate context of 18:18 demands that the binding and loosing here somehow deals with specific cases of transgression, since both the preceding and the following verses instruct on how to deal with individual sinners.

Many commentators argue that binding and loosing in 18:18 is a judicial ruling of specific cases (e.g. Davies and Allison 1991, 787; Keener 1999, 454–55; France 2007, 695). Other commentators argue, in my opinion rightly so, that loosing is not just a judicial decision, but an act of mediating divine forgiveness (e.g. Luz 2001, 454; Gundry 1994, 369). The first mentioned commentators understand the verse purely as a judicial procedure within the community, that is, simply as a decision about right and wrong. “Loose” would then equal “declare not guilty.” However, both the preceding and the following verses deal with the reintegration (vv. 12–17) and forgiveness (vv. 21–35) of people *who are guilty*. An interpretation of “loose” as declaration of innocence does therefore not fit the context. The interpretation that “loose” means liberation from sin, on the other hand, fits the context perfectly. The judicial interpretation, that loosing and binding means making judicial decisions, forces commentators to interpret vv. 19–20 either as general insurance that the decision in v. 18 will be valid and implicitly ignore that the following verse contains a promise about effective prayer (Davies and Allison 1991, 788), to understand v. 19 as an encouragement to pray for

the future restoration of the sinner (Keener 1999, 455), or to assume that Matthew changes the subject entirely in vv. 19–20 (France 2007, 697). By contrast, if binding and loosing is not just a judicial ruling but something that has effect on the sinner, then the prayer ritual in vv. 19–20 makes sense in the context. The prayer ritual effectuates the loosing or binding of sin in heaven.

As I will argue below, Matthew 18:15–17 has a decidedly anti-judicial agenda in its interpretation of the Jewish reproof tradition. Moreover, as I will also argue below, sin is perceived, quite tangibly, as dangerous in Matthew’s imagination. Therefore it fits Matthew’s agenda and worldview that loosing means being liberated from the danger that sin constituted, and that binding means retaining the danger of sin. (Cf. the use of *luō* in the LXX translation of Isa 40:2; Job 42:9; 2 Macc 12:45; Sir 28:2.)

Disintegrative and Reintegrative Shaming

A central part of the argument of this article is that shame is a key issue in the Matthean reproof practice. To prepare for that discussion, we must first elaborate on how shaming functions to reintegrate or disintegrate offenders in social interaction. Scholars generally accept that honor and shame were central to the perception of social life in the ancient Mediterranean world, and the research on the subject is extensive in New Testament scholarship (for bibliography, Pilch 2011; 2012). However, criminologist John Braithwaite’s (1989) reintegrative shaming theory, where he distinguishes between “disintegrative shaming” and “reintegrative shaming,” has never been used to analyze New Testament texts. Braithwaite distinguishes the two by the differing effects they produce on the shamed person:

Reintegrative shaming means that expressions of community disapproval, which may range from mild rebuke to degradation ceremonies, are followed by gestures of reacceptance into the community of law-abiding citizens. These gestures of reacceptance will vary from a simple smile expressing forgiveness and love to quite formal ceremonies to decertify the offender as deviant. Disintegrative shaming (stigmatization), in contrast, divides the community by creating a class of outcasts. (Braithwaite 1989, 55, cf. 4)

That is, shaming may produce either a) return to the norms of the community and reintegration, or b) marginalization and exclusion. Braithwaite, being a criminologist, is concerned with crime rates, and points out that crime rates are much higher in the United States than in Japan (1989, 61–68). According to Braithwaite's analysis, the legal system in the US tends to produce disintegrative shame, while the Japanese system tends to produce reintegrative shame. In the US, courts exact long jail sentences, while the Japanese offenders only rarely have to go to jail. Effectively, the US produces disintegrative shame and thus criminals that are pushed outside the acceptance of society, which makes them likely to commit crime again. Japan, on the other hand, produces reintegrative shame through comparatively mild sentences combined with social pressure from peers. This is possible because the Japanese community is strongly collectivistic and interdependent. Much of the punishment for the crime is thus the interpersonal shame that being sentenced produces in relation to relatives, friends and victims, rather than the formal punishment exacted in the courtroom. Importantly, the shaming is combined with an opportunity to repent and become reintegrated into the community of law-obedient citizens.

When Braithwaite wrote his book, evolutionary psychology was not as well developed as it is today, but recent research on the evolutionary function of shame gives support to his suggestion. Evolutionary psychologists suggest that shame increases fitness by inhibiting certain behaviors that would potentially disqualify us from the goods that having cooperation partners brings (Gilbert 2003; cf. Jaffe 2008). On average, shame guides social behavior in directions that increase fitness. The capacity to anticipate what will cause shame is as important as the actual experience of shame, since our anticipation inhibits our behavior before we have done something anti-social (Greenwald and Harder 1998). Shame can induce several different courses of action (Gilbert 2003; Greenwald and Harder 1998; Tangney and Dearing 2002). One domain of shame is shame related to behaviors counter to the norms of the group. When someone feels shame for breaking social norms, it often induces an impulse to repair relations by showing submissiveness. However, shame can also provoke an impulse to hide from the shaming gaze of the group. Shame can therefore induce both pro-social and withdrawing behavior; in Braithwaite's terminology, reintegration and disintegration. Another domain of shame is related to competition for social status. When you have been shamed and denigrated in a contest for social honor, the most

typical reactions are mortification, anger, desire for revenge, and longing to regain your honor. This kind of shame has been the focus of much New Testament scholarship (see discussion below).

