

PURITY AND EXORCISM IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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AMBROSE SEMINARY

PURITY AND EXORCISM IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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BY

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Charles Plett has presented a thesis titled, ***Purity and Exorcism in the Gospel of Mark*** in an oral thesis hearing which was held on January 11, 2024. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the presenter demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject matter.

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Abstract

There is a connection between purity and the exorcism of unclean spirits in the Gospel of Mark. They are juxtaposed to reinforce the Gospel's theme of Jesus' authority over impurity and ultimately, death. It has been recognized that the Levitical purity code pertains to both ritual and moral forms of impurity. The ritual code, according to Jacob Milgrom, symbolizes death, while the moral code deals with grave sins. According to this paradigm demons in Mark denote moral as well as ritual impurity because they personify both sin and death. This is also supported by various texts within Second Temple literature (e.g., *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, 1QM, 11Q5) which associate demons with impurity and death. These observations are confirmed in this thesis's exegetical analysis of the exorcism pericopae in Mark's Gospel (1:21-28; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-29), as well as the Beelzebul controversy (3:20-35). The Gospel of Mark frames Jesus' ministry as a conflict between holiness and impurity: Jesus, "the Holy One of God," defeats impure spirits. Imbued with the Holy Spirit, Jesus has the power and authority to overcome Satan, the ruler of the demons, and free those held in bondage to death, the greatest impurity. Ultimately, Jesus is both the embodiment and the source of purity, and this legitimizes his authority to exorcize unclean spirits. Furthermore, demonic possession in Mark's Gospel reflects not only bondage to Satan, but also portrays human bondage to sin. The liberation of exorcism also foreshadows Jesus' resurrection and the freedom it brings to those under the power sin and death. In the context of exorcism, purity points to a deeper reality, a spiritual battle between the forces of life and death. Exorcism is a kind of purification rite that moves people from death to life.

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CHAPTER ONE

Thesis Statement

This dissertation seeks to answer the following: Is there a relationship between purity and the exorcism of unclean spirits in the Gospel of Mark? How do the exorcisms in Mark enhance our understanding purity in this gospel? We will contend that there is a connection between the concept of purity and the exorcism of unclean spirits in Mark's Gospel. They are juxtaposed to reinforce the Gospel's theme of Jesus' authority over impurity, and ultimately, death. Sources from both extrabiblical Jewish literature within Second Temple Judaism and the Hebrew Bible seem to support such a claim. Qumranic texts attribute impurity to demons because of their connection with death, the common denominator of all forms of impurity. The Levitical Law articulates holiness and impurity as semantic opposites that cannot occupy the same space—while holiness is frequently associated with purity.

Mark frames Jesus' ministry as a competition between holiness and impurity. In the Beelzebul controversy, Jesus explains that his exorcisms signify his opposition to Satan, the ruler of the demons. He overcomes the "Strong Man" to free those held in bondage to death, the greatest impurity. Jesus' exorcisms provided a purification of a particular impurity for which the Levitical Law had no recourse. In Mark's Gospel Jesus has the unique power and authority to liberate, through exorcism, those under bondage to Satan. Ultimately, Jesus, "the Holy One of God" (Mk. 1:24), is both the embodiment and the source of purity. More than ritual compliance or physical healings, the exorcisms bring to the forefront the spiritual forces behind impurity and vividly portray the movement from death to life.

Relevance of Thesis

In recent discussions endorsing of the “Jewishness” of Jesus,¹ some scholars stop short when it comes to Jesus’ compliance with the laws of purity.² Jesus is portrayed as a radical social reformer who repudiated purity codes. Many scholars, while confirming Jesus’ Jewish ethnicity, do see Jesus as holding different priorities or taking a different direction in matters of purity than that spelled out in the Levitical code.³ Much of the purity debate so far has focused on the Synoptic description of Jesus and his actions regarding things like table-fellowship, Sabbath observance, food controversies, physical impurities, and hand-washing. However, given that the demons Jesus exorcizes are frequently referred to as “unclean spirits,” it is worth considering whether the exorcism accounts can shed any light on the topic of purity and perhaps Jesus’ attitude toward it. Such an inquiry can potentially offer useful insight to the “Jewishness” debate on the historical Jesus.

This thesis is also relevant for Synoptic studies and contributes to understanding the Gospel of Mark regarding his theme of purity and its relation to exorcism. The concepts of purity and unclean spirits seem to coalesce uniquely in the Gospel of Mark, not least in the fact that he so often refers to demons as “unclean.” “Πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον” occurs more often in Mark

¹ John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company Incorporated, 1973); John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vols. 1-4 (New York: Doubleday, 1991-2001; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

² Such is the accusation, for example, of researchers like Paula Fredriksen and Cecilia Wassen. Paula Fredriksen, “Did Jesus Oppose Purity Laws?” *Biblical Review* 11, no. 3 (June 1995): 18-25, 42-47; Cecilia Wassen, “The Jewishness of Jesus and Ritual Purity,” *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 27 (2016): 11-36.

³ Michael F. Bird, “Jesus as Law-Breaker,” in *Who Do My Opponents Say That I Am? An Investigation of the Accusations Against Jesus*, eds. Scot McKnight, Joseph B. Modica (London: T&T Clark International, 2008), 3-26; Thomas Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 344; Jerome Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity in Mark’s Gospel,” *Semeia* 35 (1986): 91-128; Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 73-143.

than Matthew and Luke combined,⁴ which suggests that this term is important for the purposes of the Gospel.

The current study can also make contributions to eschatological and christological questions. For example, how do Jesus' exorcisms support his proclamation of the kingdom of God, specifically in the Gospel of Mark? What do they reveal about the nature of the kingdom and about who Jesus is claimed to be? This thesis encourages further exploration into the relationship between purity, exorcism and resurrection.

The growth of Christianity in the first century moved in a direction that eventually abandoned adherence to the Levitical purity codes and the Jewish ceremonial laws in general. Developments on the purity debate can potentially contribute to understanding why the church has largely moved in this direction. Was this move away from the Law in the early church due purely to the Gentile demographic shift, or is there already a precedent in the example of Jesus?

This study can also shed useful insight into the nature of demons as understood in the first century and as portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels. Were the demons more than just malevolent spiritual beings that brought pain, illness and loss of autonomy to the host? Is there possibly a deeper meaning to the term πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον?

An analysis of the purity issues in Jesus' exorcisms may also broaden our understanding of the exorcisms themselves, as well as the exorcist. Were Jesus' exorcisms unique, and if so, in what way? In Mark's Gospel the exorcisms are frequently understood by commentators as a display of the authority and power unique to Jesus in the cosmic battle with the evil forces of

⁴ Elizabeth E. Shivley, "Purification of the Body and the Reign of God in the Gospel of Mark," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 71, no. 1 (April 2020): 78; Geert van Oyen, "Demons and Exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark," in *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, eds. Nienke Vos, Willemien Otten (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 104.

Satan's kingdom. First of all, if Jesus had authority (different than his scribal contemporaries), what kind of authority was this? Does one in authority need to comply with the "rules?" Through the lens of purity, questions like these may also provoke further discussion on what it means to be a Jew. Is there one definition of "Jew?" If Jesus did abrogate parts of the Law does that make him less Jewish? Did Jesus see himself as abandoning his Jewish identity, or embracing it in its truest sense? These are not just historical concerns, but theological and philosophical as well.

Literature Review

While the literature specifically addressing both topics of purity and exorcism of unclean spirits in the Gospel of Mark is limited, there is no shortage of scholarly work on these as separate subjects: purity and exorcism. In the following pages, we will first review the most relevant sources on each of these topics separately. This will then be followed by a survey of scholarly literature that directly addresses the connection between purity and exorcism as it relates to my own research on these ideas in Mark's Gospel.

1. Purity

In recent decades there has been a tide of scholarship that portrays Jesus' attitude toward purity as one of reform and transformation. Some scholars suggest Jesus, while not rejecting purity laws, nonetheless downplayed their significance.⁵ Many others, however, go much further, arguing that Jesus completely changed the paradigm by taking away people's impurity and imparting purity.⁶ Their argument is that Jesus is not a typical Jew. Rather, as Mark portrays Jesus, he is not only the awaited messianic deliverer of Israel, but also the Son of God. As such,

⁵ Bird, "Jesus as Law-Breaker," 3-26; Kazen, *Jesus and Purity* Halakhah, 344; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 4, *Law and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 414-415; Jonathan Klawans, "Moral and Ritual Purity," in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison Jr., John Dominic Crossan (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006): 282-283.

⁶ Something Tom Holmen refers to as "the inversion of the transferability of (im)purity." Tom Holmen, "Jesus and the Purity Paradigm," in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3, eds. Tom Holmen, Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2709-2744. See also James Dunn, "Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate," *New Testament Studies* 48, no. 4 (October 2002): 461; Bruce Chilton, *Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Healing: His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1998), 58-71; Crispin Fletcher-Louise, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 5, no. 1 (2007): 65-70; Bird, "Jesus as Law-Breaker," 24; David Garland, "Mishnah Zabim and Mark 5:21-6:6a: The Rules of Purity," in *Reading Mark in Context: Jesus and Second Temple Judaism*, eds. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich and Jason Maston (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 84-91; Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 111.

Jesus is bestowed with an authority⁷ that allows him to bring a purification that appears to go above the ritual purity law,⁸ or perhaps “reverse,” it.⁹

However, other scholars insist that Jesus did not oppose the purity laws, claiming that such a portrait misunderstands the nature and purpose of these laws.¹⁰ Paula Fredriksen, for example, accuses these scholars of “a systematic misconstrual of the meaning and application of the purity codes.”¹¹ She critiques Marcus Borg, for example, as conflating purity, morality, class and gender,¹² when in fact, she argues, the purity codes are egalitarian. Impurity is not sinful and does not require forgiveness, but purification.¹³ Similarly, Cecilia Wassen is frustrated by scholars who laud the “Jewishness” of Jesus on one hand, but stop short when it comes to compliance with purity codes,¹⁴ let alone who ascribe to Jesus the ability to purify others. She writes: “If Jesus had actually believed that he was transmitting purity to others, then this Jesus would have had an extremely elevated view of himself as a divine representative, a suggestion that I find highly problematic.”¹⁵

⁷ Kazen proposes Jesus “understood his authority as the power of God’s coming reign somehow being embodied in, or residing with himself.” Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 337.

⁸ Or at least above a perceived understanding of the law. Bird, “Jesus as Law-Breaker,” 26. Mark portrays Jesus as “an authorized limit-breaker.” Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity,” 121.

⁹ Fletcher-Louise, “Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah,” 2731-32; 2743-44.

¹⁰ Fredriksen, “Did Jesus Oppose Purity Laws?”, 18-25; 42-47; Wassen, “The Jewishness of Jesus,” 11-36; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 182-210; Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 136-150; Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 68.

¹¹ Fredriksen, “Did Jesus Oppose Purity Laws?” 21.

¹² Marcus Borg and Jerome Neyrey describe the first century Jewish purity paradigm as one of social boundaries dividing people by class, income, gender, disability, etc. In their interpretation this system catered to the ruling elite for the purposes of maintaining the status quo. Jesus came to challenge this political system and restore equality and compassion. See Marcus Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1994), 97-117; Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994), 50-53; Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity,” 91-128.

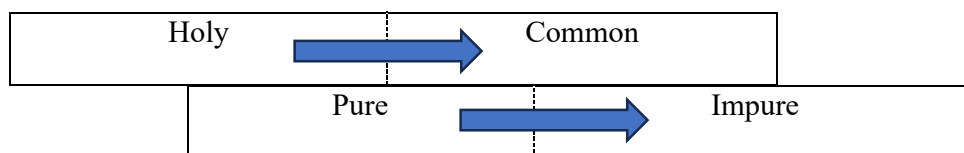
¹³ Fredriksen, “Did Jesus Oppose Purity Laws?” 20-22.

¹⁴ Wassen, “The Jewishness of Jesus,” 12.

¹⁵ Wassen, “The Jewishness of Jesus,” 24.

Close to the heart of this debate are the tangled issues of purity and morality. Jacob Milgrom seems to hold the two ideas apart when he says, “contracting impurity is no sin!” The sin is only in the failure to seek purification once defiled.¹⁶ Are the purity codes strictly amoral, as Fredriksen and Wassen also contend, or is there some overlap or connection with sin which gives many New Testament (NT) scholars grounds for claiming Jesus’ radical departure from Jewish purity tradition? In light of this controversy, we will discuss the connection between the ancient Jewish concept of purity, the perception and portrayal of Jesus’ attitude toward it, and the complex relationship between impurity and sin.

Perhaps the best place to start is with Jacob Milgrom’s insightful analysis on purity in the Levitical Law.¹⁷ Milgrom states that “biblical rituals are symbolic acts that, in the main, contain within them ethical values.”¹⁸ It is in this sense that he interprets the Levitical laws of P (Lev. 1-16) and H (Lev. 17-27). Milgrom suggests that the common theme among the bodily impurities is that they “stand for the forces of death.”¹⁹ Milgrom promotes a helpful model of purity based on two binaries: holy/common and pure/impure.



¹⁶ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 298.

¹⁷ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 30.

¹⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 128-130. See also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 767. Loss of blood or semen suggests loss of life. Scale disease has the appearance of death. Still, the purification is only symbolic; the healing comes from God. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 133-134.

These binaries represent two domains that only partially overlap. While the common could be either pure or impure, the holy must always remain pure. If it became exposed to impurity it had to be purged immediately.²⁰ While commonness and purity are *states of being*, holiness and impurity are *dynamic forces*, each trying to exert influence and control on their opposing categories, the common and the pure. By obedience to the law Israel sought to actively increase the realm of the holy and diminish impurity so as to increase the realm of purity.²¹ Holiness and impurity are semantic opposites representing the forces of life and death. “Thus the entire purification process is nothing but a symbolic ritual, a *rite of passage*, marking the transition from death to life.”²²

The thesis of Jonathan Klawans’ book *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* is that the Levitical law describes two types of impurity: ritual impurity (Lev. 11-15) and what Klawans terms “moral” impurity (Lev. 18-20).²³ These impurity paradigms do overlap a certain amount but remain distinct, not only into the prophetic and wisdom literature of the Old Testament (OT) but also to some extent in Second Temple literature. Klawans argues that both are real impurities; the impurity from grave moral sins (idolatry, sexual sin, murder) is just as much an ontological reality as ritual uncleanness.²⁴

Thomas Kazen’s *Jesus and Purity Halakhah* is one of the more detailed examinations of first century Jewish purity and Jesus’ attitude toward it. Kazen makes the case that purity observance was important for many Jews in the Second Temple period (2TP), both in Judea and

²⁰ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 95.

²¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 732.

²² Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 134.

²³ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 22-31.

²⁴ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 32-36.

Galilee, even outside the context of the Temple.²⁵ Focusing on *non-conflict traditions*,²⁶ Kazen argues that Jesus' use of physical touch on those deemed ritually unclean (e.g., lepers, corpses, and those with genital emissions) was significant and would have been interpreted as a "seemingly indifferent" attitude to purity.²⁷ Jesus instead put a priority on "inner"²⁸ (moral) purity, part of what Kazen calls a "moral trajectory" in the ancient Judaic concept of impurity.²⁹

Jerome Neyrey³⁰ refers to purity by the adage: "a place for everything and everything in its place." He takes his lead from anthropologist Mary Douglas' work on systematic structures and classifications that define societies.³¹ Impurity, then, represents something that is "out of place."³² Purity involves clear lines and boundaries for the purpose of preserving social structure; pollution would suggest blurred lines or the crossing of borders.³³ But in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is portrayed as someone who can cross boundaries because of his divine status.³⁴ Jesus does not break down barriers for its own sake, but erects new barriers in their place. Thus he reforms the understanding of purity based not on outward social boundaries of exclusion, but on inclusivity and on inner attitudes of the heart, especially mercy.³⁵

²⁵ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 72-83.

²⁶ These are stories "in which purity is not a debated issue, and thus should not be expected to primarily reflect the interests of the early church." Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 89.

²⁷ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 89-108.

²⁸ Kazen takes issue with Klawans' terminological distinction of "ritual" and "moral," as well as "literal" and "metaphorical." He believes the terms "inner" and "outer" create alternative categories that best capture the distinction between the two types of impurity, and they are alluded to in some Synoptic contexts (Mk. 7:14-23; Matt. 23:25-28). Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 219-231.

²⁹ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 214-219.

³⁰ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 91-128.

³¹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

³² Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 91-94.

³³ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 99-104.

³⁴ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 105-106.

³⁵ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 115-124.

Marcus Borg contends that the Jewish sects, especially the Pharisees and Essenes, were consumed with a “quest for holiness” and equated holiness with separation from everything unclean.³⁶ Borg accepts the same Jewish purity paradigm as Neyrey, that is, social, political and economic boundaries and categories which maintained the status quo of favoring the elite and exploiting the poor.³⁷ Borg argues that Jesus challenged this paradigm and sought to replace holiness and purity with mercy and compassion.³⁸ As he states, “whereas purity divides and excludes, compassion unites and includes.”³⁹ Regarding the accusations of Paula Fredriksen, Borg’s sociopolitical analysis leads him to argue that while the Levitical law itself may have been egalitarian, purity did eventually become a tool of exploitation by the ruling class. According to Borg, the very kind of “domination system” that Israel was liberated from (Egypt), was reborn in Israel with the advent of kingship. The battle between Moses and Pharaoh was recapitulated between the classical prophets and the “ruling elites of palace and temple.” This classist exploitation, Borg argues, continued into Jesus’ day. “Even though certain laws in the Hebrew Bible . . . mandated a more egalitarian society, there is little reason to think that they had much impact in Herodian and Roman Palestine.”⁴⁰ Certainly, the idea that purity is achieved by separation has the risk of factionalism built into it. This, combined with the fact that those in positions of power (e.g. Jewish religious leaders) were frequently also the ones who controlled the rules of pure and impure does lend itself to the possibility of purity being another tool of exploitation.

³⁶ Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics*, 59-60.

³⁷ Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 109-111.

³⁸ Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics*, 123-143.

³⁹ Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 58.

⁴⁰ Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (London/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1998), 8-12 (quote from p. 12).

2. Exorcism

In his book *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity* Eric Sorensen reviews the history of demonic possession and exorcism in ancient Israel and early Judaism.

What we find is a contrast to the polytheism of ancient Mesopotamia. “Instead of a policy of religious conglomeration, the Hebrew Bible advocated the exclusive theism of its national God.”⁴¹ Cultic practices, including exorcism, are prohibited by Moses. However, over time and into the 2TP, the perception of these practices became more positive, such that ancient figures like Solomon and Moses became rewritten as masters of magic and power over demons. This was in part due to a dualistic framework of good and evil spiritual forces which emerged over time and became more prominent and descriptive in Second Temple literature. Such a shift made the intercession by human intermediaries possible and necessary. This helped to bolster the image of Jewish exorcists and magicians by the turn of the era.⁴²

A. T. Wright’s *The Origin of Evil Spirits* is an important resource as a detailed investigation into the dominant strain of demonic etiology that emerges from the pseudepigraphal book *1 Enoch*. More specifically, it focuses on the first part of *1 Enoch* (i.e., chapters 1-36) known as the *Book of Watchers (BW)*. *BW* offers a demon origin story based on an interpretation of Gen. 6:1-4 and, according to Wright, represents the dominant understanding of demonology in 2TP Judaism.⁴³ One significant result of such an origin story is the separation

⁴¹ Eric Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 47.

⁴² Eric Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 47-74. This migration of thought and opinion is partly due to exposure to Zoroastrianism, which influenced the dualistic worldview of good and evil in sectarian Judaism, and also nurtured apocalypticism and beliefs in possession and exorcism. (See pp. 32-46.)

⁴³ Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1-4 in Early Jewish Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 9.

of God from the origin of evil. This would eventually give rise to “a recognized dualism in the spirit world of the first century.”⁴⁴

BW has also been influential on the Synoptic authors. Nicholas Elder argues that Mark’s exorcism pericopae are cast in the framework of *I Enoch*.⁴⁵ Elder suggests that in books like *I Enoch* skills of reading and writing are connected with spiritual authority. Unlike Enoch, however, Jesus does not need to rely on scribal skills to deal with demons: he can speak directly to them and command them to leave.⁴⁶ This direct and unmediated kind of authority amazes the crowd and contrasts that of the scribes. In Mk. 1:21-28, for example, Elder argues that Jesus’ teaching and his act of exorcism are one and the same. Unlike the scribes, who teach the text, Jesus “stands in place of the text” such that the exorcism *is* his teaching.⁴⁷

In *Jesus the Exorcist*⁴⁸ Graham Twelftree asks the question, was Jesus an exorcist? Applying the criteria of the historical method to the gospels his answer is in the affirmative. Twelftree traces the history of evil spirits in the OT and the vast amount of literature of the 2TP that influenced the attitude and understanding of demons in the NT world. Belief in evil spirits and exorcism was widely known and practiced in first century Palestine and the wider world. Jesus was not the only exorcist, but what was unique about Jesus’ exorcisms was that he tied them to his eschatological message about the kingdom of God.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 193.

⁴⁵ Nicholas Elder, “Scribes and Demons: Literacy and Authority in a Capernaum Synagogue (Mark 1:21-28),” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (Jan. 2021): 75-94.

⁴⁶ Elder, “Scribes and Demons,” 86-87.

⁴⁷ Elder, “Scribes and Demons,” 87-93.

⁴⁸ Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993).

⁴⁹ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 171-173; 217-220.

Geert van Oyen discusses the Markan terminology regarding demons in his essay “Demons and Exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark.”⁵⁰ He observes that, contrary to classical Greek, δαιμόνιον (“demon”) is always used negatively in Mark. All mentions of δαιμόνιον are connected with the verbs ἐξέρχομαι (“come out”) and ἐκβάλλω (“cast out”). Mark describes Jesus’ ministry with the frequent use of ἐξουσία (“authority”). This word almost always occurs with demons/unclean spirits and suggests that in Mark exorcisms are about authority and power. The only exception would be Mk. 2:10, where ἐξουσία refers to authority over sin. The frequent use of ἐπιτιμάω (“to rebuke”) underscores the serious tone of the conflict. There is a battle going on “at a transcendental level between God and Satan.”⁵¹ In the Beelzebul controversy Jesus makes the source of his authority plain, and that forces the reader to choose. For van Oyen, the main point of Mark’s Gospel is the question, who has the real authority? This is a matter of Jesus’ identity. Who is Jesus? The audience does not know; the Markan paradox is that it is the demons who are heralds of Jesus’ true identity.⁵²

3. Purity and Exorcism

Thomas Kazen (*Jesus and Purity* Halakhah) states the challenge succinctly: “In order to suggest links between Jesus’ exorcism and his contact with impure people, we must show that there was a demonic aspect to impurity in his contemporary cultural and religious context.”⁵³ The roots of this link can already be found in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁴ Although the Levitical Law is considered a refutation of demonic attribution to disease and other impurities, Kazen finds that vestiges of pagan demonic influence from Mesopotamian cultures can still be seen in some of the

⁵⁰ Van Oyen, “Demons and Exorcisms,” 99-116.

⁵¹ Van Oyen, “Demons and Exorcisms,” 109.

⁵² Van Oyen, “Demons and Exorcisms,” 111-113.

⁵³ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity* Halakhah, 300.

⁵⁴ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity* Halakhah, 301-310.

purificatory rites. Examples include the Red Heifer rite for corpse exposure, the bird rite for lepers, and the scapegoat on Yom Kippur. He accepts “purification offering” as the preferred translation for the חטאת (sin) offering, since reference to Azazel (likely a demon) suggests that this ritual was not originally propitiatory but rather purificatory, “a vehicle for transporting demonic impurities to where they belonged, i.e. to the desert and its demon.”⁵⁵

The increase in demonology and exorcism in the 2TP points to a popular association of demons with certain types of impurity (e.g., diseases such as leprosy). According to some Qumran texts, physical disease, moral weakness and impurity are understood to be caused by demons (i.e., “impure spirits”).⁵⁶ “We must conclude that impurity and demon possession were closely associated in popular tradition and, whether or not it was accepted by the Rabbis, purification was conceived of as a kind of exorcism.”⁵⁷

In *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels*, Clinton Wahlen argues that the term πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον (“unclean/impure spirit”) is unique to the evangelists’ tradition and not to later redaction.⁵⁸ The term ἀκάθαρτον (“impure”) is only used in the gospels together with πνεῦμα (“spirit”) to refer to an “unclean spirit” or demon.⁵⁹ Demons are never called “unclean” in Greco-Roman literature.⁶⁰ However, already in the post-exilic book of Zechariah, we see the idea of demons as unclean (Zech. 13:1-2). Wahlen also elaborates on evidence of this in his survey of Second Temple Jewish literature, most notably in the demon origin story in *BW*.

⁵⁵ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 309.

⁵⁶ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 310-311.

⁵⁷ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 312.

⁵⁸ Clinton Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 23.

⁵⁹ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 17-18.

⁶⁰ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 1.

Elizabeth Shively sees a motif of resurrection in Jesus' healings and exorcisms.⁶¹

Shively's thesis presents Mark's exorcisms as reflections of Jewish impurity codes that deal with death and mortality. "Mark's presentation reflects this [Qumran and Second Temple] idea that mortality and, more specifically, death is the common factor that joins all impurity."⁶² Demons and disease point to death, the greatest impurity, but Jesus' exorcisms and healings point to his resurrection, demonstrating his power over this impurity. The resurrection, then, is a purification of God's people.⁶³

The central thesis in *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, by Matthew Thiessen, is that Jesus is portrayed as removing the *source* of ritual impurity.⁶⁴ The priestly system had the tools to deal with the consequences of impurities as they inevitably arose, but these were *defensive* measures; Jesus comes as one on the *offensive*. Following Milgrom, Thiessen states that the three traditional sources of ritual impurity (leprosy, discharges and corpses) portray death. Thus, in his healings and miracles, Jesus is doing what the Law could not do: remove the source of the impurity, which symbolizes death. This includes the exorcism of demons⁶⁵ in which the two opposing forces of holiness and impurity do battle. Ultimately, in his death and resurrection, Jesus takes impurity into himself only to defeat death itself, the greatest impurity.

Steffen Joris argues that δαιμόνιον and πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον are not synonymous. While they often seem to be used interchangeably in the gospels, in Mark "πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον

⁶¹ Shively, "Purification of the Body," 62-89.

⁶² Shively, "Purification of the Body," 74.

⁶³ Shively, "Purification of the Body," 80-89.

⁶⁴ Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity Within First-Century Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2020).

