

Biblical Notes — Matthew 18:17

17 – If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (17. ἐὰν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτῶν, εἰπὼν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας παρακούσῃ, ἔστω σοι ὡς περὶ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης)

The buried assumption for Roman Catholics is that when Matthew uses the term "tell it to the church" that he is referring to the Roman Catholic Church. This assumption is not warranted based upon the language of the text. The church is the [ἐκκλησίᾳ]. This is the assembly of believers, not the Roman Catholic Church.

Thayer's Lexicon: The name is used even by Christ while on earth of the company of his adherents in any city or village: Matthew 18:17. bb. the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth; collectively, all who worship and honor God and Christ in whatever place they may be.

"Tell it unto the Church - Lay the whole matter before the congregation of Christian believers, in that place of which he is a member, or before the minister and elders, as the representatives of the Church or assembly. If all this avail not, then."
— Adam Clarke, Adam Clarke Commentary, Commentary on Matthew 18:17.

"Tell it to the church - See the notes at Matthew 16:18. The church may here mean the whole assembly of believers, or it may mean those who are authorized to try such cases - the representatives of the church, or these who act for the church."
— Albert Barnes, Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible, Commentary on Matthew 18:17.

"Tell it unto the church. As the Savior was giving preparatory instruction, he was compelled to thus speak of the church by anticipation before it actually existed. The word "church" means assembly, and the apostles knew that there would be some form of assembly in the kingdom about to be set up. When Matthew wrote his Gospel, churches were already in existence."
— J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton. Commentary on Matthew 18:17. The Fourfold Gospel.

"That is, unto the church governors, the church representatives, as some think. Not the pope, whom Papists make the church virtual, and who, like a wasp, is no sooner angry but out comes a sting; which being out, is like a fool's dagger, rattling and snapping without an edge."
— John Trapp Complete Commentary, Commentary on Matthew 18:17.

"17. εἰπὲ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. The word ἐκκλησίᾳ is found only here and ch. Matthew 16:18 (where see note) in the Gospels. In the former passage the reference to the Christians Church is undoubted. Here either [1] the assembly or congregation of the Jewish synagogue, or rather, [2] the ruling body of the synagogue (collegium presbyterorum, Schleusner) is meant. This must have been the sense of the word to those who were listening to Christ. But what was spoken of the Jewish Church was naturally soon applied to the Christian Church. And the use of the term by Christ implied for the future an organised Church exercising discipline, organised too at least in part on the model of the synagogue."
— Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, Commentary on Matthew 18:17.

"Matthew 18:17. . . Try first a minimum of social pressure and publicity, and if that fail have recourse to the maximum. —: speak to the "Church"—the brotherhood of believers in the Christ."
— The Expositor's Greek Testament, Commentary on Matthew 18:17.

"church = assembly. In this case the synagogue, or local court, as in Acts 19:39. See App-120"
— E.W. Bullinger's Companion Bible Notes, Commentary on Matthew 18:17.

"Then tell the whole thing to the church. Only after the first two attempts have failed, do you then tell it to the church. ["Church" here means congregation. The first use of "church" is in Matthew 16:18] If he will not listen to the church. The church leaders [elders] had the right to exclude such a person from the fellowship of the group, with the purpose of causing him to repent. [Orthodox Jews would not even speak to foreigners and tax collectors.]"
— The Bible Study New Testament, Commentary on Matthew 18:17.