In a later article, Braithwaite, together with Stephen Mugford (1994), elaborates on what elements procedures of shaming should have in order to be reintegrative rather than disintegrative. They enumerate no less than 14 factors, but here I only summarize their argument selectively in a way that I deem to have heuristic value for our study of Matt 18:15–20:

a) *Shaming with an opening for reintegration.* The offender should be confronted with what s/he has done. However, the shaming should not be so harsh that the offender loses all hope for acceptance, and it should always be combined with the possibility of repentance and reconciliation.

b) *No identification of offender with offense.* The offender should be defined so that s/he is not identified with the offense, but so that the offense is something that the offender can distance him-/herself from. The offender is thus still seen as a morally capable agent.

c) *Presence of offender's kin or friends.* There should be people present who care about the offender and whom the offender care about. The presence of such people induces feelings of both shame and love.

d) *Mediator impartiality.* Third party process leaders should be able to empathize with both offender and victim.

e) *Inclusion ritual.* There should be a ritual of inclusion that reintegrates the offender.

According to Braithwaite (1989, 69–83), reintegrative shaming is much more potent than punishment to maintain moral behavior within a community. Most people are more worried about what other people, especially people close to them, will say about them than about punishments. That is, the motivation to abstain from unacceptable behavior comes more from shame than from fear. Punishment only reforms the offender if the offender sees the punishment as shaming. Harsh punishments also tend to become disintegrative rather than reintegrative shaming procedures.

New Testament research using the concepts of honor and shame as interpretative keys is massive (see Pilch 2011; 2012 for bibliography), ever since the seminal work of Bruce Malina (1981; 2001) where he introduced social-scientific models for these concepts, based on Mediterranean anthropology. Here I will limit my discussion to one remark: When shaming has been discussed in New Testament scholarship,

shaming as a challenge that requires a riposte has been at the center of scholarly discussion. Reintegrative shaming, however, has been a less explored topic.

Malina and many others (e.g., Moxnes 1996; Rohrbaugh 2010) have explored how shaming challenges, such as accusations, insults, or devious questions, was expected to lead to a riposte by the challenged person in order to defend honor. In the Gospels, for instance, Jesus wins all arguments with other Jewish leaders by successfully delivering a riposte to their negative challenges (e.g., Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998a; 1998b; Neyrey 1998; 2007). The by-standing crowd gives Jesus honor and his opponents have to go away in shame. In this game, honor is given to one at the expense of the other. It is “zero sum game,” as Malina (2001, 89–90) would call it. With the terminology of Braithwaite, these negative challenges are very often cases of disintegrative shaming, since the shaming procedure ends up in social distance and division.

Malina (2001, 33–35) makes a distinction between positive and negative challenges, where positive challenges, such as gifts and praise, is not intended to denigrate or hurt the other person, but just to introduce a positive exchange (cf. 2001, 95). Such challenges also need a riposte—a friendly riposte—in order to maintain honor. I mention this, just to clarify that Malina’s model does not claim that all challenges are meant to rob an opponent of honor. However, neither positive nor negative challenges fit the concept of reintegrative shaming, since neither form of challenge is described in Malina’s model as a loving attempt to induce repentance or moral reform in the shamed person.

One example of a narrative scene that could be analyzed in a new way with the concept of reintegrative shaming is Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4. Jerome Neyrey (2007, 93) uses the model of challenge and riposte to analyze the scene and rightly emphasize how Jesus and the woman challenge and riposte each other (cf. Neyrey 2009, 160–62). His analysis works well, all the way up until the point where he has to explain why the scene does not end up with Jesus “defeating” the woman, even though Jesus has insulted her life-style in a rather harsh manner. When the outcome of the dialogue surprises, Neyrey notes, rightly so, that “[a]lthough the Samaritan woman and Jesus play the game of challenge and riposte, he does not shame her and send her away in defeat. *On the contrary*, he rewards her ...” (2009, 93, emphasis added). Jesus’ challenges to the woman’s lifestyle have inspired her to change. Here the concept of reintegrative shaming (in this case perhaps better

called “integrative shaming”) can improve the analysis. John has decided to describe the scene in a way that would be understood by his collectivistic readers to facilitate reintegration. Firstly, Jesus and the Samaritan woman are alone. That is, there is no crowd around them, so the verbal exchange does not aim to win the favor of an audience in the world of the narrative. This gives the woman opportunity to reform without worrying about defending her reputation. Second, Jesus does not claim that the Samaritan woman is a certain kind of person, but rather just states what she has done. “You have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband” (John 4:18). Thus he gives her the opportunity to detach herself from her past actions, just like Braithwaite suggests one should. Third, Jesus combines the shaming with an integrating opportunity—to drink the water of life (4:14). Her response is overwhelming. Having been an outcast, she becomes an integrated agent for faith in the Messiah (4:29, 39).

David DeSilva is probably the New Testament scholar who has most frequently emphasized that shaming can be a device for intra-group rhetoric of identity formation and community maintenance (e.g. 1996; 2000a, 78–84; 2000b; 2009, 189–92). If certain behaviors are disgraceful and other honorable, shame will be an efficient motivator to make people conform to the standards of the group. DeSilva’s analyses could be said to describe the dynamics of reintegrative shaming, although he does not use this terminology. However, his analysis can be further nuanced by several of the insights in Braithwaite’s theory, for instance that reintegrative shaming a) should be formulated so that the shamed person can distance him-/herself from the shameful act, and b) should be combined with love, forgiveness, and openings for reintegration.

Louise Lawrence’s (2002; 2003, 142–80) critical engagement with Malina’s (2001) agonistic understanding of shaming is also of some relevance for our discussion. Zeba Crook (2007; cf. 2009, 597–99) has rightly pointed out that her criticism of Malina on this issue is partly based on a caricature of his model. Nevertheless, Lawrence is right when she argues that although the pattern of challenge and riposte is a valid interpretation of many disputes in the Gospel of Matthew, not all critical verbal interactions are meant as competitions for honor. Sometimes, criticism is just part of a negotiation or a dispute over common interest (2003, 168). Although she does not specifically discuss reintegrative

shaming, the general implication of her insight is that criticism is not always a competition for honor, but can also be instrumental in influencing the criticized person in a certain direction.