⁶⁵ As Thiessen argues, it is likely that Jewish demonology was highly influenced by the Zoroastrianism of Persia, and many Zoroastrian texts connect demons with impurity and death. To that end Thiessen finds that, with the exception of Philo, all Second Temple Jewish literature believed demons were evil, a picture he argues is also presented in the post-Gospel rabbinic writings. Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 128-129; 138-139.

represents a general impurity, predominantly connected to sin, that needs cleansing.”⁶⁶ His review finds that Second Temple literature seems to share this understanding.⁶⁷ Semantic connections between Mark’s use of “unclean spirits” to Zechariah’s use of the Hebrew equivalent (רוח הטמאה) are what link Mark to Zechariah and Zechariah’s messianic references such that Jesus’ exorcisms of “unclean spirits” reflect his messianic cleansing of, and victory over, sin and impurity.⁶⁸ Thus Joris draws attention to the relation between impurity and sin in connection with exorcism in the Gospel of Mark.

4. Conclusion

At the start of this survey we mentioned the thoughts of scholars such as Fredriksen and Wassen, who argued that purity had nothing to do with sin. This broad review has explained how impurity has become connected to sin and how that ties in with an ethical view of demons as evil and sinful. Thus we have established a relationship between the concepts of (im)purity on the one hand, and the designation of demons as “impure spirits” in Mark’s Gospel on the other. In our study we will elaborate on these concepts in greater detail and use them to explain how exorcisms in Mark portray Jesus as the only one with the power and authority to liberate demoniacs from bondage to Satan, thereby “robbing” the “Strong Man.” As “the Holy One of

⁶⁶ Steffen Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit’: Another Messianic Strand,” *Australian Biblical Review* 60 (2012): 66.

⁶⁷ Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 59.

⁶⁸ Peter Bolt argues that this cleansing is, in fact, forgiveness of sins. The cleansing (i.e. forgiveness) of this sin from the fountain mentioned in Zech. 13:1 would be the removal of the idols and the unclean spirits (Zech. 13:2). In Mark’s Gospel, then, Jesus’ exorcisms are an act of forgiveness. Peter Bolt, “. . . With a View to the Forgiveness of Sins’: Jesus and Forgiveness in Mark’s Gospel,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 57, no. 2 (August 1998): 59-62.

God,” Jesus presses the kingdom of God forward on an offensive attack against the kingdom of Satan, thereby moving people from death to life.

Methodology

This study will include an exegetical analysis of the four exorcism pericopae in the Gospel of Mark. Our research will be corroborated by relevant texts in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature, as well as an understanding of the role of purity in Mark's Gospel.

1. Jewish background to purity and demonology.

To begin, we will trace the evolution of demonology as well as the concept of purity through the Hebrew Bible and into the 2TP. Then we will conclude with a discussion on how demons became associated with what is unclean. This analysis will provide us with an understanding of how demons were perceived to be impure in the time of Jesus and of the composition of Mark's Gospel.

2. Purity in Mark.

Next we will look at how the concept of purity is portrayed in the Gospel of Mark. Here we will try to understand both how the author establishes Jesus' purity and also how the author portrays Jesus' attitude toward purity.

3. Exorcisms in Mark

At this stage we will be in a position to perform a literary analysis of the exorcism accounts in the Gospel of Mark. Our task will be to understand what these pericopae contribute to Mark's portrayal of Jesus' attitude to purity and his response to impurity.

4. Discussion/Synthesis

Synthesizing all that has been discussed thus far we will seek an answer on how purity is related to the exorcism of "unclean spirits" in Mark's Gospel. It will be our position that purity is the

condition in which Jesus, via the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, defeats impurity. Through exorcism Jesus, the Pure One, confronts the “Strong Man” and liberates those held in bondage to death, the greatest impurity. Unlike purity rituals, Jesus does not just deal with the consequences of impurity, he removes the source, that is, the one who holds the power of death, Satan himself. Exorcism is a movement from death to life and it can only come from Jesus because, as David Garland states, “Jesus is the embodiment of God’s holiness.”⁶⁹ Jesus frees those in bondage to death and moves them from death to life. It is because of Jesus’ power (through the Holy Spirit) and authority (as designated by his identity as “the Holy One of God”), that he is able to accomplish for humans what they cannot do for themselves.

5. Conclusion

Mark frames Jesus’ ministry of exorcism as a competition between holiness and impurity. More than ritual compliance or physical healings, the exorcisms bring to the forefront the spiritual forces behind impurity and vividly portray the movement from death to life. Purity is life, and Jesus bestows it.

⁶⁹ Garland, “Mishnah Zabim,” 88.

CHAPTER TWO

Jewish Background to Purity and Demonology

1. Introduction

Whereas purity is important from the beginning of the Mosaic Law as explicated in the Levitical code, there are only a few scattered allusions to demons without overt discussion on the subject. However, as we move into the 2TP the two subjects converge and become intimately interconnected. In this chapter we will explore facets of the Jewish historical background that may have led to first century understandings of the relationship between purity and demons.

2. Jewish Background to Purity

2.1 Hebrew Bible

In his commentary on Leviticus, Jacob Milgrom explains how the monotheism of Israel stood in unique contrast to the polytheism of the surrounding nations.⁷⁰ YHWH stood above the world, all-powerful and uncontested. Milgrom states that in the Levitical law, evil no longer comes from demons but from human choices.⁷¹

Among all of the diachronic changes that occur in the development of Israel's impurity system, this clearly is the most significant: the total severance of impurity from the demonic and its reinterpretation as a *symbolic system* reminding Israel of its imperative to cleave to life and reject death.⁷²

⁷⁰ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 42-45.

⁷¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 43. Kaufmann also states, "What is fundamental and peculiar to Jewish demonology is that its spirits and devils derive, not from a primordial evil root, but from sin." He cites the land serpent (Satan) as an example. "Biblical religion was unable to reconcile itself with the idea that there was a power in the universe that defied the authority of God and that could serve as an antigod, the symbol and source of evil. Hence, it strove to transfer evil from the metaphysical to the moral realm, to the realm of sin." Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 65.

⁷² Jacob Milgrom, "The Dynamics of Purity in the Priestly System," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 32. Emphasis added.

Death, Milgrom argues, was the common denominator among the major impurities (scale disease, discharges, corpse exposure).⁷³ We should note, however, that although Milgrom calls these impurities symbolic, that is not quite the same as saying they are only figurative. Their defiling consequences are real.⁷⁴ Impurity has an ontological status that affects one's standing before God. But the impurities also point to a greater reality beyond themselves.

Jonathan Klawans has observed the presence of two forms of impurity in the Levitical law: *ritual impurity* in Lev. 11-15, often designated P (Priestly code), and *moral impurity* in Lev. 18-20, labelled H (Holiness code). He describes these two impurities as follows:⁷⁵

Ritual Impurity (Lev. 11-15; Num. 19)

1. It results from natural processes such as genital discharges, scale disease and contact with corpses.
2. It is contagious.
3. It is not sinful.
4. It is not permanent; it is removed by ritual ablutions and purification rites.
5. It is often described as “impure” (טמא).

Moral Impurity (Lev. 18-20; Num. 35)

1. It results from certain grave sins such as idolatry, sexual sin (especially incest) and murder.
2. It is not contagious through contact or proximity.
3. It is sin.
4. It results in a long-lasting degradation of the sinner and eventually also the land of Israel and the sanctuary. It is ameliorated by punishment, atonement, or eventual exile.
5. Common terms pertaining to moral impurity also include טמא, but in addition we find the terms “abomination” (תועבה) and “pollute” (חנף).

⁷³ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 13. “A ritual must signify something beyond itself, whose attainment enhances the meaning and value of life. This, I submit, is the quintessence and achievement of Leviticus” (p. 1). See also p. 12 and Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 766-768; 1001-1003.

⁷⁴ E.g., “If they fail to purify themselves after touching a human corpse, they defile the Lord’s tabernacle” (Num. 19:13, cf. v. 20). Thus for the ancient Israelites “impurity was a physical substance, an aerial miasma that possessed magnetic attraction for the realm of the sacred.” Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 257.

⁷⁵ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 23-27.

The purity language of the Holiness Code has commonly been interpreted as a metaphorical implementation of what is found in the Priestly code.⁷⁶ However, Klawans makes the point that moral impurity and the defilement of the land are real, literal impurities and not figurative.⁷⁷ Metaphor does become much more prevalent in the prophetic and wisdom literature, where ritual purity language is applied to sin.⁷⁸ Klawans concedes as much but he feels that this is still distinct from the literal defiling force of sin that he has shown to be present, not just in the Holiness Code, but throughout the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁹

2.1.1 Excursus 1: Ritual Purity and Holiness

Ritual impurity can be a slippery concept to define. This kind of impurity is not about physical uncleanness or dirt. Nor is it about moral behavior, such as that found in H. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz write, “This cultic meaning of impurity is neither literal nor entirely metaphorical. It is connected to the human body and its relation to the holy.”⁸⁰ Purity is not so much a property “as a relationship between persons and objects.”⁸¹ For ancient Israel, it defined one’s relation to the Temple, which was the dwelling of holy God. Someone who was ritually impure could not enter the Temple. First he or she needed to undergo the purification procedure for his or her particular impurity.

Recalling our earlier review on Milgrom’s binaries of holy/common and pure/impure (Lev. 10:10; Ezek. 44:23; cf. Ezek. 22:26), it was stated that the holy always goes with what is pure. What is the relationship between the two? The Hebrew concept of “holy” (קדש) is defined in Brown-Driver-Briggs as “apartness” or “sacredness,” connoting the idea of separation, withdrawal. It is used adjectivally to describe what is set apart (from the common).⁸² The idea refers to what is sacred and unpolluted. This describes God. It was also meant to describe Israel as a nation unique, “set-apart,” or holy for God (“Be holy, because I am holy”⁸³). Therefore to approach God (in the sancta) one must be clean, pure and unpolluted by what is profane or immoral, because holiness and

⁷⁶ T. M. Lemos, “Where There Is Dirt, Is There System? Revisiting Biblical Purity Constructions,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 37, no. 3 (March 2013), 275; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 37; H. Ringgren, “טהר,” in *TDOT*, vol. 5, trans. David E. Green, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1986): 294-295; H. Ringgren, G. Andre, “טמא,” in *TDOT*, vol. 5, trans. David E. Green, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1986): 337-340; Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 108; Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 199-201.

⁷⁷ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 32-36.

⁷⁸ Examples include Is. 1:15-17; 30:22; 64:5-6; Ez. 36:17, 25; Ps. 51; Lam. 1:8, 17; Jer. 2:22-23. T. M. Lemos cites several examples in which the lines are blurred between different kinds of impurity such as physical uncleanness, ritual impurity and moral impurity (Zech. 3; the use of ברר in Is. 49:2 vs. 52:11; Pr. 20:9; Ps. 73:13; Is. 1:16). Lemos, “Where There Is Dirt,” 286-287.

⁷⁹ Deut. 21:23; 24:1-4; Num. 35:33-34; I Ki. 14:24; 2 Ki. 16:3; Hos. 5:3; 6:10; Is. 24:5-6; Jer. 2:23; 7:30; Eze. 5:11; 22:1-4; 36:16-18; Ezra 9:10-12; Ps. 106: 34-39. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 26-36; 43-46. Cf. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman on His Sixtieth Birthday*, eds. Carol L Meyers and Michael O’Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: ASOR/Eisenbrauns, 1983), 410.

⁸⁰ Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz, “Purity and Holiness: An Introductory Survey,” in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 5.

⁸¹ Poorthuis and Schwartz, “Purity and Holiness,” 8.

⁸² BDB, s.v. “קדש.”

⁸³ Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26.

impurity, in Milgrom's terms, are "semantic opposites" representing life and death, respectively. Purification rituals are a movement from death to life. And if holiness and impurity are antonyms, it suggests that holiness and purity are synonyms.⁸⁴ Consider Is. 6:1-7. Here the image of God's holiness on his throne is contrasted with Isaiah's conviction of his own uncleanness. James Dunn states that,

the purity/impurity distinction is most simply understood as the human response made necessary by the fascinating but threatening character of divine holiness; the awareness of holiness brings consciousness of impurity . . . It is the negative, inhibiting effect of impurity, as preventing access to or relation with the holy, which sets impurity as the effective antithesis to the positive, outgoing power of the divine holiness.⁸⁵

And so, purity and holiness are very closely connected. Because of their intrinsic relationship, authors frequently conflate these terms. James Dunn, for example, states elsewhere, "Holiness and purity go hand in hand. To be pure is to be set apart to Yahweh, that is, to be separated from other peoples that would infringe or compromise that holiness, that purity."⁸⁶ Joel Marcus writes, "'Holy,' *hagios*, a term of cultic origin, is roughly synonymous with 'clean' (*katharos*) and the antonym of 'unclean' (*akathartos*)."⁸⁷ When we come to the NT, Paul seems at times to have considered them interchangeable terms.⁸⁸

And yet, because of the nature of our present study, it is useful to draw out the distinction between the two concepts. Perhaps we could nuance it somewhat by saying humans can be in a state of purity, but holiness resides with and is imparted by God.⁸⁹ God demands holiness of his people and purity is a precursor or requirement for holiness.⁹⁰ As Bruce Chilton describes it, "purity is the condition that anticipates holiness." What is pure becomes holy because God accepts it.⁹¹

2.2 Second Temple Literature

A distinction between ritual and moral impurity, as well as purity language as a metaphor for sin, is also present within Second Temple literature.⁹² Again we can see evidence that sin has its own

⁸⁴ In his survey on these concepts, Wahlen, referencing the work of Philip Jenson, states that purity and holiness represent two distinct spheres. "Purity pertains to the human sphere and holiness to the divine. These spheres overlap in harmony with the biblical conception of God's (holy) presence dwelling in the temple, which is situated in the midst of his (pure) people. Purity characterizes normal life for the ordinary Israelite and is the presupposition for approaching that which is holy." Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 10.

⁸⁵ James Dunn, "Jesus and Holiness: The Challenge of Purity," in *Holiness Past and Present*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (London: T&T Clark Ltd., 2003), 172.

⁸⁶ Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 450-451.

⁸⁷ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible. (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 188. Borg, commenting on Lev. 19:2, states, "Holiness thus meant the same as purity." Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 50.

⁸⁸ E.g., 1 Thes. 4:7; 1 Cor. 7:14.

⁸⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1002.

⁹⁰ Cana Werman, "The Concept of Holiness and the Requirements of Purity in Second Temple and Tannaic Literature," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 163. In Rom. 6:19 Paul contrasts slavery to impurity with slavery to righteousness. The implication is that righteous living (purity) leads to holiness.

⁹¹ Bruce Chilton, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 39. It is of note that in the opening of Mark Jesus is first purified through baptism and then receives the Holy Spirit. We will have more to say about the relationship between purity, holiness and authority in chapter four.

⁹² Neusner, *The Idea of Purity*, 33-38.

defiling force. Examples of this can be found in Ezra-Nehemiah, *Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, and the *Damascus Document*, among others.⁹³ Additional morally defiling sins are also introduced, such as intermarriage with Gentiles⁹⁴ and bribery.⁹⁵

However, when we turn specifically to some of the sectarian⁹⁶ literature of Qumran, things start to change. Qumran seems to combine or equate sin with ritual impurity.⁹⁷ Sin was defiling, but ritual defilement was also sinful.⁹⁸ The practices for dealing with ritual and moral impurities are also melded. There is a connection between atonement and purification such that they seem to be two sides of the same coin.⁹⁹

In the tannaitic literature the categories of ritual and moral impurity are again kept strictly apart, which Klawans describes by the term “compartmentalization.”¹⁰⁰ There are only a few examples in the Mishnah where ritual impurity appears to include a moral dimension, such as in cases of leprosy (*m. Keritot* 2:3) and defiling molds (*m. Negaim* 12:6). These conditions appear at times as a punishment for sin.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 43-60.

⁹⁴ See *Ezr.* 6:21; 9:1-2, 11-14; *Neh.* 13:30; *Jub.* 22:16ff; 30:13-15. Hayes designates this as *genealogical impurity*. Christine Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (January 1999): 3-25.

⁹⁵ *Temple Scroll* (11QT) 50:11-15. Cf. *Lev.* 19:15, 35; *Deut.* 25:15-16.

⁹⁶ That is, literature scholars consider the composition of the Qumran community itself. J. J. Collins has suggested that the sectarian works include the Community Rule, the War Rule, Damascus Document and the Thanksgiving Hymns. J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 179.

⁹⁷ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 67-91. Outsiders, by definition sin, and are automatically labelled ritually impure. Insiders who sin are defiling. Insiders who are ritually defiled must not only ritually purify but also repent (p. 75). Ritual impurity and sin are also explicitly connected in passages such as 1QS2:25-3:6 and 1QS5:13-14.

⁹⁸ Jacob Neusner draws the same conclusion: “For the *yahad*, one cannot distinguish between cultic and moral impurity. In themselves and in their consequences they are identical.” Neusner, *The Idea of Purity*, 54.

⁹⁹ E.g., 1QS 3:6-9; 4Q512 (fragments 29-32) 7:5-10.

¹⁰⁰ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 92-135.

¹⁰¹ However, Klawans argues that the ritual and moral aspects are still kept distinct because, in the case of leprosy for example, a sinner is only considered ritually unclean if he contracts leprosy. “Thus even when there is a causal relationship between ritual impurity and sin, the real connection is not between sin and defilement, but with sin and punishment.” Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 104.

In summary, what we have found in the Hebrew Bible is that there are broadly two concepts of purity: ritual and moral. While these concepts frequently overlap in the prophetic and wisdom literature, we still see a common thread of examples in which these two impurities are kept distinct. This trend continues in the 2TP literature. However, in the sectarian Qumran literature there is a blurring of the lines between ritual impurity and moral impurity (sin). In this case it is not that metaphorical language is again employed, but that the two are somehow one: sin is defiling, but ritual impurity is also sinful.

3. Jewish Background to Demons

3.1 Hebrew Bible

In the Hebrew Bible angels are the most frequently mentioned supernatural beings.¹⁰² They interact with the patriarchs, the early leaders of Israel (Moses, Joshua) and the prophets.¹⁰³ They are frequently portrayed as God's messengers, or intermediaries between God and people. Their role is to serve God and carry out his will or command, which involves a variety of tasks such as commissioning people (e.g., Moses, Ex. 3:2; Gideon, Judges 6:11-24), communicating with prophets (e.g., Elijah, 2 Ki. 1:3, 15), announcing births (e.g., Samson, Judges 13:3-5), offering divine protection (such as to Israel in the desert, Ex. 14:19-20; 23:20, 23), and carrying out divine punishment (e.g., Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 19).¹⁰⁴ The word "angel" is used to

¹⁰² The generic Hebrew term for non-corporeal divine spirit beings is "elohim" (אלהים). As Michael Heiser explains, it is used over 2000 times in the OT to denote the God of Israel, but it is also used for any "being as a member of the nonhuman, nonterrestrial world." Thus it can refer to various other gods or any of a multitude of spiritual beings, including demons or angels. See Michael Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says About the Powers of Darkness* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 7-8.

¹⁰³ E.g., Gen. 16:9-11; 22:11; 28:12; 33:11-13; Ex. 3:2; Nu. 22:21-35; Judges 6:11-12, 20-22; Josh. 5:13-15; 2 Sam. 24:16-17; 2 Ki. 1:3, 15; Is. 37:36; Zech. 1-6.

¹⁰⁴ Carol Newsom, "Angels," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. 1, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 249-250.

translate the Hebrew מַלְאךְ (LXX “ἄγγελος”), a term which means “messenger.” The most frequent usage is “angel of the Lord” (מַלְאךְ יְהוָה), and there are times when it seems to imply God himself.¹⁰⁵ Some form of established angelology can already be found in preexilic Israel, where we see reference to a heavenly host or army.¹⁰⁶ Sometimes “angels” is used to translate “sons of God” (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים),¹⁰⁷ a term of rank which suggests that the divine beings are members of God’s heavenly court.¹⁰⁸

By contrast, the OT makes very little mention of demons or evil spirits, especially as autonomous beings acting on their own will.¹⁰⁹ Some suggest this is because demonology is sparse or absent in Israel, especially in pre-exilic and exilic times,¹¹⁰ but perhaps it is more accurate to say it is suppressed.¹¹¹ This, as noted earlier, stands in contrast to the surrounding ANE cultures, which had a robust demonology.¹¹² When evil spirits are mentioned in the OT, they are frequently portrayed as acting according to God’s bidding, including the Satan figure.¹¹³ Exorcisms are nowhere explicit in the Hebrew Bible.¹¹⁴ Rather, we find the attitude that all things, blessing and cursing, health and sickness, life and death, originate with God.¹¹⁵ Demons

¹⁰⁵ E.g., Gen. 16:7-13; Ex. 3:2-6; Judges 6:11-24.

¹⁰⁶ Archie T. Wright, “Angels,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Ancient Judaism*, ed. J. J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2010), 329; Newsom, “Angels,” 249. E.g. Deut. 33:2; Josh. 5:14; 2 Ki. 6:17.

¹⁰⁷ E.g., Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps. 29:1; 89:7.

¹⁰⁸ Gen. 28:12; 32:1-2; Ps. 82:1; 89:6-7; 1 Ki. 22:19-22; 2 Sam. 14:17, 20. Wright, “Angels,” 328-329; Newsom, “Angels,” 249.

¹⁰⁹ Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 1; Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 48-55.

¹¹⁰ Alexander, “The Demonology,” 351; Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 313-316.

¹¹¹ This is Kazen’s contention. He cites references to evil spirits, demons, goat demons, Lilith, Azazel, Death and the Destroyer all within the Pentateuch, Deuteronomic history, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 301-302.

¹¹² Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 127-129.

¹¹³ Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 51. Examples include Satan inciting David to take a census in 1 Ch. 21:1 as well as his accusation and affliction of Job in Job 1-2.

¹¹⁴ Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 55.

¹¹⁵ Heiser, *Demons*, 33-34, 36.

are not generally described as unclean,¹¹⁶ but they may be associated with impurity by their relationship to idolatry.¹¹⁷ The Satan figure, who in the NT is depicted as the enemy of Jesus and “prince of demons,” is not yet present in the OT. “Satan” (שטן) occurs twenty-seven times in the OT, seventeen times with the definite article (-ה) and ten times without. It is not yet a personal name but is best understood as a sort of title for “the Accuser,” or “the Adversary.”¹¹⁸

3.2 Second Temple Literature¹¹⁹

Matthias Henze summarizes our preceding discussion: “The Old Testament does not know the demons of the New Testament, and it says nothing about their origin.”¹²⁰ However, it is in 2TP literature where things are different.¹²¹ Demonology (and angelology)¹²² is not only more prolific and detailed, but the nature of demons and the response to them has also evolved.

Demonic activity starts to affect individuals now more than the corporate nation of Israel. We

¹¹⁶ With the exception of Zech. 13:2, which we will discuss later in this study as it pertains to Mark’s Gospel.

¹¹⁷ Idolatry was one of the grave sins causing impurity (Lev. 18:21, 24; Eze. 22:3-4; 37:23; Ps. 106:38-39) and idolatry was considered the worship of demons (Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37). Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 11-12.

¹¹⁸ Heiser, *Demons*, 76-77. Heiser would not translate שטן as “Satan” (i.e. a proper personal name) in any of the passages where it is commonly done in Bible translations (e.g., Job 1-2; 1 Ch. 21:1; Zech. 3:1ff.). See discussion, Heiser, *Demons*, 76-80.

¹¹⁹ The amount of 2TP Jewish literature is vast, including the OT Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The limits of the current study do not allow space for an exhaustive analysis of every reference to demons. What we will undertake is a presentation of demonology in the more pertinent texts that will give us the broad strokes of the major themes and ideas related to demons and demonic possession.

¹²⁰ Matthias Henze, *Mind the Gap: How the Jewish Writings between the Old and New Testament Help Us Understand Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 99.

¹²¹ This is due in no small part to Persian influence. Philip Alexander, “The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years*, vol. 2, eds. Peter Flint and James Vanderkam (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 351; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 32. For a detailed discussion on Zoroastrianism’s influence on Jewish and Christian ideas of personified evil, ethical dualism, possession and exorcism see Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 32-46. Zoroastrians associated demons with impurity and death. Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 128-129; Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 24.

¹²² Some important characteristics of angelology in the 2TP include the increased detail of angelic hierarchy, the angelic armies involved in cosmic, apocalyptic battles, as well as the evolution of a dualism which involves evil angels opposed to God, led by Satan. Newsom, “Angels,” 251-253.

also see tools and techniques (prayers, incantations, physical objects, etc.) employed to protect from or exorcise evil spirits.

Of all the writings in the Second Temple period, *I Enoch* plays the most influential role in fleshing out the 2TP Jewish understanding of demon origins.¹²³ In the first thirty-six chapters of this book, known as the *Book of Watchers (BW)*, the author interprets Gen. 6:1-4 as the event responsible for the presence of demons on the earth.¹²⁴ Demons, in fact, can be traced back to an angel rebellion. In Gen. 6:1-4, certain angels, or, the “sons of God” (i.e., the Watchers), procreate with the daughters of men. *BW* interprets this move as a rebellion of the Watchers (angels).¹²⁵ Their offspring are called giants (*Nephilim*) because of their large size. These giants are evil and destroy nature and humanity. Therefore God sends the flood and the giants are destroyed. However, their disembodied spirits are left to roam the earth, which they will continue to do until the final judgement (*I Enoch* 15-16:1). These, then, are the evil spirits. Alexander suggests that, unlike angels, it is their partly human origin that allows demons to invade a human body.¹²⁶ Because their bodies were destroyed by the flood, they seek to possess human bodies.

¹²³ Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 156, 223; Heiser, *Demons*, 137. Nicholas Elder states, “It is this account that provides the etiology for evil spirits that was influential in Second Temple Judaism and is pervasive in early Jewish and Christian texts.” Elder, “Scribes and Demons,” 80. In this article, Elder draws specific attention to *BW* influence on the Gospel of Mark (pp. 81-87).

¹²⁴ Other 2TP literature also bear witness to the Watchers tradition. Heiser, *Demons*, 139. For example, *Jub.* 10:5 refers to “Thy Watchers.” The book of *Jubilees* presupposes *BW*. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 103. Qumran was heavily influenced by *Jubilees* and *I Enoch* and these documents are found among the DSS in their original languages (*Jubilees* in Hebrew; *I Enoch* in Aramaic). See Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 135; Alexander, “The Demonology,” 337; Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 11.

¹²⁵ Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 141. The idea of rebellion of angels and their punishment is also found in *2 Enoch* 29:3-4 (cf. *2 Pet.* 2:4 and *Jude* 6).

¹²⁶ Alexander, “The Demonology,” 339. Wright states that although such an explanation is only implied in *BW*, “this aspect of possession is identified more clearly in the Gospels (see *Mk.* 5.12). Nevertheless, there are indications in the DSS that this issue had been addressed earlier and was a concern in the second and first centuries B.C.E.” Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 224-225.