Matthew's Reproof in Its Cultural Context

The instruction to “reprove” (*elenchō*) a sinning brother in Matt 18:15–17 has predecessors in both Jewish and Greco-Roman culture. These texts have been carefully compared to Matthew's account by others (e.g., Carmody 1989; Duling 1998; 2011, 212–44; Kampen 1998; Karkowski 2004; Kugel 1987), so there is no need for a complete survey here. I will only discuss a number of texts that demonstrate how the aim of reproof often, but not always, was to help a faulty person to improve.

Plutarch's advice about how one should admonish a friend, in his treatise *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend*, is a good starting point to understand reintegrative shaming in antiquity. Plutarch uses vocabulary like “frank speech” (*parrhēsia*), “admonish” (*noutheteō*) and “criticism” (*epitimēsis*), rather than “reprove” (*elenchō*) in his rather long discussion (*Adul. am.* 25–37). He thus adheres to the *topos* of “frank speech” (cf. Duling 1998; Fitzgerald 1996). As he argues that a good friend admonishes in private, not in public, he shows insight into the psyche of a person concerned about honor and shame (chs. 32–33). If a person is reproved in public, Plutarch reasons, his first concern will be to protect his honor and he will not be open for moral reform. In private, on the other hand, the reproved person can accept admonitions from a good friend, since he can trust that the friend's motif is to help him rather than to improve his own honor before the public at the expense of the reproved person. Plutarch describes a combination of shaming and care that is typical of Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming. The honor-game is called off, and instead the aim of shaming is the well-being of the shamed person.

Jewish texts about reproof usually allude to or quote portions of Lev 19:15–18, especially v. 17, “You shall not hate your neighbor in your heart. You shall reprove your neighbor and not bear sin because of him.” These early Jewish interpretations of Lev 19:17 have been carefully analyzed by James Kugel (1987). Kugel shows that several interpretations of reproof are non-judicial and informal, while other interpretations are judicial. The non-judicial interpretations motivate the reproof with care of the “neighbor” or “friend” (Sir 19:13–17; 20:2–3; *T. Gad* 6; *Sifra* on Lev

19:17). The scenario in these texts is private confrontation, probably in order to avoid public shame (cf. Prov 25:9–10). A partial exception is perhaps *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Lev 19:17, arguing that the one who reproves is not responsible for the embarrassment of the offender.

The texts which are structurally closest to Matt 18:15–17 are portions of the decidedly judicial Qumran penal code in D (CD IX, 2–8, 16–22) and S (1QS V, 24–VI, 1), which give instructions on how one should reprove offending community members properly (Carmody 1989; Kampen 1998). Just like Matthew, both D and S elaborate not only on the practice of reproof in Lev 19:17 but also on the “two or three witnesses” of Deut 19:15. Just like Matthew, both D and S argue that reproof before witnesses is a necessary step before bringing a case to the assembly (Matthew), the elders (D), or the Many (S). However, there is a difference in attitude in the reproof instructions between S and D, as John Kampen (1998) rightly notes. The instruction on how to reprove is more judicial in D than in S. In D, the concern is a correct legal procedure. (Some concern for the reputation of the accused can be glimpsed in CD IX, 4, though.) In S, in contrast, the main concern of the reproof is the improvement of the offender. The members of the community should “reprove his neighbor in truth and humility and in loving kindness” (1QS V, 25). Consistent with care for the offender in S, the first step of reproof is private. The reason, although it is not stated in the text, is probably that a more discreet procedure will increase the likelihood of repentance, as reintegrative shaming theory suggests (cf. 1QS VIII, 16–20). D, on the other hand, with its more judicial focus, instructs that witnesses should be there to ensure that the reproof is properly done and does not seem to include a first step where the offender is reproved just by the offended (cf. Carmody 1989, 147–49). Thus S seems to reflect a more intimate community than D does, which fits the theory that the legislative portions of D originated outside of Qumran (Hempel 1998, 1–14). (In CD XX, 17, which probably belongs to a later stratum added in Qumran, exhortations are said to be for the good of the offender.)

The *Didache*, which is related to Matthew, contains glimpses of a reproof practice, which can perhaps be seen as a variant of Matt 18:15–17. In the instruction about the Eucharist, community members who are in a fight are excluded from the meal until they have reconciled (14:2). This is similar to the Qumran penal codes, where offenders are excluded from the communal meal for several offences, but only seldom excluded from all aspects of community life (Jokiranta 2007). However, as opposed to the

Qumran penal codes, which often prescribe a certain time period of exclusion from meals, reconciliation is enough to be allowed to participate in the meal again in the *Didache*. Likewise, Matt 18:15–17 does not prescribe punishment of a repentant brother. *Did.* 15:3, which refers to “the Gospel,” probably Matt 18:15–17, advises the community members to “reprove” each other and to stop talking to an offender “until he repents.” As opposed to the vague formulation “he should be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” in Matt 18:17, the social sanction is quite specific in the *Didache*. Also, the emphasis in Matthew that every effort must be made to reintegrate the sinner, is not visible in the *Didache*. The *Didache* could thus be considered to be somewhere in between Matt 18:15–17 and the Qumran penal codes in lenience.

Matt 18:15–17 as Reintegrative Shaming

The extensive similarities between the Qumran penal codes and Matt 18:15–17 discussed above make it tempting to argue that Matt 18:15–18 is a judicial code of church discipline. I argue, however, that Matthew alludes to the genre of penal code and does a subversive re-reading. The goal of Matthew is to reintegrate the offender rather than to exact a proper penalty.