Referencing *1 Enoch* 15:8 Wright explains that “the Watchers have created an unauthorized new being, one that is a mix of the heavenly nature of angels and the body and flesh of humans: ‘they will be called “evil spirits” and they will dwell amongst humans (15:8).’”¹²⁷ God’s judgement and “binding” of the Watchers in *1 Enoch* 10:4-13 echoes the language of 2 Pet. 2:4 (cf. Jude 6).¹²⁸ This judging will be done by God’s “Elect One.”¹²⁹ In the 2TP literature “there was a strong conviction about and earnest expectation for an age in which Satan would be bound and his power broken. That is the part with the most important contact with Christianity.”¹³⁰

In *BW* we have an evil origin account that exonerates God from any part in the creation of evil.¹³¹ This may account for the development of ethical dualism in the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and “the emergence of the ‘kingdom of Satan’ in the Gospels (Matt. 12:26; Lk. 11:18), bringing about a recognized dualism in the spirit world of the first century.”¹³²

The Satan figure is more developed in 2TP literature than in the OT. In the *Book of Jubilees* Satan (who is not mentioned in *1 Enoch*) becomes the leader of the spirits of the giants, or evil spirits (In *BW* evil spirits have no leader). Here he is mostly referred to as “Mastema” (e.g., *Jub.* 10:8),¹³³ and he is still in some sense answerable to God. The name for Satan in the DSS and various other 2TP literature is Belial or Beliar, where he is most frequently portrayed as the leader of the forces of evil opposed to God and his people.¹³⁴ Thus, from *Jubilees* to the

¹²⁷ Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 156. They were “created in rebellion” (p. 224).

¹²⁸ Also, *T. of Levi* 18:12, “And Beliar shall be bound by him,” cf. Mk. 3:27.

¹²⁹ *1 Enoch* 55:4.

¹³⁰ Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 95.

¹³¹ Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 166-168.

¹³² Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 193.

¹³³ In *Jub.* 10:11 he is identified as Satan.

¹³⁴ For e.g., *T. of Levi* 19:1; *T. of Issachar* 6:1; *T. of Dan* 1:7; 1QS 1:16-2:8. 1QM 14:9; 4Q390 fr. II 1:4; 1QM13:4-6, 11; 1QM 15-18; CD4:14-18.

DSS Satan shifts from an instrument in God's economy to the leader of the opposition.¹³⁵

Bennie Reynolds III concludes that although the NT concept of Satan is not yet present in the DSS, the "theological and metaphysical building blocks for Satan are prominently on display."¹³⁶

Dualism is one prominent feature that characterizes Qumran literature in particular.

Gideon Bohak explains:

Within the dualistic worldview of this small Jewish sect, the Sons of Light were in a state of constant and mortal struggle against the Sons of Darkness, who were abetted by a host of demons, always trying to lead the Sons of Light astray and tempt them into error, sin, and doubt.¹³⁷

This dualism, however, is not absolute. As passages like 1QS 3:20-24, 15-17 suggest, God is the author of all. "For it is He who created the spirits of Light and Darkness and founded every action upon them and established every deed [upon] their [ways]" (1QS 3:25-26).

Common examples of exorcism in 2TP literature include Abraham's prayer over Pharaoh in the *Genesis Apocryphon* to remove the "chastising spirit" sent by God.¹³⁸ David and Solomon are also named in connection to exorcism.¹³⁹ Physical elements (namely fish parts) are used in Tobit¹⁴⁰ and *Testament of Solomon*¹⁴¹ to defeat the demon Asmodeus at the hands of the angel Rafael. In *BW* and *Jubilees*, demons possess human bodies through which the demons cause destruction on the land and to other people. By contrast, however, the DSS are less focused on

¹³⁵ Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 161.

¹³⁶ Bennie Reynolds III, "Understanding the Demonologies of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Accomplishments and Directions for the Future," *Religion Compass* 7, no. 4 (April 2013): 108-109.

¹³⁷ Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 106.

¹³⁸ 1Q20 20:28-29.

¹³⁹ Solomon is portrayed as a powerful exorcist (11Q11 2:2-5) and David's name is mentioned in a prayer against demons (11Q11 5,6).

¹⁴⁰ Tobit 8:2-3. Meier suggests the Tobit story is "more properly called a case of demonic obsession (attack from without) than possession." John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2, *Mentor, Message and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 405. Sorenson believes we see, uniquely in this story, a demon who has been acting autonomously, and not in service to God. Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 50, 54-55.

¹⁴¹ *T. of Solomon* 5:9-10, 13.

physical possession. Instead there is greater emphasis on the evil influence demons have on human inclinations.¹⁴² As many scholars note, the demonology of the DSS puts greater emphasis on the psychological and ethical effects of possession, seeking to lead the person away from God¹⁴³ and, as Sorenson states, “it is in this context of ethical possession that one can explain the eventual application of exorcism to Christian initiation.”¹⁴⁴

It was not uncommon in antiquity to associate demons as the cause of disease,¹⁴⁵ and 2TP literature bears this out to some extent. For example, the non-sectarian Aramaic fragment 4Q560 describes an exorcism through apotropaic incantation.¹⁴⁶ Here Fever, Chills and Chest Pain are considered the proper names of demons.¹⁴⁷ This text is contemporaneous with the birth of Christianity and seems to suggest “a demonic etiology for disease in the Qumran texts.”¹⁴⁸ An Apocryphal Psalm, 11Q5 19:16 states, “Let not Belial dominate me, nor an unclean spirit; let pain and the evil inclination not possess my bones.” Here we have Satan, unclean spirits,¹⁴⁹ and illness/pain (as well as moral failure) together in one verse.

But as several scholars point out not all illnesses were attributed to possession.¹⁵⁰ “There were well-known maladies like fever, leprosy and paralysis of which it was not thought

¹⁴² For example, 1QH 15:3, “for Belial is manifest in their (evil) inclination.”

¹⁴³ Alexander, “The Demonology,” 344-348; Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 181-182; Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 65.

¹⁴⁴ Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 65.

¹⁴⁵ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 303-304.

¹⁴⁶ Douglas Penney and Michael Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub: An Aramaic Incantation Formula From Qumran (4Q560),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 627-650.

¹⁴⁷ Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 631-632. Demons named after the sicknesses they cause is a characteristic of ANE demonology. For details, see Hillers, Rabinowitz and Scholem, “Demons, Demonology,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971-72), 1522.

¹⁴⁸ Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 650. The authors speculate, “With regard to the Gospels, this incantation poses the question whether ‘exorcism’ and ‘healing’ were truly distinguished in the minds of the evangelists.”

¹⁴⁹ רוח הטמאה, also found in 4Q444. Cf. רוח נדה in 1QS 4.22.

¹⁵⁰ James D. G. Dunn and Graham H. Twelftree, “Demon-Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament,” *Churchman* 94, no. 3 (1980): 210-225; Ferguson, *Demonology*, 4-5; Heiser, *Demons*, 198-199; Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 51.

necessary to attribute directly either to Satan or to demons (Mark 1:29-31, 40-4, 2:1-12; cf. Mark 4:19).”¹⁵¹ Conversely, Heiser points out that “certain New Testament descriptions of evil spirits unmistakably point to an intelligent, conscious spirit entity.”¹⁵²

The minimal reference to demons in the OT contrasts significantly with a more elaborate demonology in the 2TP. The demonology that was suppressed and/or replaced with monotheism in the Hebrew Bible begins to re-emerge as a struggle between opposing spiritual forces. Satan evolves from an adversary in God’s divine realm to the leader of the opposition. This creates a space for human intermediaries, using various methods, to appeal to the divine for assistance against the demonic threat.¹⁵³ The practice of exorcism and the idea that an unclean spirit can dwell inside a person are concepts that will also become important in the Synoptic Gospels.¹⁵⁴ The giantology of *BW* and its explanation of evil spirits was expounded upon by other Jewish literature in the second and first centuries BCE as we have seen from examples in the pseudepigrapha, apocrypha and DSS. Ultimately, the Palestinian Jewish worldview in many respects took up this concept of evil spirits, as reflected in the gospels. Here we see that demons can possess and afflict people, although the reasons are not specified.¹⁵⁵

Alexander states that “belief in demons was probably widespread in late Second Temple Judaism, but it should be noted that there is a particularly close affinity between the demonology

¹⁵¹ Dunn and Twelftree, “Demon-Possession and Exorcism,” 217.

¹⁵² Heiser, *Demons*, 198. Heiser cites Mk. 1:23-27, Mk. 3:11-12 and Mk 5:1-20 as examples where Jesus is in an adversarial conversation with an unclean spirit and it obeys him.

¹⁵³ Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism*, 74.

¹⁵⁴ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 50.

¹⁵⁵ Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 194.

of the Scrolls and the demonology of the New Testament.”¹⁵⁶ Both implement demonology into a theological framework. Qumran assimilated it into their battle motif of the spiritual war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. The NT authors viewed the defeat of demons as a sign of the kingdom of God.¹⁵⁷ Both frameworks are apocalyptic in nature. Bennie H. Reynolds III describes how the motifs of dualism and eschatology (especially the idea of judgment and final battle) are significant characteristics of Jewish apocalyptic literature, a genre which emerged in the Hellenistic period.¹⁵⁸ John Collins believes the dualistic language of Qumran as well as the presence of books like Daniel, *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* among the DSS speak to the apocalyptic interest at Qumran.¹⁵⁹ Both Qumran and the NT authors also had messianic expectations,¹⁶⁰ which played a central role in their eschatologies.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Alexander, “The Demonology,” 351. Alexander states the importance of the Scrolls in relation to the NT also for dating purposes: “It should be borne in mind that most of our evidence for demonology in the Graeco-Roman world comes from after 200 CE. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls some of our earliest evidence was in the New Testament. But the availability of the Scrolls now makes it clear that the New Testament is not isolated in its magical ideas and praxis, and we have genuinely contemporary material with which to compare its demonology” (p. 352, note 56).

¹⁵⁷ Alexander, “The Demonology,” 350-351.

¹⁵⁸ Bennie H. Reynolds III, “A Dwelling Place of Demons: Demonology and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Apocalyptic Thinking in Judaism: Engaging with John Collins’ ‘The Apocalyptic Imagination,’* eds. Cecilia Wassen and Sidnie White Crawford (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 35-50.

¹⁵⁹ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 179-184. Collins states: “The Dead Sea Scrolls, along with the writings of early Christianity, provide our main evidence from antiquity for a community in which apocalyptic beliefs played an important part,” (p. 218).

¹⁶⁰ For some allusions and parallels of messianic descriptors between the scrolls (specifically 4Q521) and the NT see Andrew Perrin, “From Qumran to Nazareth: Reflections on Jesus’ Identity as Messiah in Light of Pre-Christian Messianic Texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *RST* 27, no. 2 (2008): 213-230.

¹⁶¹ While the NT presents Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, Christian theology portrays Jesus as a spiritual messiah, the divine second person of the Trinity, and one who in some sense brings spiritual salvation. In contrast, the Qumran messiah was not one person but two, depicted as Aaron and Israel (1QS 9:11; cf. CD 12:23-13:1; 14:19), a priest and a king (See also Zech. 4:14 for a possible biblical parallel referring to Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the priest). The Qumran community believed it was living in the eschatological “end of days.” However, contra the spiritual kingdom of God of Christian theology, Qumran was expecting God to restore the very physical temple cult and Davidic kingdom “through” the human messiahs of Aaron and Israel. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 196-206. Collins further states that, unlike Jewish apocalypticism, “the Christians believed that the messiah had already come and that the firstfruits of the resurrection had taken place.” Although the Qumran community did believe they were in some sense living in the last days, their messianic hopes were more abstract and not based on a clear and known historical figure like Jesus who lived, died, and apparently rose again (p. 337).

4. Summary: Demons and Impurity

As demonology became more widespread in the 2TP, so did its association with impurity. The Qumran community, for example, incorporated demonology into its impurity paradigm.¹⁶² The idea of demons as impure or unclean comes across in several 2TP Jewish texts.¹⁶³ Some DSS fragments mention “unclean spirits.”¹⁶⁴ The impurity of demons is found most notably in *BW* where giants result from an unauthorized union between the angels of God with the daughters of men.¹⁶⁵ And if demonic existence is unnatural, how much more so demonic possession. Demons pollute the host. They don’t belong; they are “out of place.”¹⁶⁶ Commenting on the Enochic etiology, Alexander states, “The triumph of good over evil, and the confinement of the demons and the wicked angels to the abyss at the end of history, represent a kind of cosmic exorcism and purification.”¹⁶⁷ Heiser draws the implication: “That the phrase ‘unclean spirits’ is found in the New Testament is clear evidence that New Testament writers stood firmly in the Second Temple Jewish tradition regarding the origin of demons.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² Alexander, “The Demonology,” 348-350.

¹⁶³ E.g., 1QM 13.5; 1 Enoch 99:7.

¹⁶⁴ רוח הטמאה, e.g., 11Q5 19.16; 4Q444. 1QS 4.22 mentions רוח נדה, but it is questionable whether cosmic forces are implied here rather than dispositions of the human heart. See discussion in Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 45-47.

¹⁶⁵ “Polarities of heaven and earth, angelic and human, spiritual and fleshly are employed to highlight the inappropriate crossing of boundaries which produced the giants.” Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 32. Alexander states: “They were born from a crossing of species which breached the fundamental law of creation that each species was to reproduce ‘after its kind’ (Gen.1:11-12, 21, 24-25).” Alexander, “The Demonology,” 340. This union is described as a “defilement” and the giant offspring as “bastards.” 1 Enoch 10:9, 11; 15:2-9. “Bastard” terminology is also present in the DSS, e.g., 4Q510, 4Q511 fr. 35:7.

¹⁶⁶ Pollution as matter out of place is the model championed by Mary Douglas’ classic anthropological work *Purity and Danger*. To this end, Alexander states, “all of them – demons, Giants and the fallen Watchers – represent forces which have no place in this created order, but belong properly to the abyss, and to the chaos which God subdued at creation.” Alexander, “The Demonology,” 350.

¹⁶⁷ Alexander, “The Demonology,” 350.

¹⁶⁸ Heiser, *Demons*, 197. Sorenson similarly writes, “The New Testament writings presuppose the Jewish demonology of the intertestamental period.” Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 118. Matthias Henze also draws a direct comparison between the NT and the unclean spirits of the dead Nephilim in the *BW* tradition and states “These are the unclean spirits or demons that also appear in the New Testament.” Henze, *Mind the Gap*, 105. See also Elder, “Scribes and Demons,” 75-76, who states that 1 Enoch presents by far and away the greatest influence on the NT portrayal and understanding of demons.

Demons are also related to Klawans' impurity categories in the Levitical code. First, demons are *ritually impure* because they are connected to death,¹⁶⁹ which is what ritual impurities signify. For example, as discussed earlier, demons, according to the origin story of *BW*, are the spirits of the dead *Nephilim*. Psalm 106:37 also connects idol worship, demons and death. In Hellenistic circles they are frequently considered the ghosts of the deceased.¹⁷⁰ Bolt argues that this was the popular opinion among the laypeople in the first century and therefore, "for the person who viewed the daimons as ghosts of the dead, Jesus' exorcisms would be seen as an assault upon the world of the dead, and even upon death itself."¹⁷¹ Secondly, demons are *ethically impure* because they are connected to sin and destructive behavior.¹⁷² Under the leadership of Mastema/Belial/Satan, they seek to corrupt people, lead them into sin and draw them away from God. We can see this, for example, in regard to idol worship. Idolatry is one of the grave sins mentioned in the Holiness Code. In Ps. 96:5 of the Hebrew Bible, the "gods of the nations" are called "worthless idols," but already in the LXX translation they are called "demons."¹⁷³ Bloodshed is another grave sin of the Holiness Code and we have shown that demons are involved in this as well. For example, in *Jub.* 11:4 the spirits of Mastema lead people to murder, and in Tobit, the demon Asmodeus kills all Sarah's husbands. Demons are also impure simply by association: they are part of Satan's kingdom and therefore in rebellion to God.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ See Bolt's review of Greco-Roman and Jewish sources to establish the strong link between demons and death. Peter Bolt, "Jesus, the Daimons and the Dead," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony Lane (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1996), 75-96.

¹⁷⁰ Ferguson, *Demonology*, 41.

¹⁷¹ Bolt, "Jesus, the Daimons and the Dead," 101.

¹⁷² Including the grave moral sins of fornication, idolatry, and bloodshed (e.g., *Jub.* 10:1-2; 11:4; *1 Enoch* 99:7; CD 4:14-18; Tob. 3:8; cf. Ps. 96:5; 106:37).

¹⁷³ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 33-34, also references *1 Enoch* 99:7 as linking "unclean spirits" with demons in connection to idol worship.

¹⁷⁴ Ferguson, *Demonology*, 27-28.

As both ritually and morally impure, demonic possession could represent a combination of these two types of impurity, a new non-cultic category of impurity we could designate “spirit-impurity.” The Levitical code does not address this kind of impurity,¹⁷⁵ but, as we shall see, the Gospel of Mark does. These connections, then, between demons and impurity provide a helpful backstory and context for the following sections of our study in which we will seek to understand the relationship of purity and the exorcism of “unclean spirits” specifically in the Gospel of Mark.

¹⁷⁵ Although there is evidence that demonic or non-cultic vestiges lie behind many of the cultic purity rites such as the bird rite for lepers and “leprous” buildings (Lev. 14), the red cow rite (Num. 19), and the scapegoat (Lev. 16). Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 305-310. In that sense, “spirit-impurity” is not a new concept but in fact a very old one, pre-dating the Levitical law.

CHAPTER THREE

Purity in Mark

1. Introduction

Judaism in the first century was not entirely monolithic. Timothy Lim uses the term “sectarian matrix” to describe the various Jewish factions (including Christians) that were all offshoots of a “common Judaism” (a term coined by E. P. Sanders). Beyond the central tenets of Judaism (e.g., monotheism, circumcision, Sabbath observance, food laws, purity, etc.) these sects had their own unique understandings on various teachings and practices.¹⁷⁶ Purity was one of those practices. James Dunn states, “It cannot be doubted that purity was a major preoccupation in the Judaism of Jesus’ time . . . *The laws of clean and unclean* were central to Jewish identity.”¹⁷⁷ Purity in the 2TP was important for many Jews even outside the context of the Temple.¹⁷⁸ This was partly due to the expansionist movement of the Pharisees.¹⁷⁹ While various Jewish sects such as the Essenes and the Pharisees had differing opinions on what purity should look like, none denied

¹⁷⁶ For example, according to Lim, Essenes were very ascetic; Pharisees and Sadducees not as much. Christians and Pharisees believed in an afterlife while the Sadducees did not. Essenes were deterministic, Pharisees and Sadducees believed in free will. Timothy Lim, “Towards a Description of the Sectarian Matrix,” in *Echoes from the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament*, ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 7-31. Cf. Neusner, *The Idea of Purity*, 33. Neusner states that “the main and consistent trait of the innovative ideas of purity before us [is] their sectarianism” (p. 113).

¹⁷⁷ Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 450. See also Dunn, “Jesus and Holiness,” 173. The Levitical purity code was an important identity marker that set Israel apart. It maintained her elect status as a holy nation set apart for God. Bird, “Jesus as Law-Breaker,” 12-13.

¹⁷⁸ Eyal Regev calls it “Non-Priestly Purity.” Eyal Regev, “Non-Priestly Purity and Its Religious Aspects According to Historical Sources and Archeological Findings,” in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, eds. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2000): 223-244. See also Roger Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Traditional History and Legal History in Mark 7* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1986), 152. Re: the practice of purity outside the temple in 2TP literature, see for example, Tobit 2:5,9; Judith 12:5-9; John 2:6.

¹⁷⁹ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 72-81; Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 81-87. Food laws were of particular importance for Jewish identity as the “separated ones.” Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 450-456; Dunn, “Jesus and Holiness,” 174-175; Bird, “Jesus as Law-Breaker,” 14. Regev, “Non-Priestly Purity,” 229, argues that purity customs began before the Hasmonean period not only in Israel but also the Diaspora, and therefore not only by Pharisees.

that it was centrally important. For example, Pharisees (and the later rabbinic literature) held sin and impurity apart, while the Essenes saw sin as a source of impurity. The Essene community rejected the Temple as defiled and corrupt. They viewed their community as the true temple, whereas the Pharisees did not reject the Jerusalem temple. The Pharisees, therefore, upheld the sacrificial system, but the Essenes, who had no physical temple, emphasized the sacrifice of blameless conduct and other spiritual practices. However, both groups believed purity should also be observed outside the temple.¹⁸⁰ The Sadducees observed the written Torah and their purity was centered around the temple as well as their priestly lineage. The Pharisees were observant of the written Torah as well, but also held as equally authoritative the oral “tradition of the elders.” Thus they held to strict ritual purity traditions not specified in the written Torah and which they sought to expand among the common people and common practices (e.g. common meals, or *hullin*). Essenes, on the other hand, did not promote “expansion” so much as “exclusion” and separation. They felt the current practice of Judaism and the temple were too corrupt and sought separation and exclusion in an attempt to preserve their sense of purity. Both the Sadducees and the Essenes seem to have Zadokite ancestry, the hereditary priestly line.¹⁸¹

In light of this diversity, where can Mark’s ideas about purity be located? This will be the focus of the present chapter. Continuing with the categories of *ritual* and *moral* as a framework, we will first analyze examples of both ritual and moral impurity as they relate to

¹⁸⁰ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 67-117; Neusner, *The Idea of Purity*, 50, 54, 65.

¹⁸¹ See also Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus*, 81-87; Dunn, “Jesus and Holiness,” 174-176; Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics*, 57-59; Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 62-63. Scholars like Fredriksen argue that the purity system was egalitarian. Others, like Ched Myers and Jerome Neyrey, see it as a form of social oppression and class distinction. Myers goes on to argue that the Pharisees sought to make it easier by liberalizing the demands of purity, while the Sadducees, who felt only the priestly caste could and should follow purity demands, rejected “the legitimacy of the Pharisaic oral tradition,” holding strictly to the Torah, but for the purposes of hoarding the privileges of this redemptive medium for themselves. Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 75-76, 222.

Jesus in Mark's Gospel. This will prepare us for the second half of the chapter, an exposition of Mk. 7:1-23, in which ritual and moral purity interact in the same passage. What we will find is that Mark portrays Jesus, not only as pure, but as concerned about both types of purity. However, it will become evident that Jesus in Mark does not give them equal weighting but assigns greater worth and significance to moral purity and the inner attitude of the heart. When faced with a choice, one's moral character and the ability to respond to human need supersede ritualistic obligations.

2. Establishing Jesus' Purity

From the first chapter¹⁸² of Mark the evangelist draws attention to Jesus' holiness and purity in several ways. In his opening sentence he calls Jesus "the Christ" (i.e., the Messiah, the "Anointed One") and the Son of God.¹⁸³ Jerome Neyrey argues that Mark¹⁸⁴ establishes what he terms Jesus' "purity rating" right from the start through a series of events.¹⁸⁵ He states that the language of John the Baptist shows a deference to "the one coming after" him in a way that speaks to Jesus' purity and holiness. For example, "John, although a holy¹⁸⁶ prophet himself, is

¹⁸² "The opening portions of a narrative are crucial to its impact. It subtly 'educates' readers in how the following story ought to be read." Bolt, "With a View," 54. For the importance of a narrative approach to understanding demons in Mark, see van Oyen, "Demons and Exorcisms," 101-103.

¹⁸³ The "Son of God" reference is not accepted by all scholars because it is absent in some ancient manuscripts. See, for example, Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 130.

¹⁸⁴ We are not going to delve into the matter of authorship in this paper but, when we use the term "Mark," we are referring to the person(s) responsible for the final form of the gospel. One of the more common and perhaps traditional views among scholars is that the author was John Mark, mentioned several times in the NT book of Acts and in the epistles (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39; Col. 4:10; Philemon 1:24; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pe. 5:13). See Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 21-24; Morna Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 5-8; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 7-9; James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 3-4; Robert Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, Word Biblical Commentary 34A (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989), xxvi-xxix.

¹⁸⁵ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 106-107.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Mk. 6:20.

not worthy to touch Jesus' feet, implying Jesus' special status as a holy figure (1:7).¹⁸⁷ While John baptizes with water,¹⁸⁸ his successor will baptize (make pure) with the Holy Spirit "making Jesus' purificatory actions better¹⁸⁹ than John's own water washings (1:8)."¹⁹⁰ Jesus' baptism by John, according to Thiessen, suggests an acknowledgement of Jewish ritual purification.¹⁹¹ Neyrey also argues that the theophany Jesus receives (both the sending of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and the voice from heaven, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased"¹⁹²) is a testament by God to Jesus' purity. Neyrey states: "God sees no uncleanness in him."¹⁹³ Even Jesus' encounter with Satan may have purity implications (1:12-13). In Neyrey's words, "*Satan*, enemy of God and Uncleanness itself,¹⁹⁴ attacks Jesus and tries to make him unclean; he fails."¹⁹⁵ The very message of Jesus, "The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news" (1:15), is itself a call to moral purity because Jesus "demands that

¹⁸⁷ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 106.

¹⁸⁸ The practice of immersing in water is itself highly symbolic of a purification ritual. Joan Taylor states that "to the Jews in general John's call for immersion would have been understandable as a call to become ritually clean." Joan Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist Within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 63. James Dunn similarly states, "the symbolism of purity is inescapable in a rite involving immersion (baptism) in water." Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 456.

¹⁸⁹ "Better," perhaps, in the sense of more complete. Since Mark labels Jesus the Messiah and Son of God, and John, according to the prophetic quotations, is his herald, it may suggest that Mark considers Jesus' "baptizing" with the Holy Spirit a fuller and more complete purification than John's water baptism, which seems to be more of a preparatory act for what is to come. That the Holy Spirit is an active agent in Jesus' baptisms (purifications) has implications for how to understand the power behind Jesus' exorcisms.

¹⁹⁰ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 106-107.

¹⁹¹ Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 23.

¹⁹² All scripture quotations from the New International Version, published by Biblica, 2011, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁹³ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 107.

¹⁹⁴ As portrayed in the Beelzebul controversy, Mk. 3:22-30, where Satan/Beelzebul is described both as an impure spirit as well as the prince of demons. See chapter two of this study on the association of demons with impurity and the development of Satan as their leader. Jesus meets Satan in the wilderness, traditionally considered the domain of unclean spirits. Satan is also closely associated with uncleanness in *Jub.* 50:5. See also Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 126-127.

¹⁹⁵ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 107. Πειράζω, "to tempt" can also mean "to test," according to BDAG, s.v. "πειράζω." Is the Holy Spirit testing Jesus? In the temptation, it is angels who "attended him." However, it was the Holy Spirit who initiated this confrontation with Satan and, as we will find in Mk. 3:29, Jesus will ascribe his exorcisms to the power of the Holy Spirit.

sinner turn from the realm of sin and seek the circle of God's favor and holiness."¹⁹⁶ Even an impure spirit confesses, "I know who you are – the Holy One of God!" (1:24).