Dennis Duling (1998), in his analysis of Matt 18:15–17, argues that the Matthean community fits within the category of voluntary associations in antiquity, and as such is a “fictive kinship association.” Voluntary associations occupy a social space somewhere in between kin and city; household and public space (Kloppenborg 1996; Harland 2009). “Where government and kinship fail, voluntary associations provide fictive polities and fictive families” (Walker-Ramisch 1996, 132). We should therefore expect the norms for interaction in voluntary association to vary between family-like and public assembly-like. (We have already discussed above how the penal code in S reflects a more family-like community than D.) Matthew 18 persistently pushes the imagination in the direction of family relations, which compels the reader to understand the communal instructions in Matt 18:15–20 in a certain light. The terminology of Matt 18 is not “neighbor” or “citizen,” but household-imagery like “child” (vv. 2–4), “little one” (vv. 6, 10, 14), “brother” (vv. 15, 21, 35), and “slave” (vv.23–34). God is depicted as a “father” (vv. 10, 14, 19, 35). The only exception to the family-imagery is that God is “king” in the concluding metaphor (vv. 23–34).

The imagination of being family probably influenced how a Matthean community member would understand conflict resolution. Cognitive research on forgiveness shows that people are much keener on forgiving kin than other people (Mullet and Girard 1999). According to evolutionary psychology (e.g., Teehan 2010) and game theoretical simulations of social interaction (e.g., Kim 2010; Hammond and Axelrod 2006), it is a most rational tendency for any cooperative species to forgive kin and friends more than other categories. Most probably, we humans are born with this tendency to be more generous and forgiving to kin and established cooperation partners, since this strategy will give a decisive advantage under most circumstances. This tendency was probably even more prominent in antiquity, where the norm was to be very forgiving within the family and resolve internal conflicts as smoothly as possible in order to maintain the collective honor of the family (DeSilva 1996, 171–73).

Given the structural similarities between the Qumran penal codes and Matthew, we may assume that Matthew was familiar with judicial interpretations of Lev 19:17. Perhaps such tendencies existed within the Matthean community. It is commonplace to suggest that Matthew has redacted previous traditions very carefully in this text (e.g., Luz 2001, 423, 448–49; Davies and Allison 1991, 752, 781). Matthew’s strategy is thus to use familiar knowledge and to reinterpret it. That was likely an effective way to transform practices within a community, since innovation is more easily accepted if it fits existing cognitive structures (cf. Roitto 2011, 112–13, 153–54).

Matthew has carefully placed the parable of the stray sheep (18:12–14) as the interpretative key to both the preceding and the following instructions (Thompson 1970, 245–51). As opposed to the parallel in Luke 15:4–7, where the sheep is “lost” and “repents,” the sheep is a community member who has only “gone astray” in Matthew. The parable elaborates God’s care for his “little ones” in the preceding verses (18:6–10) and elucidates the goal of the following procedural instructions—to “win back” (18:15) the brother. The point that the goal is to reform rather than to convict a sinning brother is then reinforced in 18:21–35, where the importance of relentless forgiveness within the community is hammered into the audience. We may therefore suspect that Matthew is here reinterpreting an existing reproof-tradition within the Matthean community, perhaps one similar to the one found in the Qumran penal codes.

Matthew chooses to use the word “reprove” (*elenchō*), which echoes the vocabulary of Lev 19:17 LXX. The parallel in Luke 17:3, by contrast, uses “rebuke” (*epitimaō*), perhaps echoing the philosophical tradition of frank speech (discussed above). When Matthew emphasizes that one should reprove a brother “when the two of you are alone” in order to “win him over” (18:15), the attitude is close to Plutarch’s concern, discussed above, as well as to those Jewish traditions that focus on the moral reform of the offender and therefore advice confrontation without mentioning witnesses (Sir 19:13–17; 20:2–3; *T. Gad* 6; *Sifra* on Lev 19:17).

The attitude in Matt 18:15 is quite different from the S and D penal codes, even if at least S shares Matthew’s interest in the moral reform of the offender. As discussed above, the most important difference is that in Matt 18:15 the matter is settled “if he listens,” while the Qumran penal codes insist that proper punishments should be exacted for offences (see, e.g., Jokiranta 2007; Hempel 1997 for overviews). Jutta Jokiranta (2007) has argued convincingly that the punishments were vital to the identity of the Qumran community. For most offenses, the punishment was not total exclusion, but exclusion from certain aspects of the community life and lowering of the rank of the offender (2007, 293). That is, imperfection was handled by lowering or raising the status of members according to their conduct (2007, 294–95). The social function of the punishments was thus to express which members best embodied the identity of the group and thus to express the identity of the group. We may suspect that similar thoughts flourished among members of the Matthean community, since Matt 18 is introduced with a question from the disciples: “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (18:1). Elsewhere Matthew warns that they should not use titles like “rabbi,” “teacher,” or “father,” since they are all “brothers” (23:8–12; cf. 20:20–28). The lack of punishment in 18:15–17, together with the emphasis on forgiveness in 18:21–35, can thus be seen as a way to counter a Qumran-like hierarchical imagination of community in favor of a more family-like imagination.

Since the goal of Matthew is to “win over” (v. 15) the brother so that he does not “perish” (v. 14), it was probably a good idea to begin with a discreet encounter, in order to maximize the chances that the shame worked in a reintegrative way. As Plutarch (discussed above) correctly points out, public disgrace makes it much more difficult for a shamed person to reform. We get no information about how the reproof could have been conducted, but the focus of the reproof is the action of “sin against you” (v. 15), not what kind of person the sinner is. According to

Braithwaite, it must be possible for the offender to distance himself from his transgressions in order to experience himself to be an acceptable community member again. We may thus infer that Matthew's practice of reproof focused on the sin rather than the sinner, since the end result of a successful reproof in private was that the brother had been "won over," that is, reintegrated.