It can be seen in Neyrey's language that he seems to treat the concepts of holiness and purity nearly synonymously. Indeed, as will be seen in this study, it is difficult to speak of one without the other. Jesus' "better" baptism (purification), for example, is due to the work of the Holy Spirit. Looking at the events in Mark 1 we can see Jesus' holiness most clearly acknowledged in his receiving the Holy Spirit and also in the tone of reverence and awe in John's confession of unworthiness.¹⁹⁷ Other events (the baptism, the voice, the resistance to temptation, the call to the kingdom), as Neyrey argues, can be seen as testimonies to his purity. Thus it appears that for Mark, not only is purity important, but it is focused on a specific person. In Mark's Gospel narrative the concept of purity begins with Jesus. He is, in a sense, the "Pure One."

3. Demonstrating Jesus' Purity: Ritual Impurity in Mark

Mark describes Jesus' encounters with several examples of ritual impurity. Jesus heals both a man with *lepra*¹⁹⁸ (1:40-45) and a menstruant (ῥύσει αἵματος)¹⁹⁹ (5:25-34). He also raises to life

¹⁹⁶ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 107.

¹⁹⁷ John feels unworthy because Jesus is "more powerful." Hannah Harrington suggests that besides the concept of separation, power is another integral part of holiness. Hannah Harrington, *Holiness: Rabbinic Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World* (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 20-26. See Excursus 2 in chapter 4 for more detail.

¹⁹⁸ Commonly and misleadingly translated as "leprosy" in modern English translations. "Leprosy," or Hansen's disease, is physiologically due to neurological damage secondary to bacterial infection. Λέπρα (Hebrew צרעת) is a blanket term referring to a variety of dermatological conditions (e.g., eczema, psoriasis, etc.) whose presentations include swelling, redness, rash, or flaking of the skin. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity* Halakhah, 98-99. Milgrom employs the descriptive translation "scale disease." Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 772.

¹⁹⁹ Hebrew זבה, refers to a woman with abnormal vaginal bleeding beyond the menstrual period. The phrase ῥύσει αἵματος (Mk. 5:25) is also found in LXX Lev. 15:19, 25, both times referring to a defiling genital discharge. Many commentators believe Mark's account is suggesting the same condition for this woman, who is thus suffering from a prolonged case (12 years) of ritual uncleanness. Garland, "Mishnah Zabim," 84; John Donahue and Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, Sacra Pagina Series 2 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 173-174.

a 12-year-old girl (5:35-43).²⁰⁰ In each case the suppliants approach Jesus in faith and in each instance their faith is rewarded. All three scenarios expose Jesus to impurity²⁰¹ but he does not seem concerned. Is this a “flagrant disregard” of ritual purity codes?²⁰² Although it could be assumed that Jesus purified himself ceremonially after each exposure,²⁰³ some feel it is more likely that the opposite may be true.²⁰⁴ Jesus, of course, was fully capable of healing from a distance.²⁰⁵ However, each episode mentions touch, and this appears to be Mark’s intention in the context of these healings, particularly in matters involving impurity.²⁰⁶ The isolation for sufferers of impurity was no doubt in part related to protecting the community from contagion and it may be that Jesus did not go out of his way to break purity laws. However, when approached with a need, his priority seems to be not the avoidance of contagion, but the welfare of the suppliant. To this end, even the order of these pericopae may not be accidental. In Num. 5:2 God tells Moses to “send away from the camp anyone who has a defiling skin disease or a discharge of any kind, or who is ceremonially unclean because of a dead body.” Joel Marcus

²⁰⁰ While purity is not the main or explicit focus of these episodes, “for any Jew telling or hearing these stories the purity implications would have been inescapable.” Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 461. See also Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakah*, 89-198.

²⁰¹ According to the Mishnah (*m. Kelim* 1.4), the *zabab*, the *lepros*, and the corpse are, in ascending order, the most powerful sources of impurity. Re: *lepra*, see Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakah*, 109-116 on the exclusion and contamination of lepers in the 2TP. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 73 states, “Frequently regarded as divine punishment for serious sin, this disease belonged among the worst evils to afflict one, a living death whose healing was equivalent to being raised from the dead.” (cf. 2 Ki. 5:7). Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 819; Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakah*, 116-127. The man’s words (“if you are willing”) seem to corroborate such an understanding as they may imply his awareness that he is asking a lot of Jesus to be anywhere near him and his uncleanness. This suggests Jesus’ touch was significant. Re: *zabab*, Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakah*, 156-161, argues persuasively that genital dischargers were quarantined at the time of Jesus. Re: corpses, exposure to a corpse, according to the Law, holds the highest degree of defilement. See Num. 5, 19; Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 1-6; Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 98-100.

²⁰² Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity,” 109.

²⁰³ So Fredriksen, “Did Jesus Oppose Purity Laws?”, 21, 25.

²⁰⁴ So Holmen, “Jesus and the Purity Paradigm,” 2718-2719. The omission of such a detail may suggest Jesus does not view ritual impurity in the same way as the culture around him. If the omission is intentional it would also be consistent with Mark’s portrayal of other controversial behavior of Jesus and the disciples, such as Sabbath observance and table fellowship.

²⁰⁵ Matt. 8:5-13/Lk. 7:1-10; Mk. 7:24-30/Matt. 15:29-31; John 4:46-54.

²⁰⁶ Garland, “Mishnah Zabim,” 86-88.

points out that Mark places these encounters in his gospel in the same order: the leper (1:40-45), the menstruant (5:25-34), and a corpse exposure (5:35-43).²⁰⁷ Perhaps in this way Mark's Jesus is drawing them back into the fold. He desires not only to heal but, more importantly, to restore a sufferer of impurity to fellowship and social reintegration.²⁰⁸ It is in this sense that he may have appeared to onlookers as being "indifferent" to purity codes.²⁰⁹

And yet, Jesus does acknowledge the requirements of the Mosaic Law when, for example, he tells the *lepros* to show himself to the priest (Mk. 1:44). This, in Paula Fredriksen's view, is an example of the "manifest evidence" "indicating that Jesus kept the laws of biblical purity."²¹⁰ Thus, according to Fredriksen, Jesus was an observant Jew. However, Jesus in Mark is both compliant with the law (as in this example of the *lepros*), and at other times appears subversive to the law (e.g., he forgives the sins of the paralytic in 2:1-12 instead of upholding the atoning sacrificial system, and he clears the Temple and predicts its demise in Mk. 11 and 13). Perhaps saying Jesus was compliant with purity laws is not the same as saying he condoned them.²¹¹ The controversies in the following chapters of Mark, specifically about the Law, require us to see Jesus' actions here with more nuance. Guelich feels Jesus gives a nod to the Law because it was the avenue of reintegration into society, but compliance does not equal endorsement. "On the one hand, one can see that the Law had not become passe for Jesus; on the other hand, one cannot read this account as giving a blanket endorsement of the Law."²¹²

²⁰⁷ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 368.

²⁰⁸ In light of Num. 5:1-4, an important aspect of healing conditions such as these is not just physical, but also social wholeness. Jesus restores social and psychological health by enabling individuals to re-enter society. See Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 144-146.

²⁰⁹ Kazen argues this point in his fourth chapter. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 89-198. Cf. Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 461. Bird, "Jesus as Law-Breaker," 16, states "Jesus' lack of concern about contracting impurity is shocking and anti-social" (note 58).

²¹⁰ Fredriksen, "Did Jesus Oppose Purity Laws?", 25. Cf. Wassen, "The Jewishness of Jesus," 25-26.

²¹¹ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 181.

²¹² Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 79. Ironically, although Jesus complied with the Law, it is not clear that the healed man did (1:45).

Perhaps, as James Dunn suggests, these accounts are less about Jesus opposing rules than they are about the power of purity in Jesus himself.²¹³ That is, Jesus is not threatened by impurity but, as many scholars contend, acts with boldness and makes the impure pure with his contagious purity.²¹⁴ We might also recognize the presence of faith. In all three examples Jesus was approached by people who were confident in his ability to heal.²¹⁵

In Mk. 2:15-17, the purity concern is that of table fellowship. Jesus is questioned for associating with tax collectors and “sinners.” It was the practice of many Pharisees (known as *haberim*) to emulate priestly purity by eating common meals in a state of purity.²¹⁶ This was an exclusionary and defining practice not just for the Pharisees, but also the Essenes.²¹⁷ Dunn states that “sinners” was a common “term of condemnation within the factionalism of Second Temple Judaism” and a way of invalidating the “interpretations and practices” of those which diverged with one’s particular sect:

To refuse the legitimacy of divergent interpretations is ever the sectarian way of affirming the sole legitimacy of the particular sect’s interpretation; to be right oneself, it is necessary that all who disagree are wrong – not just of a different opinion, but ‘sinners,’ law-breakers, criminals. In this case, to eat with ‘sinners’ was to transgress what the critics regarded as the ‘obvious’ implications of the purity code.²¹⁸

²¹³ Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 461

²¹⁴ As mentioned earlier in our study, this idea of Jesus’ “contagious” purity has many supporters. For example, Holmen, “Jesus and the Purity Paradigm,” 2709-2744. Holmen argues that Jesus reverses Hag. 2:11-13 (pp. 2721-2722). See also Bird, “Jesus as Law-Breaker,” 24; Garland, “Mishnah Zabim,” 87-90; Chilton, *Jesus’ Baptism and Jesus’ Healing*, 58-71; Peter Pimental, “The ‘Unclean Spirits’ of St. Mark’s Gospel,” *The Expository Times* 99, no. 6 (March 1988): 174; Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics*, 134-136 (Borg suggests Paul had a similar understanding of purity in 1 Cor. 7:12-14); Fletcher-Louise, “Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah,” 64-70. Fletcher-Louise parallels Jesus’ actions with the power of Aaron’s purity to argue that “Jesus’ interaction with impurity is best understood as analogous to high priestly contagious purity” (p. 69).

²¹⁵ Mark 6:4-6 suggest that Jesus’ ability to do miracles was limited because of the crowd’s lack of faith.

²¹⁶ Neusner, *The Idea of Purity*, 65.

²¹⁷ James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus, Table Fellowship, and Qumran,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York/London/Toronto: ABRL, 1992), 260-264.

²¹⁸ Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 465. For more on the “factional” use of “sinner” see Dunn, “Jesus and Holiness,” 178-179. See also Borg’s discussion on the internal divisions caused by the pursuit of holiness in Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics*, 68-70.

Perhaps the Pharisees were also concerned that food in such company was likely not prepared in the proper way (cf. Mk. 7:1-8).²¹⁹ By breaking the purity *halakhah* and eating and fellowshiping with members of society deemed “unclean” and “sinners” Jesus moved from exclusion to inclusion. For Neyrey, this is another example of Jesus crossing purity boundaries and radically redefining a new and *inclusive* kind of boundary, based on building bridges of social relationship.²²⁰ In contrast to the Pharisees (and the Essenes), Dunn concludes: “In short, Jesus’ table-fellowship must be seen as both a protest against a religious zeal that is judgmental and exclusive and as a lived-out expression of the openness of God’s grace.”²²¹ Kent Brower writes, “God is re-creating an inclusive new people. Jesus offers forgiveness by calling the sinners and in doing so reshapes the holy people of God as those who are intimately bound to himself.” It is this re-definition of the Kingdom that was so scandalous.²²²

Interestingly, this account of table-fellowship, and Dunn’s statement above, juxtapose the concepts of impurity and sin. Jesus ate with “sinners.” Was he criticized because of purity concerns or because he broke social norms by dining with people of ill repute?²²³ Either way, Jesus ties his response to his mission, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mk. 2:17). Luke’s version adds “to repentance,” in reference to sinners, at the end of Jesus’

²¹⁹ Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 96.

²²⁰ Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity,” 108, 116-119, 124. Kazen cites Jesus’ table-fellowship as one of the reasons for his success in Galilee, based on pragmatic reasons. It allowed the close cohesive relationships upon which rural Galilean peasantry depended. This also applied to other impurities such as leprosy, dischargers and corpses. Too many rules threatened social interaction and were not practical to the rural way of life. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 295.

²²¹ Dunn, “Jesus, Table Fellowship, and Qumran,” 268.

²²² Kent Brower, “The Holy One and His Disciples: Holiness and Ecclesiology in Mark,” in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, eds. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 66-67.

²²³ Even Cecilia Wassen concedes: “We can conclude that sin and ritual impurity could be closely linked, in particular inner purity was a prerequisite for purification to have an effect. According to this perspective, a person could not become completely ritually pure if he or she was a sinner.” Cecilia Wassen, “Jesus’ Table Fellowship with ‘Toll Collectors and Sinners’: Questioning the Alleged Purity Implications,” *JSHJ* 14, no. 2 (2016), 154.

statement; Matthew's account references Hos. 6:6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice;" all three Synoptic Gospels choose to include the physician metaphor.²²⁴ Taken collectively, these factors seem to imply Jesus is prioritizing moral concerns over issues of ritual purity.²²⁵

4. Demonstrating Jesus' Purity: Moral Impurity in Mark

When we turn to examples of what could be considered moral impurity in Mark we do not see the same direct parallels to the grave sins (those mentioned in H: sexual sin, murder, idolatry, Lev. 18-20; Num. 35) that we saw with those of ritual impurity discussed above (scale disease, discharges, corpses). There are no passages overtly dealing with sexual sin, idolatry and murder. However, this does not mean these grave sins are not addressed. In regard to sexual impurity, a pertinent passage is Mk. 10:1-10. Here Jesus is questioned on divorce. Unlike ritual purity, Jesus is not more lenient, but more demanding. Except for sexual unfaithfulness, there is a risk of committing adultery by divorcing one's spouse and marrying another.²²⁶ Idolatry as portrayed in the OT is not found in Mark, but the gospel certainly does address the issue of allegiance. When a rich man approaches Jesus and asks "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk. 10:17-22), it turns out obeying the commandments is not enough. Jesus tells the man to sell all he has, give the money to the poor, and follow him.²²⁷ The grave sin of murder is also addressed in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mk. 12:1-12). This parable is a not-so-veiled indictment of the Jewish religious leaders, for the gravity of the sin is not only on account of the murderous act

²²⁴ It is the "sinners" who need a doctor, not the impure.

²²⁵ As we will see, this comports with Mark's overall portrait of Jesus' attitude regarding purity.

²²⁶ The law of divorce, says Jesus, was a concession of Moses, but divorce was never God's intention.

²²⁷ Again, Jesus seems to move beyond the letter of the law to address the source of the man's struggles, which involved the inner categories of intention, desire and motive. The man's wealth stood in the way of a relationship with Jesus. Love of money is a significant issue addressed by Jesus in the gospels and can be understood as its own form of idolatry (cf. Matt. 6:24).

itself, but the One who is murdered.²²⁸ In Lev. 18 the end result of grave moral sins was rejection. When Israel rejected God's law, God rejected her. The Parable of the Wicked Tenants reveals that God again is rejecting those who profane, not only his law, but his Son. In 70 C.E. Jerusalem will experience another "exile" from land and temple.

The motif of rejection is also exemplified in the clearing of the temple (Mk. 11:15-17). Jesus criticizes the "profane" activity of buying and selling in what should be sacred space.²²⁹ In his demonstration Jesus was both expressing his frustration at corruption and defilement, and pronouncing judgment.²³⁰

The concepts of purity and defilement are expressed in several ways. The force of Jesus' actions is punctuated by the words "driving out" (ἐκβάλλειν), a verb commonly used by Mark for exorcisms of unclean spirits (1:34, 39; 3:15, 22-23; etc.).²³¹ The use of this word may connect the temple incident with Jesus "driving out" what is profane, unclean and does not belong. Marcus suggests "its employment here may be a hint that the buyers and sellers who profane the Temple are Satan's tools."²³² Jesus (only in Mark) prevents people from carrying vessels through the temple which, according to Wahlen, shows "a concern to maintain purity."²³³ Zechariah 14:21 states "there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day" (ESV). Bruce Chilton, therefore, believes Jesus is appropriating "Zechariah's prophecy of

²²⁸ The parable alludes to the Song of the Vineyard (Is. 5:1-7). W. J. C. Weren, "The Use of Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12, 1-12; Matthew 21, 33-46)," *Biblica* 79, no. 1 (1998): 5-6, 11. Moral impurity is implicit; the "bad fruit" of Is. 5:2 is explained as moral degradation in Is. 5:7.

²²⁹ Collins, *Mark*, 528; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 444; William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 407.

²³⁰ In the Synoptics, the placement of Jesus' occupation of the temple ahead of a prediction of its destruction "associates his actions with the divine judgment against the cult." Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus*, 116.

²³¹ 12 of the 18 occurrences of ἐκβάλλω in Mark are used in reference to demons/unclean spirits or Satan (not counting 11:15).

²³² Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 782. Does this suggest the temple cleansing as a kind of exorcism?

²³³ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 82.

eschatological purity.”²³⁴ Jesus quotes Is. 56:7, taken from a passage that extends his blessings to the outcasts and disenfranchised.²³⁵ As Meyers states, “By citing this tradition Mark has indicated what the temple is *supposed* to embody: inclusivity and community, especially accessible to ‘outsiders.’”²³⁶ This is followed up by Jer. 7:11. Here Mark’s Jesus is accusing the authorities of allowing the temple to become a marketplace instead of a place of worship. The insinuation suggests that the buying and selling of animals for Passover sacrifice and the exchanging of money has been characterized by extortion and greed,²³⁷ and it is being carried out where it should not be. What is profane/common has come in contact with what is holy.²³⁸ The quote of Jer. 7:11 also calls to mind the larger context of the passage (Jer. 7:1-15) in which Israel is accused of significant moral degradation, including the grave sins of moral impurity: murder, adultery and idolatry. Right before Jer. 7:11 God asks incredulously how Israel can possibly think she is safe to do these “detestable things” (תועבה) and still worship in the temple (Jer. 7:9-10)?²³⁹ Jeremiah’s sermon concludes with destruction (Jer. 7:12-15). So also, Jesus was demonstrating that the place for which the concept of purity existed, the temple, had lost its legitimacy, the consequences of which are predicted in Mk. 13:2. Marcus concludes, “His

²³⁴ Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus*, 135-136.

²³⁵ Only Mark’s version includes “. . . for all nations.”

²³⁶ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 302.

²³⁷ Evans cites rabbinic evidence of the practice of extortion. Craig Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 172-173. See also Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (London/New York: Continuum, 1998), 14-16. Borg sees the pursuit of “holiness/purity” by the Jewish elite not as a matter of personal virtue but rather as an excuse to uphold the oppressive economic “status quo,” vs. Jesus’ emphasis on compassion. Elsewhere Borg states “[The temple clearing] was not an indictment of unscrupulous merchants, but of the elites themselves.” Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 114. That is, the corruption was not just opportunistic, it was systemic. Therefore, based on the Palestinian context of class struggle in a pre-industrial agrarian society, Borg sees purity as an elitist issue.

²³⁸ Recall Milgrom’s dichotomy of the two concepts of holy and profane which cannot share the same space.

²³⁹ As we have seen, תועבה is one of the common expressions used to describe the grave sins of moral impurity. Klawans, “Impurity and Sin,” 26. Another common term is חנק (“pollute”), which Jeremiah also uses in relation to the temple. (Jer. 23:11).

temple demonstration, therefore, symbolized both the reform attempt and the judgment of destruction that would follow its failure.”²⁴⁰

Nicholas Perrin points out interesting parallels to the pseudepigraphal *Psalms of Solomon*, in which are also found themes of temple defilement.²⁴¹ The Psalmist awaits a Davidic Messiah: “See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David . . . to purge Jerusalem from gentiles”²⁴² (17:21-22). The author specifically identifies the king: “their king shall be the Lord Messiah” (v. 32). For Mark this figure is Jesus, which he claims in the opening sentence of his gospel (Mk. 1:1). Holiness involves proximity to God, which explains the centrality of the temple, where God dwelt. However, Mark is changing the locus of holiness; it no longer resides in a building but in a person, a “temple” not made with hands.²⁴³

We have seen evidence of both ritual and moral impurity in the Gospel of Mark. Some important characteristics of purity for Mark are that it originates with Jesus, it appears contagious, it is facilitated by faith, and it is inclusive. In some cases Jesus has shown compliance with the Law, but he has at other times exhibited an attitude which puts a priority on moral aspects of purity over above ritual. As Dunn states, “What Jesus did seem to object to was the application of purity rules simply to exclude from community, without anything more being

²⁴⁰ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 783; cf. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 170-171.

²⁴¹ Nicholas Perrin, “Psalms of Solomon and Mark 11:12-25: The Great Priestly Showdown at the Temple,” in *Reading Mark in Context: Jesus and Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Ben Blackwell, John Goodrich and Jason Maston (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 182-188. Concern for temple purity has historical precedent. Besides the outcries of the classical prophets, 1 Maccabees also recounts the purification of the temple after it was desecrated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (1 Macc. 4:36-61). The sectarians at Qumran also left over concerns of temple and priestly defilement. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 185-186.

²⁴² Perrin suggests here that “the term ‘gentiles’ is used not as an ethnic but moral label, designating Israel’s officials as functional pagans.” Perrin, “Psalms of Solomon,” 183.

²⁴³ Brower, “The Holy One,” 71. Cf. Mk. 14:58. While in Mark this connection between Jesus’ body and the temple is under the surface, it becomes explicit in the Gospel of John (John 2:19-21).

done for the person(s) reckoned unclean.”²⁴⁴ While he seems to be more liberal in regard to the ritual law, he upholds a higher standard with the moral law. We will now turn to a seminal passage of Mark in which ritual and moral purity appear to conflict. Mark 7:1-23 gives us the strongest statement on where Jesus’ purity alliances lie and the reasoning behind it.

5. Ritual vs. Moral Purity: Mark 7:1-23

James Dunn sums up the attitude of most scholars: “*The* purity text in the Gospel tradition is, of course, Mark 7:1-23.”²⁴⁵ This passage encapsulates Jesus’ inclination to moral purity over ritual purity. In this text the Pharisees notice that Jesus’ disciples 1) do not “follow the tradition of the elders”, and 2) eat with defiled (i.e. unwashed) hands.²⁴⁶ Hand-washing was practiced by some Pharisees known as *haberim*²⁴⁷ at the time of Jesus to enhance their purity. By ceremonially washing before *hullin* (common meals) they hoped to replicate the purity practice of the chief priests, who ceremonially washed before *terumah* (priestly meals).²⁴⁸ Roger Booth suggests that

²⁴⁴ Dunn, “Jesus and Holiness,” 192. Kazen has pointed out that Jesus’ approach made purity more attainable. It focused on what was pragmatic, it did not pose a barrier for social interaction (e.g. table-fellowship), and it did not exploit the poor. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity* Halakhah, 293-299. Brower states, “At its most basic, the [purity] debate is over whether holiness is dependent upon separation from impurity through boundary maintenance or whether the system itself has come to misconstrue God’s demands for his people.” Brower, “The Holy One,” 70.

²⁴⁵ Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 461.

²⁴⁶ This hand-washing refers to cultic practice, not hygiene. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 119. The word for “defiled” is κοινός (“common, ordinary, profane”). A similar word, ἀκάθαρτος, means “unclean.” Mark seems to reserve this word for “unclean spirits” and whereas κοινός is used for ceremonial impurity, ἀκάθαρτος can be used in contexts of both ritual and moral impurity. See BDAG, s.v. “ἀκάθαρτος” and BDAG, s.v. “κοινός.”

²⁴⁷ Dunn states that Pharisees were a “purity sect.” The Hebrew term *peshurim* means “separatists.” Dunn, “Jesus and Holiness,” 174. Maccoby describes the *haburot* as voluntary ritual purity societies who elevated the standard of purity for people, apart from the priest. Their members were known as *haberim* and were mostly made up of Pharisees. “They were leaders of a new kind of Judaism which sought to transfer the holiness of the Temple to the home.” They focused on the table, eating common food in a state of purity. Purity was practiced as an end in itself, not related to the Temple. Again, this practice was voluntary; it was not commanded in the Torah “and was therefore a supererogatory exercise in piety.” Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 209-210.

²⁴⁸ Dunn, “Jesus and Holiness,” 181-182. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 194-203. See also Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 449, 520; Neusner, *The Idea of Purity*, 3. Interestingly, Furstenberg claims that the rules governing the practice of handwashing have their origin in Greco-Roman table manners, not an expansion of the priestly code. Yair Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body: A New Understanding of Contamination in Mark 7.15,” *NTS* 54, no. 2 (April 2008): 192-194, 199-200.

here the Pharisees are exhorting Jesus, as a recognized rabbi, to follow the same *supererogatory* practices.²⁴⁹

Jesus' first response is to point out their hypocrisy. He quotes Is. 29:13 to argue that human tradition has become more important to the Pharisees than the actual commands of God. The tradition of Korban provides a case in point. It nullifies the fifth commandment to honor one's parents. Jesus' summary statements in verses 8 and 13 clearly imply he holds the commands of the written Torah above the *halakhic* tradition.

It is at verse 14 where the initial discussion about tradition and hand-washing transitions into a dispute about the source of defilement.²⁵⁰ Jesus makes a declarative statement in verse 15 which most scholars feel is authentic, at least in substance, to the historical Jesus,²⁵¹ "There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him" (ESV).²⁵² Why is that? Because, as Jesus explains, things from outside the body completely bypass the heart and pass through the digestive system (v. 19a). In light of this, as Mark sees it, it is safe to assume that all foods are clean (v. 19b).

²⁴⁹ Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 187-203.

²⁵⁰ Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 223. The adjective κοινός (vv. 2, 5), which describes a limited *state* of impurity (the hands), moves to the verb κοινῶ (vv. 15, 18, 20, 23), which describes a *process* of defilement affecting the whole person. Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 77.

²⁵¹ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 146-147; Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 65; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 289; Jan Lambrecht, "Jesus and the Law: An Investigation of Mk 7, 1-23," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 53, no. 1 (April 1977), 59-60. John Meier is a notable exception to this consensus. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 4, 393-397. Roger Booth excludes the phrase "εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτόν." He proposes vv. 1-2, the second half of the question in v. 5, and the logion of v. 15 to comprise the original core of this passage. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 74, 112-113.

²⁵² This statement raises debate because it is not clear that ritual purity sought to protect the inside of the body from impurity. "On the contrary, it was held that ritual impurity never penetrates beyond the surface of the body." Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 158. However, several scholars argue there is evidence in the Mishnah and some 2TP literature suggesting such a tradition did exist at the time of Jesus. For example, Furstenberg, "Defilement Penetrating the Body," 176-200; Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 194-203; Sigurd Grindheim, "Jesus and the Food Laws Revisited," *JSHJ* 18, no. 1 (2020): 71-73; Collins, *Mark*, 347, 349; John Poirier, "Why Did the Pharisees Wash Their Hands?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 217-233.