In Matt 18:16–17, the language becomes more judicial, as the text mentions "witnesses" and bringing the matter before "the assembly." Dennis Duling (1998) gives a number of reasons for why this passage could be seen as reflecting a judicial procedure. First, there are all the similarities between Matthew and the clearly judicial procedure in the Qumran legal codes. Second, there are casuistic formulations ("if ... then ...") throughout the passage, so typical of judicial language. Third, the language of "binding and loosing" in v. 18 may be interpreted as a judicial decision. Yet Duling is hesitant, for good reason, to conclude that Matthew promotes a full-blown judicial practice. Rather, Duling cautiously suggests, Matthew aimed to

check the assimilation of a tradition toward cultural norms and practices that are more judicial—traditions he shares with certain members of his authorial audience—by attention to the original motivation of the Torah tradition in the light of what he understands to be the meaning and message of Jesus. (1998, 18)

As I have already hinted, I would like to take Duling's suggestion further and argue that Matthew counters judicial understandings of reproof within his community by giving judicial language an interpretation based on cultural ideals for how one should solve conflicts within the family. (As we have already noted above, Matthew is not alone among ancient Jewish texts to interpret reproof in a non-judicial direction.)

According to Matt 18:16, one should bring one or two more community-members if private reproof fails. Matthew motivates the practice with "that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be confirmed," quoting Deut 19:15 LXX verbatim. In Deut 19:15 (and Deut 17:6) the purpose of demanding at least two witnesses is to avoid false accusations. In the Qumran penal codes, the interpretation of the function of these witnesses vary. In CD IX, 16–X, 3, the discussion is about whether witnesses to the same crime at different occasions can sum up to the required number of witnesses and what witnesses should be considered reliable witnesses to a crime. In CD IX, 2–4 and 1QS VI, 1,

however, the function of the witnesses is to testify that the reproof demanded by Lev 19:17 has been properly done. The witnesses are witnesses to the reproof, not the crime. That is, the Qumran legal codes allow creative interpretations of the function of the witnesses. Therefore, we may suspect that also Matthew allows himself to be creative in his understanding of the “witnesses” in Deut 19:15 (cf. Davies and Allison 1991, 784–85). The function “one or two more” in 18:16 is explained in 18:17—their function is simply to aid the first person in his task to reprove the offender and make him “listen to *them*” (cf. Luz 2001, 784). The plural “them” indicates that they are all supposed to aid in the reproof. The quote from Deut 19:15 can thus be considered part of Matthew’s strategy to reinterpret a judicial practice into a practice that aims at the reintegration of sinning community members in a more family-like manner, by quoting and reinterpreting the very text used by proponents of a more judicial practice of reproof.

Bringing one or two more community members along increases the social pressure and thereby the intensity of the shaming. As Braithwaite points out, if the shaming is too strong, the risk increases that it will be disintegrative rather than reintegrative. However, as Braithwaite also argues, the presence of by-standing people who care about the offender and who the offender cares about can increase not only shame, but also the experience of being loved and cared about by the community. Thus, the presence of such people can result in shaming with even more intense reintegrative force. Since the text portrays the task of the additional community members as helping the offended to win the offender over, this is quite a plausible scenario. The fictive family-framework of the reproof probably enhanced the reintegrative effect too, because, as Braithwaite points out (1989, 69–70), when people are asked about what stops them from behaving deviantly, the shame before the family is statistically the number one motivator.

In the Qumran legal codes, the reproofs before witnesses are not really meant to avert the need for a public assembly. Rather, as we discussed above, proper punishments were vital to the identity of the Qumran community. For Matthew, in contrast, taking the offender to the assembly is the last resort if everything else fails (18:17). Only if the other attempts at reintegrating the sinner fail, one should take this final measure. This is quite understandable in the light of Braithwaite’s theory. If Matthew’s goal is reintegration, shaming before a large crowd runs the risk of being counterproductive, especially if the offender has not budged at previous

attempts. The goal of the process is still to reintegrate the brother, but it is likely that a person faced with a large assembly of accusers might “refuse to listen” (18:17), that is, choose to distance himself from the shame rather than to repent. As Plutarch realized, “Unsparring rebuke before many people makes every infirmity and vice more impudent” (*Adul. am.* 32). Thus, there is a risk that the reproof before the assembly works to disintegrate the offender from the community rather than to reintegrate him. It must be said, however, that we have no information about how reproof before the assembly might have been arranged, so if measures were taken to lessen the public disgrace, then we will never know.

If all attempts at reintegration fail, the offender “should be like a Gentile and a tax collector to you [sg.]” Commentators generally agree that this phrase is vague and that it is difficult to guess what this might have meant in terms of practical interaction. Ulrich Luz (2001, 450–51) gives an overview of scholarly positions: First, since it is only the offended person (“you” in the singular) who is addressed, not the whole community, it is possible to argue that it is indeed only meant as an concession to the offended individual, but it is also possible to argue that it is really meant as an imperative for the whole community and that the singular case is only meant to reinforce the responsibility of each individual. Second, what does it mean to be “like a gentile and a tax collector” so someone? The Gospel of Matthew contains both negative and inclusive attitudes towards these groups (cf. Karkowski 2004, 225–27). One possibility is that the phrase means public excommunication, but it is also possible that the expression means marginalization within the community without full excommunication.

I fully recognize how open for interpretation the phrase “like a Gentile and tax collector to you” is, but wish to explore if there is an interpretation of it that is more compatible with the overarching goal of Matthew to reintegrate the sinning brother again. In the light of Braithwaite’s theory, excommunication would distance the offender from the community and thus make the procedure more disintegrative. If Matthew is trying to counter a more judicial understanding of reproof, in which some community members have been too eager to exclude members in order to keep the community pure, then a vague formulation like this, rather than the more straightforward instructions to distance themselves from evildoers that we find in, for instance, Pauline texts (e.g., Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5:9–11; Eph 5:7; 2 Thess 3:6, 14; Tit 3:6) and the *Didache* (15:3), may have been a way to soften the practice from exclusion to

marginalization. The Qumran penal codes typically prescribe punishments that marginalize sinning members from certain aspects of community life without excluding them entirely (Jokiranta 2007, 293–95). We can therefore allow the possibility that what Matthew has in mind is to somehow consider unrepentant community members marginal until they repent. With this attitude, the unrepentant member would have continued to feel both shame and care from the community—unless, of course, the marginalized person decided to leave the community.

If we allow that “you” (sg.) in Matt 18:17 is only directed at the offended person but not the whole community, then we possibly have an even more reintegrative situation. The offender is not rejected from the community as a whole, but only by the one he has offended. After all, a “family” only rarely rejects family members collectively, but rather tries to solve issues in the family as discreetly as possible (DeSilva 1996, 171–73). The offender still knows his reputation within the community, however—he is the one who refused to listen even before the assembly—and thus continues to feel the pressure to change his ways in order to be fully accepted as an honorable person in the community again. I do not argue that the Matthean community never excluded community members. For instance, there was probably reason to exclude those who were a “stumbling block” to other community members (18:6–9). Nevertheless, Matthew’s rhetorical goal in 18:15–17 is not to give rules for excommunication but to promote practices of reintegrative shaming.

Finally, it should be noted that in many ways the reintegrative procedure reported Matt 18:15–17 is quite an ordinary practice for reintegration of offenders. In the 1960s, before more formalized control systems became fashionable in the health care system of America, Eliot Friedson and Rhea Buford (1972) conducted a field study among physicians in a hospital. The relation between the physicians was egalitarian in the sense that formal hierarchical power-structures did not govern the interaction between the colleagues on a daily basis, not unlike the Matthean community. Friedson and Buford report how the physicians handled a fellow physician who did not do what he was supposed to:

When physicians are asked what they would do about an offending colleague, the usual response is, “Nothing”. Asked what they would do if the offense was repeated, however, they answer, “I’d talk to him”. ... From examples we have collected, talking-to seems to involve various blends of instructions, friendly persuasion of error, shaming, and threatening with retaliation. ... If the offender does not mend his ways the offended man may

enlist the aid of other talkers, either the administrator or one or two more colleagues. Eventually, if the misbehavior persists ... the offender may be talked-to by the Medical Director, or a formal committee of colleagues. ... [M]ost physicians are loath to vote for so drastic a step as expulsion on the basis of complaint of the few colleagues or the patient who have experienced them. Only the most gross and shocking deficiencies will do. (Friedson and Buford 1972, 193–94)

There is no reason to believe that the striking similarities between the clinic and Matt 18:15–17 exist because the physicians were devout readers of the first Gospel. Rather, the similarities are probably most readily understood as rather common processes of informal social control through reintegrative shaming in egalitarian communities.

Matt 18:18–20 as a Ritual of Reintegration or Denigration

Ritual theory has developed rapidly the last decades (see Bell 1997; Kreinath, Snoek and Stausberg 2008 for overviews). An increasing number of biblical scholars have taken interest in these ritual theories in order to understand biblical texts and history in new ways (see DeMaris 2008, 1–10; Uro 2010, 221–26 for overviews). At this point, biblical scholars who wish to use ritual theory have to steer through a virtual smorgasbord of possible theories and carefully choose theoretical perspectives that have heuristic value for a particular problem. In our case, the problem is to understand how the prayer ritual in Matt 18:19 can function as a conclusion of the reintegration process in 18:15–17.

I have decided to use three types of ritual theories in order to understand how the ritual prayer in Matt 18:19 might have worked in the Matthean community. First, Jens Schjødt's taxonomy of different kinds of rituals is an analytical tool to categorize rituals by asking how the ritual is imagined to change the state of affairs. Second, ritual competence theory theorizes about the experienced efficacy of a ritual. This theory is cognitive and analyzes the perception of participants in rituals. Third, Roy Rappaport's theory about ritual as a way to transmit different kinds of information discusses the social functions of rituals. Together, these three can help us understand the reintegrative function of the prayer. Other ritual theories would undoubtedly help us understand other aspects of how this prayer may have been functioned in the Matthean community, but these suffice for our purposes.

In the analysis below, I will assume that the Matthean community actually adopted the practices depicted in the passage. Unfortunately, we will never know to what extent Matthew managed to convince his community on this issue, but at least it is a reasonable assumption that the text influenced the community for which it was written.

A Crisis Ritual to Be Rescued from the Danger of Sin

Jens Schjødt (1986), inspired by Lauri Honko (1979), has proposed a straightforward taxonomy for rituals by asking whether the ritual transforms from and to “crisis level,” “ordinary level,” or a “higher level”. The three most common types of rituals are initiation rituals (from ordinary to higher level), calendric rituals (from ordinary to ordinary level, sometimes protecting from crisis level), and crisis rituals (from crisis to ordinary level). In Schjødt’s taxonomy, a prayer that looses the patient from sin would be one that takes the patient from a crisis level to an ordinary level, that is, a “crisis ritual.” A binding prayer, however, retains the sinner at the crisis level. Schjødt does not suggest a label for this kind of ritual, even though it is in principle classifiable, but we may call it a “binding ritual.”