The assumption of defilement implicit in the question of the Pharisees is responded to in vv. 14-23. It is one's thought life and the desires of one's heart where evil and defilement originate and eventually lead to expression (e.g., sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly).²⁵³ Clearly, Jesus, as portrayed by Mark, is more concerned about moral purity than ritual purity. Roger Booth summarizes,

We see Mark as undertaking a logical thematic progression: an exhortation to wash the hands, which is a practice of the tradition, leads to criticism of that tradition; the emphasis of that tradition is on cultic purity which leads to criticism of that basis of purity, and to teaching on what is true purity.²⁵⁴

Mark 7:19b states "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean" (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα).²⁵⁵ That is quite a sweeping statement. Some insist that it refers only to kosher food.²⁵⁶ However, it sounds like a fairly unqualified nullification of the Levitical food laws.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ Thiessen argues that Jesus was an observant Jew and points out that, in fact, all impurities, ritual or moral, "come *out of* the body rather than enter *into* the body." Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 193. However, despite the fact that this debate arose out of a concern for ritual purity, Jesus does not list any ritual impurities in 7:20-23. Furthermore, Jesus' reference to the heart (v. 21) clarifies that he is referring to ethical behavior, not physiology.

²⁵⁴ Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 33.

²⁵⁵ The phrasing is somewhat awkward since the subject of καθαρίζων is at the beginning of v. 18 (λέγει). This has led some to suggest καθαρίζων is referring to ἀρεδρῶνα, but their cases do not match (nominative vs. accusative). Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 455. Alternatively, Paul Zell argues that καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα need not be seen as a parenthetical insertion at all. Rather, it continues the words of Jesus, ending the natural flow of the sentence and referring to the ability of the digestive system to "cleanse all foods." Paul Zell, "Exegetical Brief on Mark 7:19: 'Who or What Makes All Foods Clean?'" *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 109, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 209-212.

²⁵⁶ Since non-kosher food was never eaten by Jews anyway, it would not enter into this very Jewish discussion. See Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 102-128. Similarly, Wahlen translates 7:19b as "Thus he declared ritually pure all (permissible) foods." Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 79.

²⁵⁷ God does seem to be confirming the same idea to Peter in Acts 10, where Peter's vision precedes his mission to Gentiles, much like this purity controversy precedes Jesus' ministry to Gentiles (Mk. 7:24-8:10). While some suggest Mark in 7:19b is excusing his Gentile readers from complying with Jewish food laws (Bird, "Jesus as Law-Breaker," 19), Paul, who was a Jew, seems to share this sentiment (Rom. 14:14, 20). See also Neuser, *The Idea of Purity*, 61. Raisanen suggests it might have been Paul who first articulated the idea in writing, which influenced Mark. Heikki Raisanen, "Jesus and the Food Laws: Reflections on Mark 7:15," *JSNT* 5, no. 16 (Sept. 1982): 88-89. This is also the opinion of Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 4, 395-396. Conversely, Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 99-100, sees Paul as making absolute what Jesus stated relatively. Grindheim, however, believes Paul's words in Rom. 14 are aimed more at the issue of food sacrificed to idols than the kosher food laws. Grindheim, "Jesus and the Food Laws," 73-74.

If these words truly represent Jesus' conviction, why was there such controversy in the early church regarding food purity?²⁵⁸ It seems likely, therefore, that this phrase represents a later Markan addition. It has been suggested this phrase acts as an explanation and clarification for Mark's Gentile readers,²⁵⁹ extending Jesus' intent beyond kosher food to apply to all food and justifying their exemption from food laws.²⁶⁰ This seems plausible. However, Matthew, who writes to a Jewish audience, still echoes the same sentiment in Matt. 15:11, and his closing comment on unwashed hands in v. 20, while bringing closure to the topic that initiated the conversation, does not negate this.²⁶¹ For Guelich Mk. 7:19b signifies a progression of the conversation from a debate about eating with defiled hands to a discussion on what really defiles.²⁶² While not attacking ritual purity specifically, ultimately Mark "is concerned to show that Jesus had removed the social boundaries that had separated people on the basis of 'defilement.'"²⁶³

Joel Marcus, however, considers v. 19b "an explicit revocation of OT kosher laws."²⁶⁴ Jesus is not saying that all foods have always been clean. Rather, *according to Mark*, Jesus is changing things. That is, Jesus "has authority to redefine ritual purity."²⁶⁵ So, for Marcus, the

²⁵⁸ Acts 10:9-16; 11:4-10; 15:1-21, 28-29; Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8-10; Gal. 2:11-14; Col. 2:20-22. The lack of a plausible explanation lies behind Meier's rejection of Mk. 7:15 as authentic words of Jesus. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 4, 393-397.

²⁵⁹ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 212-213. There are several Markan explanatory phrases in this passage (v. 2, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις; v. 11, ὃ ἐστὶν Δῶρον; v. 19b, καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα; also the lengthy explanation of purity washing in vv. 3-4). Lambrecht, "Jesus and the Law," 40.

²⁶⁰ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 380; Robert Banks, *Jesus & the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 248.

²⁶¹ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 279, 290.

²⁶² "Instead of attacking the ritual or ceremonial law of purity, Jesus calls for a total purity, the sanctification of the whole person, as anticipated for the age of salvation." Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 376.

²⁶³ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 378, 380.

²⁶⁴ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 458. Marcus calls καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα a performative pronouncement – it accomplishes the purification it announces (p. 457).

²⁶⁵ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 457-458. Also Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 180, who says Jesus is challenging the Torah itself, not just tradition. Cf. Acts 10:15, "Do not call anything impure (σὺ μὴ κοῖνου) that God has made clean (ἐκαθάρισεν)," and Rom. 14:20, "All food is clean."

phrase is as radical as it sounds and serves as a gateway to the Gentile mission.²⁶⁶ William Loader takes Mark's understanding a step further. For Mark's Jesus (contra Marcus), food did not, *nor did it ever*, make one unclean.²⁶⁷

So, then, how should we take v. 15? While Mark seems to have taken it as an absolute statement (v. 19b), many scholars feel Jesus himself probably was not intending to completely abrogate the ritual food laws.²⁶⁸ The construction of the Greek “ὅυ . . . ἀλλὰ . . .” in v. 15 is common in Mark²⁶⁹ and has been recognized as having a relativizing or softening effect on a pronouncement.²⁷⁰ Thus, Booth proposes the correct meaning of the phrase should be rendered thus: “There is nothing outside a man which can cultically defile him as much as the things coming from him morally defile him.”²⁷¹ John Meier, however, points out that this “relativizing” effect of the “ὅυ . . . ἀλλὰ . . .” construction is not consistent. There are examples of antithetical parallelism that are *not* relative, but exclusive.²⁷² R. T. France takes an absolutist stand on v. 15. He sees this pronouncement as an abrogation of food laws and argues that other Markan

²⁶⁶ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 458. Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 226, France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 277, and Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 72, 79, all recognize this pericope as a moment of transition to the Gentile mission which directly follows.

²⁶⁷ William Loader, “Mark 7:1-23 and the Historical Jesus,” *Colloquium* 30, no. 2 (November 1998): 125-127. Loader argues that καθαρίζων means “declare to be clean rather than make clean” (p. 126).

²⁶⁸ Rather, it was a matter of prioritizing moral over ritual. Eyal Regev, “Moral Impurity and the Temple in Early Christianity in Light of Ancient Greek Practice and Qumranic Ideology,” *Harvard Theological Review* 97, no. 4 (October 2004): 387-388. See also Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 86-88; Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 149-150; Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 464; Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 192; Bird, “Jesus as Law-Breaker,” 20-23.

²⁶⁹ Lambrecht, “Jesus and the Law,” 59. E.g. Mk. 2:17; 9:37; 10:43; 12:25; 13:11b.

²⁷⁰ Loader, “Mark 7:1-23,” 145-148; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 260-263; Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 147; Collins, *Mark*, 355; Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 69-71. It is present in the question of v. 5 and in Jesus' reply in v. 15. There are other examples of this phraseology in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Hos. 6:6; Ps. 51:16-17; 40:6; Jer. 7:22-23). It is considered a form of common Semitic idiom in antithetical parallelism employing dialectical negation. Meier explains: “Many a prophetic declaration may seem to be saying ‘not x, but y,’ when actually it is inculcating in a dramatic way that ‘y is more important than x,’ without meaning to reject x entirely.” Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 4, 386.

²⁷¹ Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 215. Booth concludes that “the intent of the logion was not limited to food, but was directed against external impurity generally (p. 107).”

²⁷² Meier cites as examples Deut. 5:6-7, 13; Mk. 2:17, 27; 10:45. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 4, 387-388. Another NT example we might add could be 1 Thes. 4:7.

examples of the above syntactical construction “do not encourage a relative sense.”²⁷³ Christian Stettler similarly concludes that Jesus himself “abrogated the purity Torah,” which separated Israel from the Gentiles. This, Stettler argues, is because he was inaugurating the Kingdom, to which the Hebrew Scriptures pointed. “Jesus opened the borders of Israel through his teaching about purity, so that the purity and holiness of the age of salvation could now also include the Gentiles”²⁷⁴ Grindheim notes, “The fact that spiritual purity is more important than ritual purity does not exempt the disciples from washing their hands.”²⁷⁵ William Lane uses Acts 10:15 as a comparison. Even though the absolute statement of v. 19b was not from Jesus, it expresses how Jesus’ words in v. 15 would eventually be understood.²⁷⁶

After Jesus’ statement to the crowd he explains the “parable” to the disciples in a separate location. What comes out of a person is what defiles because it comes from the heart.²⁷⁷ According to Michael FitzPatrick, the point of the pericope is that morality replaces ritual. “In effect . . . Mark says to his church: cultic laws (whether based on tradition or on Torah) have

²⁷³ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 289-290. John Meier agrees. He believes the absolute nature of “οὐδέν . . . δύνανται . . .” affirms the exclusive nature of the first half of the logion more than the second. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 4, 386-388. Either the traditional practices did or did not impart purity. The fact remains, the disciples did *not* wash their hands. Furthermore, whether relative or absolute, is the result any different? Michael Bird observes, “It is noteworthy that relativization can still yield the same practical outcome as abolishment: non-observance,” Bird, “Jesus as Law-Breaker,” 23. Cf. Fletcher-Louise, “Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah,” 2743.

²⁷⁴ Christian Stettler, “Purity of Heart in Jesus’ Teaching: Mark 7:14-23 Par. as an Expression of Jesus’ *Basileia* Ethics,” trans. Kathryn Williams. *JTS* 55, no. 2 (October 2004): 501-502. Comparing Matthew and Mark, Stettler writes, “Matthew formulates the *explanation* of the purity logion in vv. 17-18 as absolutely as does Mark 7:15 . . . According to Matthew, therefore, Jesus intended his enigmatic saying to be absolute and thereby to transcend the Old Testament food Torah” (p. 475).

²⁷⁵ Grindheim, “Jesus and the Food Laws,” 67. Grindheim goes on to say, “Why don’t his disciples wash their hands? Jesus’ answer is only an answer if it is intended to dismiss the whole issue of ritual uncleanness contracted through eating.”

²⁷⁶ Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 256. Carlston suggests that the very radical nature of what Jesus was proposing took time to accept. Charles Carlston, “The Things That Defile (Mark VII. 14) and the Law in Matthew and Mark,” *NTS* 15, no. 1 (October 1968): 95. See, also, France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 278-279; Grindheim, “Jesus and the Food Laws,” 76. Stettler states that the *principle* contained in Jesus’ logion took time to germinate into *practice*. Stettler, “Purity of Heart,” 496-497, 501.

²⁷⁷ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 291, writes, “‘Heart’ is the term most commonly used in the biblical literature for the essential personality.” See also Collins, *Mark*, 356.

been shown to be valueless by Jesus . . . Ritual laws have been replaced by ethical demands.”²⁷⁸

Lambrecht feels it is actually the historical Jesus who was “in reality both anti-Halachah and anti-Torah.”²⁷⁹

At the end of this discussion, it is no understatement to say that scholarly opinion is varied and nuanced. While the details are complex, to say the least, it does seem that Jesus has *changed something*.²⁸⁰ If this passage tells us anything, it is that, for Mark, Jesus holds ethical and moral purity as a priority over ritual purity, especially if they conflict. “For Jesus, clean or unclean . . . meant virtuous or sinful; hence cleanness is a moral category.”²⁸¹ This becomes manifested in Mark in the category of relationship.²⁸² All the vices of vv. 21-22 are relational, not ritual. This comports with Jesus’ apparent liberal behavior towards the ritually impure and also his higher standards with moral purity. Jesus cares about relationships. Given the unqualified nature of the language used in this pericope it seems that Jesus in Mark is revoking at least the food laws and perhaps ritual purity in general.²⁸³ While this statement is offered tentatively, it does seem corroborated by the general tenor of Jesus’ preference for moral over

²⁷⁸ Michael FitzPatrick, “From Ritual Observance to Ethics: The Argument of Mark 7:1-23,” *ABR* 35 (1987): 26.

²⁷⁹ Lambrecht, “Jesus and the Law,” 77. Lambrecht mentions Q material (p. 67) which he feels Mark used, notably Matt. 23:25-26/Lk 11:39-41. These statements attributed to Jesus seem to corroborate the position that the inside was all that mattered.

²⁸⁰ In Kazen’s opinion, in this passage “we find neither the limited question of hand-washing, nor the general classification of clean and unclean meat, but the basic issue of bodily impurity.” Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 88.

²⁸¹ Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practices and Beliefs* (London: Routledge, 1995), 154. Cf. 1 Thes. 4:7, where Paul also connects holiness with a moral understanding of purity.

²⁸² “Purity . . . is redefined or prioritized in terms of relations of persons rather than exclusively by ritual contamination through objects and space.” Bird, “Jesus as Law-Breaker,” 21.

²⁸³ Ernst Kasemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, ed. Ernst Kasemann (London: SCM, 1964), 39-40; Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 462-463. Booth argues that ἐξωθεν (“from outside”) was originally ἐξω (“outside”), and he also argues εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν (“entering into him”) was not part of the original logion. This leads him to reason, “We do not think that Jesus would have compared ethical defilement generally in the second limb with merely a rule of the tradition in the first limb, but rather with cultic defilement generally.” Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity*, 68, 214.

ritual purity that we argued in the first half of this chapter.²⁸⁴ Whether or not this was the historical Jesus' intention, it was the eventual outcome.

6. Conclusion

Marcus Borg contends that the controversy over Jesus and purity has to do with the Jewish understanding of holiness. Holiness became understood as separation from everything unclean. Jesus, according to Borg, replaced this exclusionary ethos with an ethos of *compassion*.²⁸⁵ But perhaps it is more accurate to say that Jesus in Mark is not replacing purity with compassion but is redefining purity itself. Holiness is no longer measured by proximity to the Temple but to Jesus.²⁸⁶ This redefinition of purity involves recognizing Jesus as a new force for holiness that, for the first time, overpowers impurity. Jesus is not declaring people pure the way a priest might, after their impurity has subsided or run its course. He is *healing* people. He is stopping impurity in its tracks. He is getting rid of the actual *source* of impurity.²⁸⁷ Mark, therefore, seems to suggest that purity comes ultimately from Jesus.

Jesus' new understanding of purity in Mark's Gospel may be influenced by the eschatological portrait of Israel drawn by the prophet Zechariah. As Michael Bird and others have observed, Zech. 13:1 and 14:8 describe a fountain as a metaphor for the "eschatological outpouring of God's holiness on his people" which will bring cleansing and forgiveness. Ultimately everything is purified (Zech. 14:20-21).²⁸⁸ This redefinition of purity makes it easier to look at one's neighbor with acceptance rather than avoidance. Therefore the scales tip toward

²⁸⁴ Stettler, "Purity of Heart," 485-488.

²⁸⁵ Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 53-54, 58. Cf. Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 118, who uses the term "mercy."

²⁸⁶ Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity," 115.

²⁸⁷ This is Thiessen's thesis in his book *Jesus and the Forces of Death*.

²⁸⁸ "This Zecharian vision of holiness has arguably become a controlling principle for Jesus' ministry where it drives the redefinition of purity *within Judaism* as it is holiness rather than impurity that acts as a contagion." Bird, "Jesus as Law-Breaker," 24. Cf. Joris, "The Markan Use of 'Unclean Spirit,'" 49-66.

ethical behavior. Jesus is portrayed as invested in fixing the relationship between God and people. We see this in the healing of the paralytic in Mk. 2:1-12. Before healing the man, Jesus forgives his sins. This is why Jesus' disciples do not fast (Mk. 2:18-20). Why fast when the bridegroom is present? The presence of the bridegroom, rather, is something to be acknowledged and celebrated. Even the Sabbath should not stand in the way of doing good works to those in need. Notice when Jesus heals the man with the shriveled hand on the Sabbath (Mk. 3:1-6), he turns a "legal" concern into a moral issue ("Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil; to save life or to kill?"). The Sabbath was made for humanity's sake, not the other way around (Mk. 2:27).²⁸⁹ For the same reason Jesus extends his ministry beyond Israel to include the Gentiles (Mk. 7:24-8:13). Jesus told the rich man in Mk. 10:21 to get rid of the one thing that stood between him and God. In Mk. 12:28-34 Jesus applauds the lawyer who states that love for God and love for neighbor "is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." Jesus is reaching out and restoring relationship.

The practice of ritual purity was, for Israel, a mark of national identity, a means of avoiding contagion from impure conditions and impure people, and the avenue by which to approach God. However, at this stage we can say that purity for Mark starts with Jesus as its source, not the Levitical purity codes. It seems to be contagious; it is inclusive and it comes to those who have faith to receive it. This contrasts with the extreme exclusivity and separation of the Qumran sect.²⁹⁰ It also contrasts with the Pharisees, whose inclusion criteria excluded many people. Jesus was a Jew and there is some evidence he did comply with the Levitical purity code (Mk. 1:44). Still, it seems inescapable to draw the conclusion that his behavior in the Gospel of

²⁸⁹ Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, & Politics*, 148-149, notes all Sabbath healings are initiated by Jesus. People who approach Jesus for healing wait for the Sabbath to be over (Mk. 1:32). Jesus is making a statement; he is picking this fight as "another manifestation of the conflict between holiness and mercy."

²⁹⁰ Regev, "Moral Impurity and the Temple," 396-408.

Mark points to something above and beyond the ritual law, especially when the two types of impurity compete the way they do in Mk. 7:1-23. In our next two chapters we will see the ritual and moral aspects of purity come together in a new type of impurity that the Law did not address: demonic possession. What was the correct recourse in such a case of “spirit-impurity?” We will investigate how the ritual and moral aspects of demonic possession and exorcism can contribute to the Markan understanding of purity.

CHAPTER FOUR

Exorcism in Mark

1. Introduction

In this chapter we want to explore the connection between purity and the exorcism of πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα (“unclean spirits”), an epithet frequently designated to demons in Mark. The fact that Mark uses such a term in a gospel containing the theme of purity suggests a possible link between the two concepts.²⁹¹ Eighteen out of the twenty-one occurrences of the term πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα in the NT are in the Synoptic Gospels, the majority in the Gospel of Mark (eleven times). Wahlen points out that ἀκάθαρτος is used by the gospel writers *only* in connection with πνεῦμα to denote an unclean spirit or demon.²⁹²

Although there are scholars who wish to keep the categories of sin and impurity separate, demonic possession is what brings them together in Mark. Πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον appears only once in the Septuagint (LXX) in Zech. 13:2 (Masoretic Text רוח התמאה). Steffen Joris argues that Mark’s use of πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον is highly influenced by this passage.²⁹³ Because this is a key semantic and syntactical connection, we will take the time to elaborate on his argument. The text, including verse 1, reads as follows:

¹“On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity. ²On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more,” declares the Lord

²⁹¹ Clinton Wahlen states, “The LXX employs ἀκάθαρτος 157 times, usually to translate some form of טמא. Like its Hebrew counterpart ἀκάθαρτος refers to physical, ritual and moral impurities. Most often it refers to an impurity for which a purification ritual is prescribed . . . but it can also be used when the issue is strictly moral.” Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 12. See also Pimental, “The ‘Unclean Spirits’,” 173-175.

²⁹² Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 17-18. While its use may vary depending on context, “almost without exception the expression serves to highlight a particular aspect of impurity and the nature of demonic influence on people” (p. 1, cf. p. 170). Cf. Shively, “Purification of the Body,” 78.

²⁹³ Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 49-66.

Almighty. “I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity [רוח התמאזה] from the land.” (Zech. 13:1-2)

This passage links the sin of idolatry with impurity. In some books of the OT demons were associated with impurity because idolatry (one of the grave moral sins) was considered worship of demons.²⁹⁴ Joris argues that in 2TP literature πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον is a “Jewish expression” that connotes *impurity* and *sin*, not just “demon.”²⁹⁵ The word for “impurity” in Zech. 13:1 is נדה, a term commonly referring to menstrual uncleanness. However, this word does have a broader semantic range, as can be seen in Ez. 9:11. In Zech 13:1-2 and Ez. 9:11, there is a connection between the words “impure” (נדה) and “unclean” (טמאזה), both of which are used in both texts.²⁹⁶ In Ezra the impurity is caused by the people’s uncleanness; in Zech. 13 the impurity (and sin) is caused by the unclean spirits (as well as the idols and the prophets). Also, in Num. 19 נדה is linked with sin in the phrase “water of purification,” i.e., מִי נִדָּה (literally “water of impurity”), which is used to purify from sin (חטאת). This word for sin (חטאת) is the one used in Zech. 13:1. Furthermore, both Num. 19 and Zech. 13:1 refer to waters that cleanse. Thus נדה is not just menstrual uncleanness but is also used²⁹⁷ “as a general reference to impurity caused by uncleanness (טמאזה) which is connected to sin (חטאת).”²⁹⁸ In Num. 19:13, if a man does not cleanse with the water of purification from sin, this is itself a sin and his uncleanness (טמאזה) remains on him, thus also connecting uncleanness (טמאזה) with sin (חטאת).²⁹⁹ Joris’s main point: “So the one occurrence of ‘unclean spirit’ in the Hebrew Bible has to be explained as a general

²⁹⁴ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 11-12; 28. Cf. Ezek. 13-14; Ps. 106.

²⁹⁵ Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 56-59, 66.

²⁹⁶ Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 60.

²⁹⁷ Metaphorically? “The fact that *niddah* impurity is one of the few cases of ‘contagious’ impurity given in the Torah explains its occasional metaphorical use for extreme uncleanness (Ezra 9:11; 2 Chr. 29:25; Lam. 1:8, 17; Ezek. 7:20).” Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 46.

²⁹⁸ Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 61. Cf. Ezek. 36:17.

²⁹⁹ Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 61-62. Joris further note examples in Ezekiel where one who sins is called unclean (Cf. Ezek. 36:25, 29).

reference to ‘sin’ and ‘impurity,’ which needs to be cleansed.”³⁰⁰ In his study, Joris provides many examples of what he considers Markan references or allusions to messianic passages in Zechariah.³⁰¹ Therefore he believes it is reasonable to conclude that Mark must also be doing the same thing with the Zecharian use of πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα/ רוחות המאור.

Peter Bolt argues that this cleansing from the fountain in Zech. 13:1 is really a broad-scale forgiveness of sins, not only for Israel but also for the Gentiles.³⁰² According to Bolt, the reference to Is. 40:3 at the beginning of Mark draws us to Isaiah’s expectation of forgiveness and restoration of Israel (Is. 40:1-2). This is accomplished through the atoning death of the Servant of the Lord, upon whom God has placed his Spirit (Is. 40:1; 61:1; cf. Mk. 1:8,10). Thus the exorcisms, as well as the healings, in Mark’s Gospel,

ought to be understood as a concrete manifestation of the arrival of the one who brings forgiveness to Israel, namely the Servant of the Lord, and that this ministry to Israel is preparatory for salvation to flow even to the Gentile world, and preparatory for the arrival of the kingdom of God.³⁰³

In our second chapter we discussed the increased interest in demons in the 2TP and how this influenced the concept of demons for the NT writers.³⁰⁴ Exorcism was also a well-known practice in the first century.³⁰⁵ Jesus is included in the exorcistic tradition and many scholars acknowledge him as a recognized exorcist of his day.³⁰⁶ However, what made Jesus stand out

³⁰⁰ Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 62.

³⁰¹ For example: “I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered” (Mk. 14:27/Zech. 13:7); “the blood of the covenant” (Mk. 14:24/Zech. 9:11); Mk. 11:1-10 describes Jesus entering Jerusalem on a colt (Zech. 9:9). Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 62-65.

³⁰² Bolt, “With a View,” 53-62.

³⁰³ Bolt, “With a View,” 53-54.

³⁰⁴ Henze, *Mind the Gap*, 113-114. Henze states, “Knowledge about spirits and demons had become a fixed part of the religious imagination by the first century CE when Mark wrote his Gospel” (p. 113).

³⁰⁵ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 22-52, 226; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 406; Gideon Bohak, “Jewish Exorcism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple,” in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?: On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple*, eds. Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 280; Ferguson, *Demonology*, 54-59; Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 131.

³⁰⁶ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 136-142; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 619-630; Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 313-339; Van Oyen, “Demons and Exorcisms,” 100.

from other exorcists was that his miracles were tied to his mission. According to Mk. 1:14-15 Jesus' mission was centered on the advent of the kingdom of God. Mark calls Jesus the Messiah. Although the OT does not explicitly state that the Messiah would be an exorcist, Heiser argues persuasively that 2TP Jewish literature certainly pointed readers in that direction.³⁰⁷ It was Jesus' connecting his exorcisms to eschatology that was innovative and distinctive.³⁰⁸ For Jesus the exorcisms embodied, not just announced, the kingdom of God.³⁰⁹ Twelftree states: "In pre-Christian literature there is the expectation that the Messiah would do battle with Satan, but Jesus is the first to make a specific connection between the relatively ordinary events of exorcism and the defeat of Satan, between exorcism and eschatology."³¹⁰

If Jesus was an exorcist, as we contend, and if demonic spirits are impure, as we concluded in our second chapter, and if purity is an important theme in the Gospel of Mark, as we argued in our third chapter, then the question arises: Is there a relationship between purity and exorcism? And, if so, what is the nature of that relationship? To answer these questions we will look at all four exorcism accounts in Mark and delineate the role purity plays in these exorcisms. What we will find is that the exorcisms paint a picture of purity consistent with Jesus' other activities. That is, purity comes from Jesus, the Pure One. It is dispensed by the

³⁰⁷ Heiser, *Demons*, 206-211. 4Q521, for example, states that the Messiah will resurrect the dead (which is also part of Jesus' answer to John's disciples in Lk. 7:22). This study will make the argument that exorcism is itself a movement from death to life.