Our simple analysis with the aid of Schjødt’s taxanomy prompts the question of how sin is experienced as dangerous in Matthew—so dangerous that the very purpose of Jesus is described as salvation from sin (1:21; 26:28). In Matt 18, sin is portrayed as a danger so alarming that it is better to cut off limbs than to sin with them (vv. 6–10), since the alternative is “the Gehenna of fire” for the whole body (v. 9). Next, sin is likened to the dangerous condition of being a sheep astray in the desert, which suggests deadly danger (vv. 12–14). In the concluding parable of Jesus’ speech, unforgiven sin is likened to a massive monetary debt that can potentially result in the most fearsome punishment, since it destroys the relation to the creditor, God (vv. 23–35). Elsewhere in the Gospel, sin is associated with bodily sickness (9:1–8) and demon possession (12:43–45). Moreover, sinful behavior can ignite God’s social reaction of wrath and punishment (e.g. 5:22; 22:5–7; 25:31–46) and exclude you from the Kingdom of Heaven (e.g. 5:19–20; 7:21–23).

The perceived danger of sin thus has two dimensions in Matthew: First, it is a social danger, since sin may lead to a bad relation to God and other community members. Second, it is a bodily danger, since the body of the sinner may be invaded by sickness and demons and, ultimately, risks burning in hell. Gary Anderson (2009; cf. Roitto forthcoming) argues that

the Jewish perception of sin was cognitively modeled in analogy with two cognitive domains in antiquity: 1) it was like a substance that could pollute you and wear you down, and 2) it was like a debt that could lead to punishment. I suggest that these two imaginations correspond to Matthew's perception of how sin is dangerous. The imagination of a substance readily explains Matthew's perception of sin as something that can affect the body's health and make it vulnerable to demonic influence. When sin is imagined as a debt, sin is a social liability in relation to God and others (cf. Eubank 2013). This fits Matthew's imagination that sin affected your relation to God and other community members (cf. Runesson 2013).

This takes us back to Braithwaite's analysis of reintegrative rituals. As was discussed above, Braithwaite suggests that a good process of reintegrative shaming is finalized by a reintegrative ritual, which allows the transgressor to distance him-/herself from the immoral things s/he has done. In Matthew, sin is certainly detachable from the sinning person, since sin is imagined as a substance or a debt. What is loosened or bound in 18:18–19 is not someone, "whoever," but something, "whatever" in the neuter (*hosa ean*, v. 18; *hou ean*, v. 19), referring to actions rather than persons (cf. France 2007, 696–97). Thus, the tangible imagination of sin as substance or debt that can be loosed through God's intervention made the intercessory prayer a highly relevant reintegration ritual.

The Ritual Efficacy of Prayers by Agents Divinely Empowered to Bind and Loose

Robert McCauley and Thomas Lawson (Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002) have suggested in their ritual form hypothesis, which is a central component of their ritual competence theory, that our intuitive perception of the efficacy of religious rituals is based on our perception of how we perceive ordinary actions. Our minds cognitively structure actions in this way: a) an agent b) performs an action (with an instrument) to affect c) a patient. In religious ritual actions, we imagine that "culturally postulated superhuman agents" (CPS-agents)—in Matthew's case, God—taps into the ritual action and produces some supernatural effect. If the CPS-agent is most strongly associated with the agent performing the ritual, it is a "special agent ritual," but if the CPS-agent is most strongly associated with the patient or the instrument, it is called a "special patient ritual." Special agent rituals are intuitively perceived as more powerful than special patient rituals.

Some of the predictions of McCauley and Lawson's theory have not stood up to scrutiny (Ketola 2007), but their claim about what kinds of ritual actions are perceived as particularly effective has received substantial empirical support. Experiments confirm that the agent performing the action is important for our understanding of the efficacy of a ritual in two ways (Barrett and Lawson 2001; Sørensen, Lienard, and Feeny 2006). First, if the ritual is described so that the CPS-agent taps into the ritual through the agent (special agent ritual), it is perceived as more effective and permanent than if the CPS-agent is associated with the patient or the instrument (special patient ritual). Second, if the agent is considered to have special ritual competence (e.g., priest, healer, prophet, shaman), the ritual is considered more effective than if the agent is not.

McCauley and Lawson (2002, 13–15) do not consider prayers to be rituals. However, their analysis of prayer only takes some types of prayer into consideration—the kinds of prayer that do not performatively change any patient. McCauley and Lawson claim that after baptism all who are present know, just by seeing the public actions, that a change has taken place in relation to “the religious world” (their terminology for the divine realm) for that person. After public prayer, however, they argue, people do not perceive that such a change has taken place. That is, prayer does not fit into the schema of an agent performing an action on a patient. In some prayers, for instance prayers where God is praised, no patient is prayed for. McCauley and Lawson accept that prayers may be components in rituals, but they cannot be rituals by themselves.

However, what we see in Matt 18:18–20 is precisely what McCauley and Lawson claim prayer is not. The prayer there effects a change in the religious world; it binds or looses in heaven. We can only conclude that “prayer” is a broad term that covers a variety of religious speech-acts, and not all prayers can be analyzed in the same way. Thus, although McCauley and Lawson's objection against prayer being a ritual is valid for certain kinds of prayers, I find it reasonable to analyze the prayer in Matt 18:19 as a ritual according to the understanding of ritual proposed by McCauley and Lawson themselves.

The ritual form hypothesis prompts us to ask the following analytical question: Is the divine efficacy of the prayer in Matt 18:19 connected to the agent (the praying person), the instrument (the words of prayer) or the patient (the sinner)? Elsewhere in the Gospel, the Matthean redactor changes the conclusion of Mark's story about the healed paralytic so that the authority to forgive sin is extended to “humans” (pl.) (Matt 9:8; cf.