³⁰⁸ Twelftree goes on to show that Jesus' audience would not have interpreted his exorcisms as a sign of messianism because no pre-Christian literature connects the expected coming Messiah to exorcism and the defeat of Satan. Therefore, Twelftree argues, it is Jesus himself who first connects the dots. Twelftree argues that the exorcism stories are authentic to Jesus. For his purposes, the author of Mark included the exorcism accounts in his gospel to show Jesus as the Messiah. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 173; 182-189; 215; 219-220. Cf. Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 135-136. Heiser, *Demons*, 206-212, argues that the Septuagint casts Solomon, an archetypal reference to the Messiah, as an exorcist. This leads him to conclude: "Those who witnessed or heard about the exorcisms of Jesus as well as early readers of the New Testament would have expected this role for the Messiah" (p. 211).

³⁰⁹ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 170-171.

³¹⁰ Graham Twelftree, "Demons, Devil, Satan," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 168.

removal of impurity via the power of the Holy Spirit at work in Jesus. It appears to be contagious and it is inclusive, extending even beyond the borders of Jewish Palestine. It is also a matter of faith, both for the exorcist and the suppliant. Furthermore, demonic possession brings together sin and impurity, consistent with 2TP literature. But, more than healings or rites of purification or atonement, exorcisms draw us closest to the source of impurity. We will see that impurity is not just a human failing; there is a malevolent spiritual enemy behind impurity which humans are powerless to resist. Exorcism is a vivid expression of Jesus defeating that enemy on behalf of human beings and restoring them to a state of purity.

2. The Capernaum Demoniac (Mk. 1:21-28)

Exorcism is Jesus' first miraculous act only in Mark. It follows right after Mark has both established Jesus' identity as the Pure One,³¹¹ and alluded to Jesus' unique authority.³¹² This exorcism takes place on a Sabbath (a holy day) in a synagogue (a place of worship). It is interesting that the demon initiates the confrontation.³¹³ The demoniac cries out "Τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί?" (commonly translated "What do we have to do with you?"). Twelftree concludes that the meaning behind the question is "Why are you bothering us?" and he considers it a defensive statement against Jesus.³¹⁴ This interpretation seems to be corroborated by the demon's follow up question: "Have you come to destroy us?"³¹⁵ The fact that the demon would jump to this

³¹¹ See beginning of Chapter 3 "Establishing Jesus' Purity."

³¹² As Wahlen states, Jesus' exorcism here "serves to confirm what the reader already supposes based on the voice, the dove, the wilderness invincibility, and the disciples' instantaneous response to the gospel call: he who is worthier than John wields special authority." Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 89-90.

³¹³ A kind of "fatal attraction," as Marcus aptly describes it. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 192. Cf. Mk. 5:6.

³¹⁴ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 63-64; Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 80. Pesch seems to nuance it well when he describes it as "a formula for holding someone at a distance." Rudolph Pesch, "The Markan Version of the Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac," *The Ecumenical Review* 23, no. 4 (October 1971): 357.

³¹⁵ "The use of the plural ἡμῖν juxtaposed with the singular verbs in 1:23-26 indicates that this spirit is a spokesperson for the demonic realm, asking if Jesus, the Holy One, has come to destroy the whole lot." Shively, "Purification of the Body," 78. While a conventional exorcism would simply drive the demon out of the victim, these words of the demon betray a bigger concern. "The demons here seem to tremble before an eschatological destruction." Bruce Chilton, "An Exorcism of History: Mark 1:21-28," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed.

conclusion betrays its knowledge of expected doom.³¹⁶ There can be only one reason for Jesus' presence. Unlike the crowd, who were wondering and marveling at Jesus' authoritative teaching, the demon recognized "immediately" (εὐθέως) that it was in the presence of divine judgment. Why assume this? Because the demon knows *who Jesus is*. The demon calls Jesus both by his name and the title, "The Holy One of God." The divine nature of the titles used for Jesus by the demons in Mark speak to their special knowledge.³¹⁷ Kent Brower states that "the phrase 'the Holy One of God' is a subset of [the more common] 'Son of God.'" This "routine identity" by the unclean spirits is their way of recognizing Jesus' transcendence.³¹⁸ Jesus commands the demon to "Be quiet!" (Φιμώθητι), a typical stage in the exorcism ritual to muzzle or "bind" the demon and bring it into submission.³¹⁹ This is followed by his command to "Come out of him" (ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ).³²⁰

As many scholars agree, this exorcism passage centers around the authority of Jesus.³²¹ The title "Holy One of God" alludes to Jesus' designation as God's chosen and authorized representative and also underscores the contrast between the forces of holiness and impurity

Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans (Boston/Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers Inc., 2002), 223. Destruction of evil was a messianic apocalyptic expectation. Cf. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 66, 182-189.

³¹⁶ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 103.

³¹⁷ This speaks to the christological nature of the exorcism. Both God (1:11) and the demons know who Jesus is. Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 84. Mark begins and ends his gospel with phrase "the Son of God" (1:1; 15:39), creating an inclusio which suggests that the gospel will unpack the significance of this term for Mark's message of who Jesus is. Variations of the term are found throughout the gospel (1:1, 11, 24; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 14:61; 15:39). Brower, "The Holy One," 57-60. In regard to exorcism, the power of exorcism is the power of God.

³¹⁸ Brower, "The Holy One," 58. Cf. Mk. 3:11.

³¹⁹ Collins, *Mark*, 173; Darrell Bock, *Mark* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 128.

³²⁰ The terms ἐξέρχομαι and ἐκβάλλω are used by Mark in references to δαιμόνια. Van Oyen, "Demons and Exorcisms," 106; Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 133.

³²¹ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 105-106; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 55; Collins, *Mark*, 165; Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 79; Van Oyen, "Demons and Exorcisms," 109, 112; J. Michaels, "Jesus and the Unclean Spirits," in *Demon Possession: A Medical, Historical, Anthropological, and Theological Symposium*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Chapel Inc., 1976), 42, 47.

(Jesus' holiness and the demon's impurity).³²² R. T. France states, "it links Jesus with the πνεῦμα ἅγιον whose presence is to mark his messianic ministry (1:8), and is the basis of his power over demons (3:22-30)."³²³ The *impure* spirit confronts the one empowered by the *Holy* Spirit. Jesus' ἐξουσία³²⁴ contrasts from the scribes by the action that follows the words of teaching. Nicholas Elder argues that "Jesus' teaching in the synagogue and his exorcistic activity are one and the same."³²⁵ Unlike the scribes, his is not a mediated authority contingent on the Torah. He does not teach the text. Rather "Jesus stands in place of the text."³²⁶ The crowd calls the teaching "new" (καὶνὴ, v. 27). Jesus' exorcisms are also "new" as they are tied to his teaching.³²⁷ Jesus' authority is therefore unique, and it is supernatural.³²⁸ Elder points out that the terms ἐξουσία and ἐπιτιμάω are connotated with supernatural power and authority in 2TP literature.³²⁹

Thus, Jesus' authority to perform this exorcism seems clear. What, then, can we say about purity? Are the two related? And if so, how? We just mentioned how the phrase "the

³²² Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 91; Shively, "Purification of the Body," 78. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 188, suggests that the opposite nature of holiness and impurity is underlined by the words of the demoniac: "What do we (who are unclean) have to do with you (the Holy One of God)?"

³²³ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 104. Edwards states: "From his baptism onward Jesus as God's Son has been authorized by God's Spirit." Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 123. In the OT the title "Holy One of God" is ascribed to Aaron (Ps. 106:16; cf. Num. 16:7). Crispin Fletcher-Louis connects this title as a possible acknowledgement of Jesus as the eschatological high priestly Messiah. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as High Priestly Messiah," 63-64. In Acts 2:27 Peter quotes Ps. 16:10 ("nor will you let your Holy One see decay") in reference to Jesus.

³²⁴ Ἐξουσία frequently occurs in passages about unclean spirits. Van Oyen, "Demons and Exorcisms," 109.

³²⁵ Elder, "Scribes and Demons," 76. Kee concludes similarly, "In the exorcisms, the authority of Jesus' word and the authority of his actions are united." Howard Kee, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," *New Testament Studies* 14, no. 2 (January 1968): 242.

³²⁶ Elder, "Scribes and Demons," 90. Collins states that the scribes merely hand down tradition while Jesus speaks the word of God. Collins, *Mark*, 165.

³²⁷ Chilton, "An Exorcism of History," 220. Cf. Elder, "Scribes and Demons," 75-91.

³²⁸ His authority comes from heaven (cf. Mk. 11:27-33). It is not just supernatural power over demons, but also authority to forgive sins (Mk. 2:10).

³²⁹ Elder, "Scribes and Demons," 91; Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 55; Kee, "The Terminology," 232-246.

Holy One of God” juxtaposes and contrasts the holiness of Jesus with the spirit’s impurity.³³⁰ This seems to imply an equivalency of *holiness* with *purity*. Again, as we have highlighted previously, the two terms are very closely related, often used interchangeably.³³¹ This is because holiness and purity work not exclusively from each other but in concert. They are separate concepts that are frequently inseparable. Jesus’ authority, then, besides being recognized by his status (Holy One of God), seems also to be tied to his holy and pure nature. His holiness is depicted by his endowment of the Holy Spirit and his purity, as previously discussed, is demonstrated in the events in the early part of Mark’s first chapter (the baptism, the voice of approval, the temptation, etc.).³³² Mark’s message is that rending apart the sacred image-bearer from the profane spirit can only be done through the One who is pure, in the power of the Holy Spirit. As Thiessen states, “the holy *pneuma* that has come down upon Jesus and animates him is more powerful than the impure *pneuma* that inhabits the man.”³³³

And so just as *purity* and *holiness* are inextricably intertwined, so *purity* also seems related to *authority*. This passage shows that the holy and pure nature of Jesus (which is obvious to the demon and not so obvious to the crowd) is behind the authority that both the crowds and the demon recognize. His authority is legitimized by his purity. He is “the Holy One (Pure One)

³³⁰ “The spirit of an ‘impure demon,’ an unholy one, stands in contrast to Christ as the ‘Holy One.’” Ferguson, *Demonology*, 7.

³³¹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 188. Neyrey also seems to conflate the terms in comments like “God, moreover, gave Jesus his own purity, the Holy Spirit,” and “God makes clear his verdict of Jesus’ purity rating, viz., that Jesus was and is ‘the Holy One of God.’” Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity,” 114. In the midst of the Levitical purity laws, both in P and in H, God tells Israel why it is important to avoid what is impure. The point of remaining pure is to “be holy, because I am holy,” Lev. 11:44, 45; cf. Lev. 19:2; 20:26. See our preliminary discussion on holiness and purity (Excursus 1) in chapter 2 as well as Excursus 2 below. Purity and holiness are indeed closely linked but are still distinguishable. For example, Jesus is first purified by baptism and then receives the Holy Spirit.

³³² See chapter 3, “Establishing Jesus’ Purity.”

³³³ Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 142.

of God,” and just as impurity cannot enter God’s presence in the temple, so now it also cannot stand before Jesus in this synagogue.

2.1 Excursus 2: Authority, Purity and Holiness

Authority and Purity. In our third chapter we opened with the beginning of Mark establishing Jesus’ holiness and purity. What we find in Mark 1 is that as soon as Jesus’ identity was announced through baptism, he and Satan confront each other. Jesus’ temptation by Satan in the wilderness (Mk. 1:12-13) suggests a possible vulnerability. The term *πειράζω* can mean “tempt” but it can also be understood as “test.” Is it possible then that Jesus was being tested in some sense?³³⁴ Jesus was sent there (*ἐκβάλλω*) by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit was testing Jesus, that might imply the possibility of failure. While the details of the temptation are omitted in Mark, the parallel passages (Matt. 4:1-11/Lk. 4:1-13) describe Satan’s temptations as focusing on Jesus’ abilities as opposed to a reliance on God. Satan asked Jesus to act in a way that was “Jesus-focused,” and Jesus’ responses were always “God-focused.” It appears that Satan was trying to drive a wedge between Jesus and God.³³⁵ In each case Jesus responds with an appeal for obedience to and reliance upon God’s word.

The outcome of the temptations in Mark is not explicit. However, the rest of Mark’s first chapter and indeed the rest of his gospel strongly imply that Jesus did “pass the test.”³³⁶ Jesus’ victory over Satan in this account is, for Neyrey, another attestation of his purity.³³⁷ Herein, it seems, lies a connection between Jesus’ purity and his authority. If, among other things, Jesus’ victory over Satan attests to his purity, it would imply that a failure would render Jesus defiled. The implication, therefore, is that this was Satan’s intention. He wanted to sabotage Jesus’ mission. If Satan had succeeded in defiling Jesus, Satan’s authority would have been justified. But Jesus was not defiled, and so his own authority was justified. Furthermore, Jesus’ ministry of exorcism in the Gospel of Mark can be understood as a campaign to delegitimize Satan’s authority.³³⁸

Holiness and Purity. Holiness and purity are interconnected. Holiness is generally understood as separation or being “set apart.” This is why God is holy. He stands apart from his creation. Hannah Harrington, however, argues that the idea of holiness also involves perfection and power.³³⁹ In regard to perfection, God, as holy, is not just perfect in a physical sense but also morally. “Holiness is a force within the world which acts morally because it is an extension of God himself.”³⁴⁰ Therefore, holiness involves *goodness*. It is ethical, and therefore implies justice and mercy. God cares. Holiness is the extension of God’s good nature, it is “the agency of the divine will . . . a means to effect righteousness in the earth.”³⁴¹ That is, “holiness is accomplished in the world by deeds of mercy.”³⁴²

³³⁴ The wilderness setting recalls similar examples in the OT (e.g. Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness and Elijah’s trek to Mt. Horeb). “In each instance the wilderness was a proving ground, a test of faithfulness, and a promise of deliverance.” Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 40.

³³⁵ Satan’s frequent opening conditional clause “If you are the Son of God . . .” may be a form of planting doubt, a tactic that was also used on Eve (“Did God really say . . .?” Gen. 3:1). He is challenging Jesus and asking Jesus to prove himself. Ironically, this is what Jesus does, by subjecting all actions to the will of God.

³³⁶ Mark ends similarly to Matthew, with the angels “attending” (*διακονέω*) to Jesus, suggesting angelic support, “thus showing that Jesus did not lose God’s holiness or favor through Satan’s temptations.” Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity,” 107. Marcus states that “the context suggests Jesus comes out on top, succeeding where Adam failed, in resisting Satan.” Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 170.

³³⁷ Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity,” 106-107.

³³⁸ Edwards writes, “As God’s adversary, Satan endeavors to subvert God’s reign as it is manifested through his beloved Son. In Mark, Jesus’ first miracle (1:21-28) and parable (3:27) are offensives against Satan as ‘the strong one.’ The summary capsule of 1 John that ‘the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work’ (3:8) is equally descriptive of Mark’s Gospel.” Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 40.

³³⁹ Harrington, *Holiness*, 18-37.

³⁴⁰ Harrington, *Holiness*, 34.

³⁴¹ Harrington, *Holiness*, 27.

³⁴² Harrington, *Holiness*, 36.

Lev. 19 exhorts Israel to be holy like God is holy, and this is done through ethical behavior (cf. Is. 5:16). In regard to power, the holiness of God also includes his *omnipotence*. This sovereign power is awe-instilling and compelling but also dangerous if not feared and respected. It demands obedience. This is why, for example, the Israelites were warned not to approach Mt. Sinai, where God was in the storm cloud, on pain of death (Ex. 19:12-13). Indeed, the Israelites were terrified at God's voice and requested Moses to speak to them on God's behalf.

James Milgrom describes two binaries: 1) Holy and Common, and 2) Pure and Impure.³⁴³ These are two *separate* realms, but they are related in a limited sense. What is common could be either pure or impure. However, what is holy can only be pure. If impurity comes in contact with what is holy, the holy must be purified to purge the impurity immediately or what is holy will be under threat of being abandoned by God. While "pure" and "common" are static *states of being*, holiness and impurity are *active forces* that are opposed to each other. Holiness is the force of life, and impurity the force of death. Both are in a battle "to extend their influence and control over the other two categories, the common and the pure."³⁴⁴ The holy is always seeking to gain ground against what is common, and impurity is constantly threatening and impinging on what is pure. In the Levitical purity system, impurity is warded off by purification rituals, thus preserving or restoring purity. That is how the force of impurity is diminished. However, how does the force of holiness grow? *How does what is common and pure become something that is holy?* Milgrom states that this occurs through obedience to the law (taught by the priests, Lev. 10:10-11), through observance of Sabbath and festivals (sacred time) and through worshipping in the temple (sacred space).³⁴⁵

Purity, however, is required for holiness to be unleashed. It is like a prerequisite for holiness. "Ritual purity provides the foundation for holiness; the latter cannot exist without the former. . . Purity is the state of being in which holiness can be active."³⁴⁶ Thus, as previously discussed,³⁴⁷ purity is a kind of pre-condition for holiness. Purification "is the access road . . . into a sacred status."³⁴⁸ Using baptism as an example, Harrington states, "The ritual [baptism] promotes the principle that what is unclean in God's sight must be purified before His holiness can be experienced."³⁴⁹ Harrington draws rabbinic precedent for this by quoting *m. Sot.* 9:15: "Heedfulness leads to cleanliness, cleanliness leads to cleanness [purity], cleanness leads to abstinence, abstinence leads to holiness . . ." Thus, it is through the state of purity that God's dynamic holiness, his perfection, power and goodness, can work in the world. This is depicted in Mark's Gospel in the chronology of Jesus' baptism. Jesus was first purified through baptism and then he received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, then, became the active agent in Jesus' encounters with impurity (Mk. 1:12; 3:29).

The acquisition of holiness through purity differs between early Christians and the rabbis. Christians accentuated moral purity over ritual purity. While the rabbis emphasized the human responsibility to maintain purity and therefore holiness, Christians, by contrast, saw God's holiness, through his Holy Spirit, entering and transforming human lives for his own glory.³⁵⁰ Because of the power of sin over human lives, holiness is a process initiated by God.³⁵¹ This is exemplified in Jesus' exorcisms. The victim is helpless and enslaved by the demon.

³⁴³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 616-617; 732-733.

³⁴⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 732.

³⁴⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 616-617. David Wright states: "While declaring that obedience leads to holiness, [H] recognizes that holiness ultimately comes from God (Exod. 31:13; Lev. 20:8; 22:32)." David P. Wright, "Holiness in Leviticus and Beyond: Differing Perspectives," *Interpretation* 53, no. 4 (October 1999): 353.

³⁴⁶ Harrington, *Holiness*, 173.

³⁴⁷ See discussion on purity and holiness in Ch. 2, Excursus 1.

³⁴⁸ Harrington, *Holiness*, 177.

³⁴⁹ Harrington, *Holiness*, 178.

³⁵⁰ Harrington, *Holiness*, 201.

³⁵¹ However, it could also be noted that the water used in Jewish immersion rituals had to flow from its *source*, and not drawn with a man-made device. "The Rabbis explain that only water flowing directly from its source, for example rain or spring water, is capable of purifying from impurity because it is given directly by the Holy One." Thus, this also teaches that purification and holiness can only come from God. Harrington, *Holiness*, 178.

Only Jesus, as the Holy One, empowered by the Holy Spirit, had the power to liberate and purify from demonic possession.

3. The Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20)

This exorcism account is full of possible references to ritual impurity. First, Gerasa is a land of Gentiles and the demoniac is a Gentile.³⁵² Furthermore, the presence of pigs, tombs,³⁵³ nakedness,³⁵⁴ and the presentation of a man behaving like an untamed wild (unclean) animal underscore the impurity that Jesus confronts in connection to this impure spirit.³⁵⁵ Along with impurity is the idea of death itself.³⁵⁶ This man lived in the tombs and engaged in self-harm (5:5).³⁵⁷ The description of the man's tortured condition is graphic and disturbing. He could not be bound or subdued due to unnatural strength,³⁵⁸ yet his actions were self-destructive. A social outcast, he was very much alone, and dwelt "among the tombs and in the hills" (5:5).

There are similarities to the Capernaum exorcism. Just as Jesus' first act in Palestine was an exorcism, so is the case in Gentile land. In both accounts the demon initiates the exchange. The Capernaum exorcism is preceded by the cosmic conflict between Satan and Jesus in the wilderness; similarly, this present exorcism is also "placed in a cosmic context by the preceding

³⁵² To the Jews, Gentile territory was considered unclean and Jews at the time of Jesus commonly considered Gentiles as unclean. Pesch, "The Markan Version," 356; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 283, 383; Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 155; cf. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 467; Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics*, 59.

³⁵³ Tombs were impure because of the presence of corpses (cf. Matt. 23:27). "The impurity made a graveyard an ideal dwelling place of 'unclean spirits.'" Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 342. Pesch writes, "In the Jewish tradition burial places were regarded as the favorite resort of unclean spirits." Pesch, "The Markan Version," 356.

³⁵⁴ Mk. 5:15 suggests the demoniac had been in some state of undress before his exorcism. Pesch states that some typical behavior of demoniacs included being out at night, especially in graveyards, and tearing their garments. Pesch, "The Markan Version," 356.

³⁵⁵ Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 145; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 342; Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 155; Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 96; Joris, "The Markan Use of 'Unclean Spirit,'" 54.

³⁵⁶ In chapter two we discussed the connection between impurity, evil spirits and death.

³⁵⁷ Shively, "Purification of the Body," 74. She writes, "The demons are intent on destroying him so that he is as good as dead until Jesus restores him to life" (cf. p. 85).

³⁵⁸ Marcus points out syntactical parallels to Mk. 3:27 to argue that the source of the man's supernatural strength came from the Strong Man, Satan. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 343.

description of Jesus' godlike conquest of the demonic sea (4:35-41)."³⁵⁹ Following the same question (Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί³⁶⁰; cf. Mk. 1:24) Jesus is again addressed by name and title. Here the designation is "Son of the Most High God." This is widely recognized as a Gentile label,³⁶¹ confirming again the Gentile context of this pericope.

As Thiessen and others point out, this exorcism of the "Legion" is a response to Mk. 3. Jesus has indeed bound the Strong Man and plundered his house because he is the stronger one (Mk. 1:7).³⁶² A man who once was insane, violent and naked, is brought under control, clothed and put "in his right mind." The demoniac is restored and through him a message of restoration is spread. And so, uniquely, there is an after-story. The victim is not only changed, but he acts on this change. He has been set free, he has been purified by Jesus, and he responds with a *desire to follow Jesus*. As per our excursus on purity and holiness, the man, who is now made pure, is free to pursue holiness. And this, it would seem, is what he does by obediently spreading the news about Jesus.

Given the various features of impurity described in this account it would be interesting to know how Jesus' disciples, all Jews, felt in such an environment. It is probably safe to assume that this place was not somewhere they would have visited on their own. But Jesus, the Pure One, whom it might be expected would be the most vulnerable to defilement,³⁶³ ventures straight

³⁵⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 349.

³⁶⁰ Ironically the man (or the demons?) uses the singular ἐμοὶ, even though he is possessed by a legion.

³⁶¹ Cf. Gen 14:19; Num. 24:16; Acts 16: 17. Not a messianic but a divine title, designating one as highest among all other gods. Ὑψιστος is used in the OT by non-Israelites for Israel's God (e.g. Gen. 14:18; Num. 24:16; Is. 14:14). Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 183. Cf. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 156; Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 165. Collins points out some examples of Jewish use (Deut. 32:8; 1QapGen 21:2), but in Jesus' day in non-Christian Greek texts it most commonly applied to Zeus ("Zeus Hypsistos"). For Mark's audience it may have been seen as calling Jesus the son of Zeus. Collins, *Mark*, 268.

³⁶² Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 145-146; Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 164.

³⁶³ Hyam Maccoby alludes to the idea that what is most holy may be most susceptible to impurity. Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 49. Klawans also states, "There is a degree to which the capacity to defile reflects value." Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 39. "The more 'holy' something may become, the more susceptible it is to uncleanness." Chilton and Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament*, 155.

in, seemingly without concern, but with a sense of purpose. There is no place that is off limits or unreachable; he goes wherever he wishes and spreads his contagious purity. And with his advance, impurity retreats, as does death itself. Drawing a parallel with the account of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-3), Bruce Chilton states, “In both cases the underlying dynamic of the narratives is that the pure and the impure are incompatible, and that it is the pure which destroys the impure when they meet, by driving uncleanness to self-immolation.”³⁶⁴

The portrayal of the man’s crumbling sanity and the mention of him living in the tombs and engaging in self-harm, starkly connect impurity with the picture of death. The demons are destroying this man. But if impurity is tied to death, then the purification that Jesus brings can only mean life. Jesus draws the man from death to life. As these events occur outside of Judea, Mark is indicting the (forceful) advancement of the kingdom of God Jesus preaches into new territory. Jesus is bringing life and purity to the Gentiles and extending the reach of God’s kingdom beyond Israel. What is happening here could be considered part of what Kent Brower calls “a renewed understanding of holiness” because it represents an example of the “re-creation of the holy people of God centered on Jesus.”³⁶⁵

4. The Syro-Phoenician Woman’s Daughter (Mark 7:24-30)

We now come to the third exorcism account in Mark, and the second done in Gentile territory. What makes this story interesting is not so much the exorcism itself, but what it took to make it happen. Part of the connection to purity in this pericope is the fact that Mark places it directly

³⁶⁴ Chilton, “An Exorcism of History,” 234.

³⁶⁵ Brower, “The Holy One,” 57, 58. We have been suggesting that Mark’s Jesus is redefining purity. Brower’s article argues that Jesus’ redefinition of holiness invariably creates a new understanding of what constitutes the people of God.

after Jesus' purity debate with the Pharisees in 7:1-23.³⁶⁶ In this debate Jesus repudiated the social boundaries of Jewish traditional laws and gave priority to moral integrity over ritual adherence. The next thing he does is step over those boundaries to help a Gentile. Thus the purity Jesus brings is extended to include Gentiles.

A Syro-Phoenician woman whose daughter is possessed by an impure spirit falls before Jesus, begging him to drive out (ἐκβάλλῃ) the demon. Jesus' response sounds harsh to our modern ears. "First let the children eat all they want . . . for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs" (7:27)." While some scholars have tried to lighten the blow,³⁶⁷ "dogs," whether household pets or street scavengers, is not a compliment.³⁶⁸ However, the use of πρῶτον³⁶⁹ (not found in Matthew's account) leaves the door open for hope; the "dogs" (i.e., Gentiles) will also be fed, but *after* the children (i.e., Jews; cf. Rom. 1:16).³⁷⁰ The woman does not try to defend her dignity nor counter the label Jesus ascribes to her. Rather, as Edwards puts it, she "enters into the parable" and "answers Jesus from 'within' the parable."³⁷¹ Accepting Jesus' metaphor she turns it to her own advantage,³⁷² *her* point being: there are collateral

³⁶⁶ See discussion on Mk. 7:1-23 in chapter 3. Many scholars see this juxtaposition as significant. See Guelich, *Mark 1-8*:26, 388; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 462.

³⁶⁷ Rebekah Liu, "A Dog Under the Table at the Messianic Banquet: A Study of Mark 7:24-30," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 48, no. 2 (Autumn 2010): 251-255. Liu argues that Jesus addresses the woman affectionately by using the diminutive term κυνάριον ("little dog," in this context, a household pet) as opposed to the regular κύων ("dog").

³⁶⁸ The term βαλεῖν seems to reinforce this. Collins, *Mark*, 367, dismisses outright any connotation to household dogs in this passage and believes Mark is referring to "the scavenging dogs of the street." Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 234, calls Jesus' reply "brutally harsh," and despite the use of κυνάριον, "the verb 'throw' suggests casting food outside for the dogs to eat."

³⁶⁹ Marcus notes that Mark uses the neuter singular form of this word always in an eschatological context. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 463.

³⁷⁰ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 298. Bock's opinion is that the term "points to priority, not exclusion." Bock, *Mark*, 228. Marcus draws attention to the fact that the Jewish feeding of the 5000 preceded the Gentile feeding of the 4000. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 469.

³⁷¹ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 221-222. Or, as Rhoads says, "She develops the scenario of Jesus' allegory so that she and her daughter have a place in it." David Rhoads, "Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman in Mark: A Narrative-Critical Study," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 47, no. 4 (October 2020): 42.

³⁷² Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 469-470.

benefits when the children are fed. David Rhoads writes, “The cleverness of her response is that she honored [Jesus’] rejection and still found a place for her request.”³⁷³ Jesus answers the woman’s rebuttal by saying, “For such a reply, you may go. The demon has left your daughter” (v.29).

What exactly has happened here? Was Jesus seriously opposed to healing this young girl, or was this some kind of test? Joel Marcus takes Jesus’ words literally from a historical point of view. Jesus did not at first want to heal. However, the woman *changed Jesus’ mind*.³⁷⁴ But Marcus believes that in the hands of the author, Mk. 7:27 does become a test of faith.³⁷⁵ The woman passes the test, and so this story, then, stands as a testament to the woman’s faith.

It is interesting to compare and contrast this exorcism with the previous exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac. Both occur in Gentile territory. While the people of Gerasa responded with fear and suspicion, in Tyre Jesus is pursued with a desperation that will not be ignored. In Gerasa Jesus takes on the forces of death; in Tyre Jesus challenges and elicits faith. In Gerasa it is about what Jesus does; in Tyre it is about what Jesus requires. Jesus has the power and authority to dispel impurity, but he also requires faith on the part of the suppliant. Both accounts speak to a Gentile mission and to the broader reach of the redefined purity that Jesus brings. The

³⁷³ Rhoads, “Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman,” 43.

³⁷⁴ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 468. Marcus notes, this is “the only example in the Gospels of a person who wins an argument with Jesus” (p. 470). So also, Rhoads, “Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman,” 44.

³⁷⁵ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 468-469. Rhoads, however, in his narrative analysis of Mark, contends that even Mark’s meaning was that Jesus’ mind was changed by the woman. Rhoads, “Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman,” 44, 48. So also, Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 204. France does not believe Jesus’ mind was changed. He considers Jesus’ remarks as playing “devil’s advocate.” “He appears like a wise teacher who allows, and indeed incites, his pupil to mount a victorious argument against the foil of his own reluctance.” France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 296.

exorcism itself plays a more subservient role in this account. The Gentile girl was unclean for at least two reasons: she had an impure spirit and she was a Gentile.³⁷⁶

What we can take away from this story then, in terms of purity and exorcism, is that Jesus, the Pure One, has made an unclean Gentile girl clean. As we saw with the Gerasene demoniac, so with this Gentile mother: The holiness Jesus represents leads to community, and not avoidance of impurity. In Brower's words, "By Jesus' action, people are brought into the community of faith. They are often those excluded under traditional rules. Holiness as separation from impurity is changed to holiness as community with Jesus."³⁷⁷ Jesus' purity in this passage is not exclusive, but socially inclusive.

5. The Epileptic Boy (Mark 9:14-29)

This account follows on the heels of the transfiguration of Jesus (9:1-13), where the Pure One appears before Peter and John in unblemished and radiant splendor. The purity implicit in this picture is supported by the description of Jesus' clothes as dazzlingly white, "whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" (9:3). However, after the incident Jesus tells the two disciples not to share what they have seen until "the Son of Man had risen from the dead." It is as Peter and John are descending the mountain with Jesus and ruminating over what "rising from the dead" might mean that they walk straight into a live demonstration.³⁷⁸ Death and resurrection appear to be important aspects of this exorcism. Not only is this pericope preceded and followed

³⁷⁶ Never mind the fact that Jesus interacted with a Gentile *woman*. Women were more susceptible to impurity and throughout the gospels Jesus' involvement with women appears countercultural. Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 52, 57-58. See also Borg's discussion on patriarchy and androcentrism in *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 105-107, where he observes, "All of the stories of Jesus' relationships to women involve ignoring or subverting the structures of patriarchy" (p. 106).

³⁷⁷ Brower, "The Holy One," 73.

³⁷⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 280.

with Jesus' comments on his own death and resurrection (8:31/9:12; 9:31), but we also have here a picture of one who was "dead" (v. 26)³⁷⁹ and then "raised" (v. 27).³⁸⁰

We mentioned earlier that the Capernaum exorcism had much to say about Jesus' authority. Jesus later went on to pass this authority to his disciples (3:15; 6:7) so that they too might have power to cast out impure spirits. However, in this instance the disciples failed. When Jesus hears of the disciples' failure his response is one of exasperation: "You unbelieving generation. How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" (9:19). The categories of authority and faith intersect in this pericope. Three times the need for faith is either mentioned or strongly implied. Jesus' comment in v. 19 would be the first. Who are the faithless Jesus speaks of? This designation likely refers to several groups, foremost in this context the disciples,³⁸¹ but also the crowd, the scribes and the father himself.³⁸² Jesus is frustrated at the general, corporate lack of faith in "this generation" (cf. 8:12).

The second mention of faith is found in Jesus' conversation with the father. To the father's plea, "But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us"³⁸³ Jesus, sounding somewhat offended, replies, "'If you can'? Everything is possible for one who believes." Whose faith is Jesus referring to, the father's or his own? The father's desperate reply ("I do

³⁷⁹ Furthermore, the impure spirit is connected to death in that it was trying to kill the boy (ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν, v. 22).

³⁸⁰ The raising of Jairus' daughter employed similar vocabulary (cf. 5:41). Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 662. Shively notes the many examples in Mark with resurrection terminology (1:31; 2:11; 5:41-42; 9:27). Her thesis is that Jesus' exorcisms (and healings) in Mark "anticipate Jesus' resurrection from the dead, which pioneers the purification of the body at the turn of the ages." Shively, "Purification of the Body," 63, 70, 86. Also note the term ἀνίστημι ("to raise up; to rise") is used in 8:31, 9:27 and 9:31.

³⁸¹ "What God says of his relationship to faithless Israel (cf. Is. 63:8-10), Jesus now says of his relationship to the future community of faith." Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 332.

³⁸² Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 653-654; Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 278.

³⁸³ The OT and later Jewish liturgical language ("Have mercy on us"), which is addressed to God, is echoed in the father's plea ("have pity on us and help us"), which is now addressed to Jesus. His cry is plural (ἡμῖν); he is identifying with his son's fate. Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 660-661.

believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”) certainly indicates he felt Jesus’ words were directed at him.³⁸⁴ Still, however, other examples of πάντα δυνατά (“All things are possible,” ESV) in Mark refer to God (10:27; 14:36). In this narrative, supported by the preceding transfiguration, Jesus is portrayed as divine. So perhaps Jesus is referring to himself, the one with perfect faith. It is also possible that both interpretations are valid: the father must place his inadequate faith in the hands of the Source of perfect faith, who alone holds the power to accomplish “all things.”³⁸⁵

The third reference to faith takes place at the end of the pericope. To the disciples’ question as to why they were unable to drive out the demon, Jesus replies, “This kind can only come out by prayer.”³⁸⁶ Ostensibly, the disciples had already been practicing exorcism successfully (6:13), but in this case, unlike Jesus (the “stronger one” cf. 1:7; 3:27), they were not strong enough (οὐκ ἴσχυσαν, 9:18). Why? Cranfield suggests that the disciples had become complacent. Their weakness was in their faith. Prayer and faith go hand in hand and faith must continually be renewed through prayer.³⁸⁷ Brower states that “holiness [and purity] is always derived from and always in relationship to the Holy One.” The disciples had forgotten that “exorcism is a derived authority, not one vested in the apostles as independently empowered

³⁸⁴ Elsewhere faith is linked with healing (5:34; 10:52).

³⁸⁵ Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 661-662. Similarly, France states, “It is debated whether τῷ πιστεύοντι here refers to the father or to Jesus the healer, but in the context both meanings are probably in view: Jesus has the ability to heal because of his faith, and the healing may be expected to be granted in response to the faith of the petitioner (as in 2:5; 5:34, 36). It is the latter sense that is picked up in the father’s reply.” France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 367-368. See also Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 655.

³⁸⁶ The textual variant καὶ νηστεία is found in many manuscripts but is absent in the earliest and most reliable. Therefore most (but not all; R. T. France, for example) commentators consider it to be a later ecclesiastical accretion. Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 655; Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* 2nd edition (United Bible Society, 1994), 85. Scholars (e.g. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 225; Collins, *Mark*, 439) have pointed out that prayer was actually not part of this exorcism, suggesting this as further evidence of originally separate stories being brought together. However, faith and prayer are elsewhere closely linked in Mark as we see, for example, in the cursing of the fig tree (11:22-24). Michaels, “Jesus and the Unclean Spirits,” 46, 48. Hooker herself concludes, “Prayer . . . , though not the word we expect, indicates a dependence on God.” Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 225.

³⁸⁷ Charles Cranfield, “St. Mark 9:14-29,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 3, no. 1 (1950): 61-66. Cf. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 370.

exorcists.”³⁸⁸ In a sense, then, prayer is an act of acknowledging the object of faith as well as one’s dependence on it.³⁸⁹ Thus, the lack of faith to overcome an impure spirit was a misappropriation of authority.

What can we say about purity and exorcism in this account? We can note at least three things. First, the concepts of death and resurrection are present. Jesus’ overcoming death in this exorcism foreshadows his own death and resurrection. As Shively notes,

Mark connects this healing/exorcism directly to the second passion prediction (9:30-2), inviting the audience to consider one episode in the light of the other. Jesus’ suffering and death will make it appear that those very forces he has overcome repeatedly during his ministry have now hopelessly overpowered him. Just as the boy appeared to be dead by the work of the impure spirit, the Son of Man will appear to be defeated and destroyed when he is crucified (9:31). Just as the lifeless boy rises from ‘death’, Jesus has predicted that the Son of Man, after he is killed, will rise after three days. This narrative connection suggests that the meaning of resurrection is found in the rectification of the defiling and degenerating power of illness and disability, impure spirits, and death itself.³⁹⁰

Secondly, we cannot ignore the role of faith in being cleansed through exorcism. We have seen that faith is important on both sides of a miracle, the suppliant (father) as well as the exorcist (Jesus or disciples).³⁹¹ Gregory Sterling emphasizes the faith dimension for the purposes of discipleship. The failure of the disciples to exorcize (purify) was linked to their decoupling from the source of the power (i.e., Jesus).³⁹² For Clinton Wahlen, however, Christology is the point. He argues for the way faith points not to discipleship, but back to Jesus. The pericope highlights the lack of faith in the various actors to enhance the spectacular *power*

³⁸⁸ Brower, “The Holy One,” 72.

³⁸⁹ Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 665, points out that, unlike the disciples, the father did, in fact, pray.

³⁹⁰ Shively, “Purification of the Body,” 87-88.

³⁹¹ What about the faith status of the victim? Exorcism in Mark, as well as the gospels in general, appears to be a healing miracle that does not involve volition on the part of the victim. The demoniac appears to be either driven to confront Jesus by the demon itself (e.g. Capernaum and Gerasene demoniacs) or else the victim is brought to Jesus by an advocate (family or friends) seeking help.

³⁹² Gegory Sterling, “Jesus as Exorcist: An Analysis of Matthew 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43a,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (October 2004): 485.

and *authority* of Jesus, the “stronger one,” who expels the demon with ease. “Here, as with the first exorcism in Capernaum, Mark’s demonology serves his christology.”³⁹³

Therefore, thirdly, like the Capernaum incident, Jesus’ power and authority are clearly on display. These two exorcisms have important similarities. The scene of the transfiguration prior to this exorcism parallels Jesus’ baptism which preceded the exorcism in the synagogue. In both cases, the holiness and purity of Jesus are revealed through supernatural events. At Jesus’ baptism, the heavens are “torn open” and the Holy Spirit descends upon him. On the mountain Jesus is transformed in dazzling heavenly splendor. Furthermore, both events are followed by a voice from heaven confirming Jesus’ holiness and purity. Both times the voice states that Jesus is God’s son and that God loves him.

Following this glorious display, Jesus descends into chaos and immediately takes control. The heavenly voice had commanded the disciples to listen to Jesus, and that is exactly what the demon does (a deaf and mute demon, at that).³⁹⁴ Thus a display of the holiness and purity of Jesus is followed by authoritative action. As discussed earlier, we have here again an example of the close connection between holiness and purity as they work in tandem. The visible display of purity connotated in the transfiguration on the mountain is followed by the working of cleansing holy power. Once again also, purity and authority go together. Jesus has the power to expel a demon where others failed because of who he is, the holy and pure Son of God.

6. The Beelzebul Controversy (Mark 3:20-35)

We have looked at the role of purity in the four exorcism accounts in Mark. We have shown how Jesus, the Holy One of God and the source of purity, has the power and authority to dispel

³⁹³ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 101-103.

³⁹⁴ See Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 54.

the impure spirits (Capernaum synagogue, epileptic boy). This power and authority therefore allow him to enter and transform any context of *ritual* impurity without fear of defilement (Gerasene demoniac). Furthermore, we have shown that the purity Jesus offers is inclusive in nature, extending even to the *ritually* impure Gentiles (Gerasene demoniac, Syro-Phoenician woman). This purity requires faith to work (epileptic boy, Syro-Phoenician woman), but it overcomes even the greatest form of *ritual* impurity, which is death (Gerasene demoniac, epileptic boy).

All these pericopae point to one specific struggle, that between Jesus and Satan. This becomes clear when we look at the Beelzebul debate. This passage makes plain that impure spirits are tied to Satan himself, the “prince of demons” (3:22). He is the source of all *spirit* impurity. It is this connection to Satan that highlights the *moral* aspect of spirit-impurity, because Satan is behind sin. Satan, as we have shown in chapter two, is no longer portrayed as subservient to God. Rather, he is now the autonomous opponent of God, and so, therefore, are his demons. Demons are rebellious to God, they were created in rebellion, and their goal is rebellion and lawlessness; they seek to draw people away from God. Demons are not just random “nasty creatures” that need to be exterminated. They have a leader, and their leader is God’s enemy. The battle motif is prominent. Jesus, however, displays his opposition to Satan by casting out demons, demonstrating that Satan is his enemy. This is done by the power of the Holy Spirit. Graham Twelftree states, “Jesus was quite conscious that the source of his power-authority for exorcism was in the wholly new eschatological Spirit of God, and not simply in himself or his techniques.”³⁹⁵ The fatal error of the scribes was to attribute Jesus’ power over demons to Satan. This argument Jesus destroys with pure logic – no kingdom divided against

³⁹⁵ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 217.

itself can stand. But the consequence of their error is worse than just poor reasoning; it is an unforgivable *sin*. It is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Essentially Jesus' family share a similar sentiment with that of the scribes. They think he is mad.³⁹⁶ The accusation from the scribes is that his power to exorcise comes from Beelzebul.³⁹⁷ He is quick to point out their faulty logic: "If Satan³⁹⁸ opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come" (3:26).³⁹⁹ This leaves only one other option. Jesus is claiming that his work comes from God. Like the Exodus, Jesus' work involves liberating captives. John Meier draws a comparison to Ex. 8:19. Here Pharaoh's magicians acknowledge the hand of God in the plague of gnats, which they were unable to duplicate by their own magic. Their cry "This is the finger of God" is echoed by Jesus in Luke's version of the Beelzebul controversy (Lk. 11:20). Meier argues that although Mark does not include the comment "finger of God," his use of "divided kingdom" and "divided house" language makes essentially the same point. As in Egypt, so now, God is liberating his people and exorcism is evidence of this. Thus, like Matt. 12:28/Lk. 11:20, the implication also in Mark is that "the kingdom of God has come upon you."⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ "Since madness was often regarded as due to possession by a demon, it is arguable that their judgement on the situation was close to that of the scribes in the next verse." Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 115.

³⁹⁷ All three Synoptics record the accusation that Jesus drives out demons by the power of Beelzebul. Only Mark includes the comment that Jesus is actually possessed (v. 22). Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 104, believes "Beelzebul" is likely from Q, whereas the charge of Jesus being possessed by Beelzebul is from the authentic tradition and not a Markan invention. Also note v. 30 ("He has an impure spirit") connects Satan (Beelzebul) to an impure spirit. Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 140.

³⁹⁸ Mark equates Satan with Beelzebul. Σατανᾶς is a proper name here, which it is not in the Hebrew Bible (Heiser, *Demons*, 76-80) and only very rarely in Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature. However, in rabbinic literature שָׂטָן does commonly appear as a proper name. Collins, *Mark*, 231-232.

³⁹⁹ The "divided kingdom" language that follows this statement suggests Satan has a kingdom and it is in conflict with the kingdom Jesus is proclaiming (cf. Mk. 1:15). Collins, *Mark*, 232.

⁴⁰⁰ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 411-412, 417. "Without using the key phrase "kingdom of God," Mark 3:27 proclaims the same basic reality: through Jesus' exorcisms the God of Israel is even now exercising his rule in the end time by breaking the power of Satan and/or demons and thus liberating his people" (p. 421).

Verse 27 states, “But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house” (ESV). This is the cornerstone of the passage. Satan is the Strong Man; his possessions are the demon-possessed; Jesus is the “stronger one;” Jesus’ ministry involves binding the Strong Man; plundering refers to exorcism.⁴⁰¹ The picture portrays a vigorous wresting of power. Jesus is the “thief,” the aggressor, plundering Satan’s goods. William Lane states: “The expulsion of demons is nothing less than a forceful attack on the lordship of Satan. Jesus’ ability to cast out demons means that one stronger than Satan has come to restrain his activity and to release the enslaved.”⁴⁰² Furthermore,

In the context the parable implies that Jesus’ exorcisms demonstrate the end of the dominion of Satan (cf. 3:24) and the arrival of the dominion of God, an implication that is supported by *Jub.* 5:6, where the binding of the evil angels is parallel to their being “uprooted from all their dominion” (cf. *Jub.* 10:7-8), and is made explicit in the Q parallel (Matt. 12:28/Luke 11:20), where Jesus interprets his exorcisms as a sign that “the dominion of God has come upon you.”⁴⁰³

This binding imagery has parallels to other 2TP literature.⁴⁰⁴ The conquering and liberating language in v. 27 is also reminiscent of the Exodus (as mentioned above) or of references like Is. 49:24-25,⁴⁰⁵ where God frees his people from their captors. These OT passages refer to God, but here Mark is referring to Jesus.⁴⁰⁶ Thus Mark is making a christological statement.⁴⁰⁷ Elizabeth Shively states that Mark speaks in apocalyptic tones,

⁴⁰¹ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 176; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 272, 282.

⁴⁰² Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 143.

⁴⁰³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 282-283.

⁴⁰⁴ 1 Enoch 10:4-5, 11-12; 21:1-6; 54:3-5; 69:28; T. of Levi 18:12; Jub. 10:7-9; Tob. 8:3. Cf. Is. 24:21-22; Rev. 20:1-3; Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4.

⁴⁰⁵ Especially, the LXX uses ισχυοντος (strong man), versus the Hebrew טַרְטָר (tyrant).

⁴⁰⁶ See also similar language in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (e.g., *T. of Jud.* 24; 25:3; *T. of Zeb.* 9:8; *T. of Dan* 5:10-11).

⁴⁰⁷ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 103, 105.

defining Jesus' ministry as a "cosmic conflict." In Mark the "binding" does not refer so much to an eschatological act of judgement; that is still to come. Shively elaborates:

Mark does not describe a history-closing judgment scene but the function of Jesus' exorcisms. In light of Mark's own context, the binding of the strong man most likely refers to the effect of Jesus's exorcisms in fundamentally weakening Satan's realm and guaranteeing its future destruction, rather than to the complete removal of Satan's power in the past or present. The end of Satan's kingdom is inexorably tied to the appearance of God's kingdom, which is imminent rather than fully here (Mark. 1:14-15).⁴⁰⁸

However, Jesus has more to say. Not only are the scribes completely wrong in their assessment, they are held responsible for their failure to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit (vv. 28-29). Far from collusion with Satan, Jesus implies the Holy Spirit as the source of his power. People will be forgiven for all their many sins, says Jesus, "but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin" (v. 29).⁴⁰⁹ That is a very serious charge, and the indictment falls upon the scribes, Ὅτι ἔλεγον⁴¹⁰ Πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον ἔχει (v. 30).⁴¹¹ To continue to attribute to demons the Spirit's work through Jesus is unforgivable.⁴¹²

7. Conclusion

The exorcisms in Mark portray what the Beelzebul controversy spells out. The conflict is indeed cosmic. Kingdoms are at war, but the battle is a *spiritual* battle. More than other miracles, this

⁴⁰⁸ Shively, "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and Mark 3:7-35: Apocalyptic and the Kingdom," in *Reading Mark in Context: Jesus and Second Temple Judaism*, eds. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich and Jason Maston (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 66.

⁴⁰⁹ The New Living Translation renders αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος as "a sin with eternal consequences." See Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 179-180.

⁴¹⁰ Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 146, argues the use of the imperfect tense "implies repetition and a fixed attitude of mind, the tokens of callousness which brought the scribes to the brink of unforgivable blasphemy."

⁴¹¹ Previously, the scribes accused Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebul (v. 22), whereas now the term "impure" spirit is used. The juxtaposition of *impure* spirit with *Holy* spirit here emphasizes a contrast.

⁴¹² A sinner can recognize God's gift of grace and forgiveness and choose to accept or reject it, but to deny God's work as the work of God precludes such a possibility. "One is culpably refusing God's offer and thus sealing one's own eternal judgment by committing the sin for which by definition there can be no forgiveness." Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 180. See also, Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 123 (cf. Is. 5:20; John 9:41).

fact is no more evident than in Jesus' exorcisms. Impure spirits are tied to Satan, and when Jesus exorcizes impure spirits, he defeats Satan. This is done through the power of the Holy Spirit. It was, after all, as France points out, the Holy Spirit that initiated the conflict with Satan (1:12).

France explains:

It is . . . through the Spirit that Jesus is able to overcome demonic power. The "binding" of the ἰσχυρός is being achieved not simply by a man, but by a man in whom the Spirit of God is working. The exorcisms thus reveal the essentially spiritual dimension of the ministry of Jesus.⁴¹³

Demonic possession, then, is a combination of ritual and moral impurity – what we have called *spirit-impurity*. While we have pointed out the obvious ritual impurities in the various exorcisms, the moral aspect of spirit-impurity is the connection to sin: Demons are associated with the rebel Satan, the prince of demons and enemy of God. But what is more, the enslavement to demons, while itself a reality in Mark's narrative, also points to the general enslavement of humanity to sin. Jesus said sin, that is moral impurity, begins in the heart (Mk. 7:20-23). As we pointed out in chapter 3, defilement from sin is the impurity that Jesus cares about the most. The battle with Satan is for Jesus a battle for the human heart. One's allegiance is evident by one's moral behavior (3:35). We will expound on the moral component of demonic possession and exorcism in our next chapter.

⁴¹³ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 174.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analytical Discussion on Purity in Mark's Exorcisms

1. Introduction

From the beginning of Mark's Gospel, the struggle between holiness and impurity is portrayed as an important aspect of Jesus' mission. Jesus is a holy force that overcomes the opposing forces of impurity (ritual, moral, pneumatic) and restores people to a state of purity. Jesus is depicted in Mark as the source and embodiment of purity; we could say Jesus is represented as the epitome of purity. Jesus maintains his purity despite Satan's temptations and this legitimizes his authority as the Holy One of God. Our investigation of Mark's exorcisms has demonstrated that there is indeed a connection to purity. This chapter will be a discussion analyzing our observations regarding purity and its relation to exorcism in Mark's Gospel.

2. Initial Observations

The four exorcism accounts in the Gospel of Mark reveal certain features and patterns. In two exorcisms the demoniac approaches Jesus; in the other two the demoniac is brought to Jesus.⁴¹⁴ The first two exorcisms focus on Jesus; the latter two draw attention to the families of the victims. The first two highlight the exchange between Jesus and the demon(s) and demonstrate Jesus' holiness, power and authority. The last two focus on the interaction between Jesus and the suppliant and serve as occasions in which to demonstrate the importance of faith. Two exorcisms are about the exorcist's power and two are about the suppliant's faith (one has faith, one struggles). Each type occurs both in a Jewish and a Gentile context. The presence of purity is evident in each of the exorcisms, but to varying degrees and from different perspectives. Two

⁴¹⁴ In reality, of course, the Syro-Phoenician's daughter is not physically brought to Jesus, but her mother still beseeches Jesus on her behalf.

exorcisms (Capernaum and Gerasene demoniacs) demonstrate the purity and holiness of the exorcist; two (Syro-Phoenician's daughter and epileptic boy) are about the ability of the victim to be made pure. There are times when faith seems to be required of people seeking purification.

3. "Contagious" Purity

The purity that Jesus brings has been described as "contagious"⁴¹⁵ in regard to its ability to overpower impurity. This may not be the most helpful term, since contagion connotes an uncontrolled spread.⁴¹⁶ In the exorcism accounts, however, Jesus' purity is disseminated in a controlled fashion. It is not automatic. It often involves conflict or struggle in some form, though the final outcome seems never to be in doubt. We have also seen, in the accounts of the epileptic boy and the Syro-Phoenician woman for example, how faith plays a role, both in the exorcist and in those seeking the exorcism. While the contagion of impurity seems to be magnetically drawn to Jesus, it appears that the purification from exorcism comes about through Jesus' intentional words (e.g., ἔξελεθε) and actions (e.g. probing for faith), and only happens when he says so. This suggests that purity is not just some impersonal force spreading uncontrollably and indiscriminately like a virus. Rather, it is wielded by a personal agent. It is a purity that Jesus alone brings through the power of the indwelling Spirit. It is Jesus' identity as the Holy One of God that gives him the authority to do so. Those commissioned to exorcize can only do so in Jesus' name and must not forget their reliance upon the power of Jesus to work through them.