Mark 2:12). This can reasonably be considered an expression of the self-perception of the Matthean community as authorized to mediate the forgiveness of sins (cf. Davies and Allison 1991, 98). The promise in 18:18 gives authority to the binding and loosing agents—“whatever you bind ... whatever you loose ...” In Lawson and McCauley’s terminology, Matthew promises the community that the praying community members are agents with special competence to produce an effect in heaven. As discussed above, people intuitively feel that rituals performed by people with special God-endowed powers are more effective than other rituals. In Matt 18:18, God’s agency is especially associated with the praying agent, which means that prayer was perceived as a special agent ritual. This gives us reason to believe that this kind of prayer was probably perceived as particularly effective in causing heavenly binding and loosing.

Rituals as a Way to Establish Social and Heavenly Facts

Roy Rappaport (1999) argues that one of the functions of ritual is to transmit information in communities. He makes a useful distinction between self-referential and canonical information (1999, 52–54). Canonical information is the cultural beliefs and values encoded in the ritual. As applied to the ritual of prayer in Matt 18:19, the prayer implicitly transmits a cluster of canonical information whenever it is performed, for instance that sin is dangerous but removable, that the community is in a positive relation to God and Christ, and that the community is authorized to bind and loose sin. Self-referential information is the information that the participants in a ritual send about their bodily and social status to each other when they participate in the ritual. As applied to Matt 18:19, participation in the intercessory prayer sends information about the commitment of the praying group members, that the person prayed for is in need of forgiveness, that the interceding person has qualities that makes him suitable for the task, and—most importantly—that the person prayed for no longer is unrepentant but accepts the order of the community. A binding prayer, on the other hand, makes the unrepentant status of the offender manifest in the community.

According to Rappaport, people who participate in rituals commit themselves publically to the information transmitted in the ritual (1999, 119–25). In this way, the ritual establishes that people accept the moral obligations which the ritual implies. In the case of Matt 18:19, the ritual of prayer obliges the community to accept the sinning brother as a fully acceptable group member again. The stray sheep has been found and should

no longer be considered deviant. The reprovved group member, on the other hand, commits himself publically to distance himself from his past misdeed. This takes us back to Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming. He suggests that effective reintegrative shaming should include some kind of ritual that signals the offender's reintegration into society. An intercessory prayer could definitely have that function.

How public did the intercessory prayer have to be in order to establish the binding or the loosing of a brother as a social fact? The prayer cannot be one person's doing, but at least two persons have to "agree" on performing the prayer (18:19–20). Does "two or three" in v. 19 mean the whole assembly mentioned in v.17 (Luz 2001, 458), or just the two reprovving brothers in v. 16 (Keener 1999, 455)? The two interpretative options point to a dilemma whether information transparency or discretion in the process of reintegrative shaming should be prioritized.

Michael Suk-Young Chwe (2001) argues that public rituals often function to make sure that everybody knows, and that everybody knows that everybody knows. Certainty that everybody knows is sometimes important, because people are often only willing to cooperate in complex tasks if they are confident that (almost) everybody else will participate too. In the case of Matt 18:15–20, a public prayer before the assembly would certainly maximize the distribution of information about the status of the sinning brother and the whole community would reliably know the social status of all involved parties. However, public intercession in the assembly would probably often be experienced as a major disgrace by the repentant offender. In the terminology of Braithwaite, a public ritual risks becoming a permanent stigma for the offender, which would work disintegratively.

As I have argued above, Matthew aims to soften reproof practices in his community, which might indicate that the Matthean community is under less pressure than it had been in its recent history when the Gospel was written. If so, a public intercessory prayer in the assembly might be unnecessarily costly for the offender (cf. Sosis 2004). When contemporary Swedish schools resolve problems with bullying, they sometimes gather the bully, the victim, and their parents, and give the bully a strong incitement to promise never to bully again. To demand that the bully declares his repentance publically before the whole school would be unnecessarily cruel in most cases. Nevertheless, the rumor often spreads among parents and class mates that the meeting has taken place, so the information gets around anyway. Braithwaite (1983, 75–77) argues that this kind of gossip

can be a more discreet form of shaming, since the offender knows that everybody knows, but without having to confront everyone. Therefore, I find it quite possible that the ritual of prayer in Matt 18:19 was performed in a small group of community members in order to moderate the pressure on the offender. There is an interesting use of “bind” in Sir 28:18–19, which illustrates how rumor can be as efficient as public ritual: “Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not as many as have fallen because of the tongue. Happy is the one who is protected from it, who has not been exposed to its anger, who has not borne its yoke, and has not been bound (*edethē*) with its fetters.” The information of the offender’s status would circulate among the members of the community even if the prayer was not a fully public ritual.

Conclusion

In Matt 18:15–20, the Matthean redactor combines and modifies sayings from the Jesus-tradition and plays on Jewish reproof-traditions in order to reinterpret how a sinning brother should be reprovved and reintegrated through prayer. With the aid of Braithwaite’s (1994) reintegrative shaming theory, we can see how the discreet confrontation and the possibility for the offender to distance him-/herself from his/her transgression probably made Matthew’s reproof procedure in vv. 15–17 more effective in reintegrating offenders than many other early Christian practices. A ritual analysis of vv. 18–20 shows that the Matthean self-understanding as empowered to loose and bind sins through prayer made the community experience the prayer in v. 19 as an effective ritual, either a crisis ritual that helped the sinner from his dangerous state of sinfulness, or as a binding ritual that retained the sinner in a state of crisis. At the same time, the ritual functioned to transmit both canonical information about the identity and the theology of the group, as well as self-referential information about the reintegrated status of the offending community member.

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