⁴¹⁵ Holmen, "Jesus and the Purity Paradigm," 2709-2744; Bird, "Jesus as Law-Breaker," 24; Garland, "Mishnah Zabim," 87-90; Fletcher-Louise, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah," 64-66; Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics* 134-136; Chilton, *Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Healing*, 58-71.

⁴¹⁶ Contagion suggests that purity spreads, whether we want it or not, like a force. In this study, however, we have endorsed the understanding that purity is a state of being, not a force. The leper in Mk. 1:40-45 knew his healing would not be guaranteed, but only if Jesus was willing ("Εάν θέλης"). The most notable account of what might be considered an "uncontrollable" spread of purity would be the menstruant (Mk. 5). However, even here, her action was intentional and it was her faith that healed her (Mk. 5:34).

4. Inclusivity

The inclusive nature of Jesus' purity refers to the idea that what was available to Israel is now offered to Gentiles as well. This became especially evident when noting the resemblances between the Capernaum and Gerasene exorcism accounts. The context and pattern of the stories, the language and titles used, the nature of the demons' defensive strategies, and the violence of the struggles are similar. Furthermore, the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter follows directly after the purity debate of Mk. 7:1-23 and leads to further miracles in Gentile territory, including the feeding of the 4000 (Mk. 8:1-10). This suggests an equality between Jews and Gentiles; what applies to one applies also to the other. Wahlen notes the fact that the demon is referred to as an "impure spirit," not just for the Jews, as we might expect, but also for the Gentiles. This shows "that purity is most clearly defined in relation to Jesus." The purity paradigm shifts from the Temple and the Law to Jesus. He also calls attention to the ABCB'A' chiastic pattern: The A's delineate the Jewish exorcisms; the B's the Gentile exorcisms; and in the middle is C, the purity debate of Mk. 7:1-23. For Wahlen, this suggests "that fundamentally all four exorcisms are of the same nature. Demons are no respecters of persons. They affect Jews and Gentiles in very similar ways. And despite Jesus' initial rebuff to the Syro-Phoenician woman, deliverance for her daughter is just as total as for Jews."⁴¹⁷ The fact that the Gentile exorcisms employ the same terminology suggests an expansion and inclusion of Gentiles into the realm of Israel.⁴¹⁸

5. Demons, Morality and Death

⁴¹⁷ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 100-101.

⁴¹⁸ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 106-107.

The cause of *spirit-impurity* is not made clear in Mark. Unlike moral, and some forms of ritual impurity, it does not seem to be the fault of the person possessed.⁴¹⁹ Rather the demoniac is portrayed as a helpless and innocent victim.⁴²⁰ Faith is not expected of the victim, but rather of those who come to Jesus on his or her behalf. Indeed, the Synoptic Gospels seem less concerned with the person possessed than with the destructive nature of the demon(s).⁴²¹ The demoniac is not guilty of anything, as far as we can tell.⁴²² Thus Ferguson says that demonic possession is not a moral issue but is in the same category as illness.⁴²³ There is some validity to this. In chapter two we discussed the close connection in the 2TP between demonic possession and disease. This can also be seen in the gospels.⁴²⁴ The case of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, for example, is described as a healing in Matt. 15:28. So also Luke's account of the epileptic boy (Lk. 9:42). The irrational behavior and emotional outbursts that we see in the Capernaum and Gerasene demoniacs resemble the symptoms of madness or mental illness. Even Jesus' seeming paranoia was labelled demonic possession (John 7:20). Still, despite the overlap, demonic possession is distinguishable from illness, especially in Mark. For example, unlike healings, faith plays no role on the part of the victim.⁴²⁵ Also, terminology is different. Wahlen states, "The exorcisms in Mark, unlike Matthew and Luke, are consistently distinguished from the healing of disease by the explicit mention of a demon or spirit and by the use of ἐξέρχεται

⁴¹⁹ However, in 2TP works such as the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, there is the suggestion that one's susceptibility to possession is correlated with one's ethical behavior (or lack thereof). Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 50-52. (E.g., *T. of Jud.* 20:1-2; *T. of Naph.* 8:6; *T. of Benj.* 3:3-4; 5:2.)

⁴²⁰ "Jesus did not consider the demons as having any rightful possession of human beings." Ferguson, *Demonology*, 27. See also Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 126-127.

⁴²¹ Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 125-127.

⁴²² Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 80, state that "unclean" does not in the context of demon possession refer to a moral fault "but rather something that is opposed to the 'holy.'"

⁴²³ Ferguson, *Demonology*, 27-28.

⁴²⁴ E.g., deafness and dumbness (Matt. 9:32-34; 12:22-24; Lk. 11:24-26); woman with the bent back (Lk. 13:10-17). See Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 124-125.

⁴²⁵ Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 127.

or ἐκβάλλειν rather than θεραπεύειν.”⁴²⁶ J. Michaels also contends that in the Markan summary statements (Mk. 1:32-34, 39; 3:10-12) healings and exorcisms, while described together, are kept distinct. Mark never describes demoniacs as “healed.”⁴²⁷ Furthermore, physical disease does not explain the special knowledge of the demons regarding Jesus’ identity (Mk. 1:24, 34; 3:11-12; 5:7).

Therefore, contrary to Ferguson, we contend that spirit-impurity *is* a moral issue. This is because of its connection to sin and Satan. The sin component, however, is not portrayed as something for which humans are culpable but by which they are enslaved. Demons draw people away from, and in rebellion to, God. This rebellion, this sin, can only lead to destruction. In the Beelzebul controversy, it is suggested that possession by an impure spirit means the demoniac is in bondage to Satan. This stands as more than a metaphor to the human bondage to sin, from which Jesus came to ransom humanity (Mk. 10:45). Satan, as God’s enemy, seeks to destroy God’s creation; his goal is death. Jerome Neyrey states, “Death is the ultimate sign of the power of sin and Satan. It means irrevocable uncleanness.”⁴²⁸ And so death itself could be conceived as a moral consequence. What we have seen in both chapters three and four is that Mark reflects the ancient Jewish belief that impurity is tied specifically to death.⁴²⁹ While Milgrom was referring to ritual impurity, in Mark, all impurities (ritual, moral, pneumatic) point to death. It is, as Shively writes, “the common factor that joins all impurity.”⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits*, 88. See also, Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism*, 135.

⁴²⁷ Michaels, “Jesus and the Unclean Spirits,” 48-49.

⁴²⁸ Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity,” 114.

⁴²⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 766-768; 1001-1003.

⁴³⁰ Shively, “Purification of the Body,” 74.

The Levitical purity rituals were, in Milgrom's words, a symbolic system.⁴³¹ In exorcism, however, the ritual has become reality. What ritual impurity gestured towards is present in demons. Even a corpse (the source of the greatest impurity) is not death's truest form. Death, after all, is ultimately not cessation of existence. Rather it could also be understood as a kind of separation – separation from God.⁴³² Adam and Eve were the first to experience this as soon as they ate the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3). Thus, when one encounters a demon, one is in the presence of the clearest manifestation of both sin and death; “sin” and “death” could also be called “rebellion” and “separation.” The demonic realm, which Milgrom believed the priestly author had so successfully eviscerated, has returned. But it is not an even battle. Unlike the myriad of benevolent and malevolent spiritual beings among ancient Israel's neighbors, all competing for their respective sides of “good” and “evil,” Mark continues in the Enochic tradition. Evil is not the equal and opposite force of good; it is good that has gone bad. It is the idea of rebellion and the ensuing corruption which needs to be made right, and this is what Jesus has come to do. What was once pure has been contaminated by impurity and needs to be purified.

We have talked about Jesus' preference for moral purity because he is most concerned with removing barriers to relationship. In Mark 7:15-23 Jesus is placing the source of defilement in the heart. The heart is what controls ethical behavior, and sinful attitudes of the heart lead to actions that destroy human relationships. Jesus says that nothing from the outside going into a person defiles. However, demons defile, and they come from the outside. Unlike food that goes through the digestive system, demons do not bypass the heart. From all appearances they seem

⁴³¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 13.

⁴³² Death as a separation from God is a category both in this life (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13) and the next (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 13:37-43, 47-50; 25:31-46; Lk. 16:19-31; Rev. 20:11-15). Impurity cannot share the same space as holiness; they must be kept separate.

to enter the heart and pollute it with rage and self-loathing. They also cloud the mind, creating confusion and loss of insight. We do not see evidence in Mark's Gospel of demons performing the grave moral sins of H,⁴³³ nor of affecting human relationships through the sinful attitudes of the heart listed in 7:21-22. Demoniacs do not act in ways that are ethically harmful to others.⁴³⁴ But demons still corrupt. Their corruption is focused on destroying the host through self-harm, and the loved ones of the victim are powerless. Thus, the pain and alienation caused by demonic possession is the death of relationships nonetheless.

Milgrom states, "Purification is neither healing nor theurgy. The afflicted person undergoes purification only after being cured. . . The adjective used is 'purified,' not 'cured'; the verb 'cure' never appears in the ritual."⁴³⁵ In Mark, however, Jesus is the cure. This is the main thesis of Matthew Thiessen's book.⁴³⁶ Jesus removes the actual *source* of the impurity. The purification "rite" of exorcism is performative, not just declarative or symbolic. It is not merely a religious act, but a therapeutic one.⁴³⁷ Demonic possession is what separation from God (i.e. death) looks like;⁴³⁸ it is the personification of sin and death, and only the power of God through the Holy Spirit can liberate from death.

6. The Kingdom of God

The exorcisms in Mark, as we have seen, serve a christological purpose. As the Holy (and Pure) One of God, Jesus has authority over unclean spirits. It is the Beelzebul controversy, however, that sheds light on the eschatological aspect. Here Jesus makes explicit his opposition to Satan,

⁴³³ That is, sexual sin, idolatry, and bloodshed, which we see connected with Satan and demons in 2TP literature (*Jub.* 10:1-2; 11:4; *1 Enoch* 99:7; CD 4:14-18; Tob. 3:8).

⁴³⁴ Although this does happen elsewhere in the NT (e.g., Acts 19:16).

⁴³⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 9.

⁴³⁶ Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2020.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 133.

⁴³⁸ The fact that, in the Enochic tradition, God plays no part in the creation of evil spirits (they come from an unauthorized union of angels and women) underscores the extent of their alienation from God.

and his Strong Man statement in 3:27 points to Satan's ultimate defeat. Jesus' exorcisms constitute evidence that he is not in league with Satan but is his opponent. His exorcisms are the work of the Holy Spirit. The use of terms such as "prince of demons" and "kingdom" in 3:22, 24 help to broaden the scope of Jesus' exorcisms. Twelftree points out that, while others would not recognize it, Jesus himself uniquely drew the eschatological implications of his own exorcisms.⁴³⁹ He states, "Jesus is the first to make a specific connection between the relatively ordinary events of exorcism and the defeat of Satan, between exorcism and eschatology."⁴⁴⁰ Jesus' attitude to impurity is best understood by his view of God's coming reign (as per his proclamation in Mk. 1:15) and the exorcisms signify the in-breaking of the kingdom of God (Mk. 3:20-34).⁴⁴¹ As Kazen states,

Without polarizing present and future aspects of the kingdom, it is possible to argue that Jesus' miracles in general and his exorcisms in particular were understood as power struggles, paving the way for, or signalling the coming of God's eschatological reign.⁴⁴²

More than ritual compliance or receiving healing from physical disease, exorcism portrays most vividly the spiritual reality behind the struggle between life and death. It is a struggle between the holy and the impure, between Jesus and Satan. Jesus has the power to defeat Satan's kingdom and advance God's kingdom.

7. Impurity vs. Sin

In the opening chapter of this study, we discussed the concern of some scholars, such as Paula Fredriksen, Cecilia Wassen, E. P. Sanders and Jonathan Klawans, not to conflate the categories of sin and impurity. The Levitical purity laws of P are not to be confused with sin. When one

⁴³⁹ Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 173; 182-189; 215; 219-220.

⁴⁴⁰ Twelftree, "Demons, Devil, Satan," 168.

⁴⁴¹ Chilton, "An Exorcism of History," 225.

⁴⁴² Kazen, *Jesus and Purity* Halakhah, 338. Cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 404-423.

contracts impurity, this is not a sin, and the antidote is not repentance and atonement, but ritual purification. However, ritual impurity is also more than just a “fact of life.”⁴⁴³ In the Pentateuch, God is presented as desiring his people to be a holy people and this was one of the purposes of the Levitical Law (Lev. 11:44-45). Before one can be holy one must be pure. While arguing that ritual impurity itself was not sinful, we are still reminded that not to purify oneself is sinful.⁴⁴⁴ If ritual impurity was “harmless,”⁴⁴⁵ then why should it be sinful not to purify oneself as soon as possible? Anything that keeps a person from worship (i.e., entering the Temple), that ostensibly keeps one from God, cannot be a good thing. Therefore, while ritual impurity may not be “sin” in the sense of a culpable moral failing or disobedience to God, it seems clear from P that ritual impurity was something to be avoided and/or corrected as soon as possible.⁴⁴⁶ Sin and impurity already seem to be linked in Mark’s opening with John the Baptist’s (who may or may not have been an Essene) “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Here we have impurity (purification ritual) tied to sin (repentance and forgiveness). Jesus underwent this baptism. But further connections are found in demonic possession. The fact that Mark refers to demons as impure spirits underscores the gravity of impurity. Impurity *was* a serious matter in Palestine.⁴⁴⁷ Milgrom insists that the Levitical purity code is a symbolic system. He believes the common theme among the bodily impurities is that they “stand for the forces of death.”⁴⁴⁸ According to Genesis 3, death is the consequence of sin. And so, sin and impurity *are* connected. Their common denominator is death and this connection is manifested in demonic possession. Instead of using the terms “sin” and “impurity,” we have, for the purposes of clarity,

⁴⁴³ As Fredriksen calls it. Fredriksen, “Did Jesus Oppose Purity Laws?”, 23.

⁴⁴⁴ E.g., Num. 19:20.

⁴⁴⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 9.

⁴⁴⁶ Would it be going too far, then, to think of ritual ablutions as a form repentance in some sense?

⁴⁴⁷ Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 452-453.

⁴⁴⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 128-130. See also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 767.

made use of Klawans' taxonomy of *ritual* and *moral* impurity. What we are suggesting, therefore, is that in spirit-impurity (demonic possession), ritual and moral impurity do coincide. What P symbolizes becomes reality in spirit-impurity. These categories coalesce in *spirit-impurity* because it personifies sin and death.⁴⁴⁹

8. Moral Purity over Ritual Purity As a Change in Focus

It was argued in chapter three that Mark's Jesus is more interested in moral purity than ritual purity. Scholars such as Dunn, Kazen, and Shively consider Jesus to be "indifferent" to matters of ritual purity. Kazen, for example, attributes this to Jesus' "moral trajectory."

I have suggested that Jesus was part of a moral trajectory which placed relative importance on ethics, that he had a pragmatic, rural or locally based attitude, which did not allow purity rules to intervene with social network, table fellowship, and community, and that his eschatological outlook made impurity subordinate to the kingdom.⁴⁵⁰

Matthew Thiessen begs to differ.⁴⁵¹ Like Paula Fredriksen, Cecilia Wassen and others, Thiessen argues that ritual impurity was still very important to the Jesus of the gospels and he remained an observant Jew. Thiessen contends, however, that the Synoptic authors recognized that God had introduced something new in dealing with ritual impurity, namely Jesus. Instead of the priestly defensive measures to deal with the consequences of impurity as they arose, Jesus represented an offensive force to eliminate the actual cause of impurity.⁴⁵²

By inserting a new, mobile, and powerfully contagious force of holiness into the world in the person of Jesus, Israel's God has signaled the very coming of the kingdom – a kingdom of holiness and life that throughout the mission of Jesus overwhelms the forces and sources of impurity and death, be they pneumatic, ritual or moral. Through his

⁴⁴⁹ While illness can also be correlated with sin (e.g. as punishment), this is not consistently a causal relationship. When it is, the illness can still be distinguished from the sin that caused it. That is, the illness itself is not sin. Demonic possession is different, however. It is never in question in Mark's Gospel as to what is behind it and how it affects the victim.

⁴⁵⁰ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 347.

⁴⁵¹ Thiessen's main argument is that, far from being "indifferent" to ritual purity, Jesus cared so much that he got rid of the very *source* of impurity. Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 179.

⁴⁵² Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 180.

narrative of Jesus's life, Mark repeatedly depicts Jesus overcoming impurity after impurity. This dramatic story culminates in Jesus facing off with death itself in his crucifixion, taking ritual impurity into his very own body, only once again and with finality to come out victorious when Israel's God raises him from the dead.⁴⁵³

This is an important point. In the end, we might argue, whether or not Jesus complied with ritual purity, he was bringing change. He was bringing something new. This, according to Mark, is what is so unique about Jesus. In chapter three we struggled with the possibility that Jesus, as a Jew, could abrogate the Law. But if Mark tells us anything, it is that Jesus is bringing something radically new, something that cannot be contained in old wineskins.⁴⁵⁴ What he was bringing was nothing short of the advancement of the kingdom of God. His actions in the temple, his predictions of its looming destruction, his claims to be the bridegroom whose presence makes fasting nonsensical, his exorcizing demons and ultimately his resurrection from the dead all point to a shifting paradigm with Jesus himself at the center, not the Temple, nor the Law.

9. Exorcism as a Purification Ritual: Sin, Forgiveness, and Israel's Restoration

In chapter two we pointed out the association of demons to both disease and death as well as the connection between possession, sin and impurity. This, combined with the fact that Mark refers to demons as "impure spirits," creates a strong connection between exorcism and Jesus' attitude toward impurity.⁴⁵⁵ Framing the exorcisms in the category of impurity thus suggests that exorcisms themselves are also a kind of purification rite or ritual. In the words of Todd Klutz:

There is thus a strong likelihood that Jesus, and many of his Jewish contemporaries, saw the demons of affliction as impure spirits. At least one implication can be confidently drawn about his exorcisms: they ought to be seen as, among other things, rituals of

⁴⁵³ Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 179.

⁴⁵⁴ Mk. 2:21-22. "The eschatological newness of Jesus' mission cannot be contained within the old structures of Judaism." Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 238. Cf. Mk. 1:27; 2:12b; 4:41. Robert Banks, in his analysis of Jesus and the Law in the Synoptics, argues that Jesus, while not abrogating the Law, is transcending it. Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 242-245.

⁴⁵⁵ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 338.

purification which, symbolically and paradoxically, both assumed the validity of the demonology-impurity semiotic system and simultaneously flouted it.⁴⁵⁶

Spirit-impurity is not removed by ritual ablutions or ceremonial rites, as in ritual impurity. It is not removed by repentance and sacrificial atonement, like moral impurity. It is removed by exorcism, in which the Holy Spirit removes impure spirits. As previously discussed in chapter four, Steffen Joris has argued, based on connections between Zech. 13:2 and the exorcisms in Mark, that exorcism is itself a purification of sorts. It is a cleansing from both sin and impurity. Joris opines:

“Given the prominent Markan interest in messianic passages from Zechariah, it seems more than probable that the Markan narrator implicitly referred to the one occurrence of ‘unclean spirit’ in the Hebrew Bible, namely Zech. 13:2. . . . This link provides a new Christological view on Markan demonology. Jesus’ victory over ‘unclean spirits’ in Mark refers to a Messiah that provides a general cleansing from “sin” and “impurity” Therefore . . . πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον represents a general impurity, predominantly connected to sin, that needs cleansing.”⁴⁵⁷

However, in this purification ritual, there are further moral implications. This cleansing, according to Peter Bolt, comes in the form of *forgiveness*. Here we have another connection between exorcism of impure spirits and sin. Mark’s opening reference to Is. 40:3 is important as it highlights Isaiah’s expectation for salvation for Israel through the Lord’s Servant (Is. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). This Servant, in the power of God’s Spirit (Is. 42:1), “would be an atoning sacrifice . . . bringing about the new covenant and issuing in the new era, the age of the new creation.”⁴⁵⁸ Jesus, as the Lord’s Servant, brings about the restoration of Israel. Bolt explains:

⁴⁵⁶ Todd Klutz, “The Grammar of Exorcism in the Ancient Mediterranean World: Some Cosmological, Semantic, and Pragmatic Reflections on How Exorcistic Prowess Contributed to the Worship of Jesus,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, edited by C. C. Newman, H. J. R. Davila and G. S. Lewis, 156-165. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, Vol. 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 163.

⁴⁵⁷ Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit,’” 66.

⁴⁵⁸ Bolt, “With a View,” 55.

The clear Isaianic backdrop to Mark's opening paragraph indicates that Israel is portrayed as, in some sense, still in exile, i.e. they remain under God's judgement for their sins, awaiting the forgiveness that would come through the death of the Servant of the Lord. Since John is announced as the voice crying in the desert, it means that the Servant is about to arrive, bringing the long-awaited forgiveness of sins to the nation, which would then flow over to the rest of the world.⁴⁵⁹

Bolt argues that Israel's greatest sin was idolatry, that is, the worship of demons.⁴⁶⁰

Therefore the cleansing (i.e. forgiveness) of this sin from the fountain mentioned in Zech. 13:1 would be the removal of the idols and the unclean spirits (Zech. 13:2). Both sin and impurity are cleansed. Thus the removal of unclean spirits by Jesus in Mark is a manifestation of God's forgiveness. For Bolt, then, *forgiveness is the removal of unclean spirits*.⁴⁶¹ Referencing Mk. 2:10-11, Bolt claims that Jesus' authority, as demonstrated in his healings and exorcisms, validates his authority to forgive sins.⁴⁶² This cleansing/forgiveness is already predicted by John's "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," which Bolt says points to the forgiveness that Jesus brings.⁴⁶³

10. Release from Bondage

And finally, on a slightly different angle on sin, we move from the idea of guilt to bondage. Spirit-impurity (i.e. demonic possession) is the clearest portrayal of bondage to sin. Jesus does for victims what they cannot do for themselves. Jesus' imparting of purity is part of Mark's larger theme of atonement in which Jesus takes on the consequences of sin (death and separation

⁴⁵⁹ Bolt, "With a View," 56.

⁴⁶⁰ Bolt, "With a View," 61. Cf. LXX Deut. 32:17; Is. 65:3, 11.

⁴⁶¹ Bolt, "With a View," 61-62.

⁴⁶² Bolt, "With a View," 59-65.

⁴⁶³ Bolt, "With a View," 55, 68. Bolt argues εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν should be understood as "with a view to" the forgiveness of sins. "John's baptism did not actually impart forgiveness – but it was an action attached to a repentance which was preparatory for the forgiveness of sins promised by the prophet and expected to arrive sometime in the future. Given the rest of John's message, it is natural to link the arrival of forgiveness with the arrival of the one who was to follow him, and who would baptize in the Holy Spirit (1:7-8)" (p. 55).

from God) resulting in cleansing (forgiveness) from sin. In the spiritual battle of exorcism victims of spirit-impurity are liberated. Unlike moral and, in some cases, ritual impurity, there is less emphasis on personal culpability. Rather, spirit-impurity involves the idea of bondage. The demoniac is portrayed as a slave to Satan. Jesus liberates the victim by defeating Satan in exorcism. With each exorcism, Mark's Jesus seems to be pointing to another liberation. The cross is foreshadowed. Liberation from demonic possession points to Jesus' defeat of Satan in his resurrection from the dead. As a victim is in bondage to the demon(s), so humanity is in bondage to sin. Jesus, in Mark, speaks to the manner in which he will free humanity from bondage to sin by the term "ransom." Mark 10:45 states that Jesus came to serve "and to give his life as a *ransom* [λύτρον] for many." The term λύτρον suggests paying a price to liberate those who do not have the power to free themselves.⁴⁶⁴ In Jesus' death and resurrection he robbed Satan, the Strong Man, of his greatest power, the power of death. In such a way he has liberated mankind from the power of sin and death. Again, freedom from sin (purification) must come from Jesus. Elizabeth Shively argues that in Mark, Jesus' exorcisms (and his healings) "anticipate Jesus' resurrection from the dead, which pioneers the purification of the body at the turn of the ages."⁴⁶⁵ By this resurrection Jesus overcomes death, the greatest impurity. Undergoing exorcism then becomes a kind of movement from death to life.

⁴⁶⁴ "Price of release." BDAG, s.v. "λύτρον."

⁴⁶⁵ Shively, "Purification of the Body," 63.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

In our second chapter we discussed the rise of demonic references in 2TP Jewish literature in contrast to its paucity in the Hebrew Bible. This increased interest in demons and its association with uncleanness was accompanied by an eschatological hope for a reordering and transformation of the world. This hope was at times attached to an expectation of a messianic deliverer.⁴⁶⁶ Regarding the literature of this period Ferguson writes,

Demonic activity was expected to continue until God overthrows evil. It was a common feature of the expectation concerning the messianic age that the power of demons would be broken at that time. God's Elect One will sit on his throne of glory and judge . . . There was a strong conviction about and earnest expectation for an age in which Satan would be bound and his power broken. That is the part with the most important contact with Christianity.⁴⁶⁷

The orientation toward the spiritual realm that characterized the apocalyptic literature of this time gave it a unique perspective on future events, compared to that of biblical prophecy.⁴⁶⁸ Attention was less on this world, and more on the heavenly world.⁴⁶⁹ Battles were not only between earthly empires, but also between the spiritual forces of good and evil. Apocalyptic eschatology connected earthly events to cosmic struggles, and while the biblical prophets looked to the restoration of Israel, apocalyptic literature hoped in the "transcendence of death."⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 20.

⁴⁶⁷ Ferguson, *Demonology*, 80, 95 (see pp. 74-81, 94-95).

⁴⁶⁸ John Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death," *CBQ* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1974): 21-43.

⁴⁶⁹ It has been suggested that this shift in focus from the earthly to the cosmic and eschatological realm in the 2TP was due in part to a growing post-exilic loss in confidence for God to intervene in history. Israel continued to live under foreign hegemony, which reached a crisis point under Antiochus Epiphanes. See J. H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 64-69; Richard Bauckham, *The Jewish World Around the New Testament* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 53-64. Bauckham states the function of apocalyptic was "to counter fatalistic despair" (p. 63).

⁴⁷⁰ "By its focus on heavenly, supernatural realities it provides a possibility that the human life can transcend death, not merely by the future generations of the nation but by passing to the higher, heavenly sphere. It is this hope for the transcendence of death which is the distinctive character of apocalyptic over against prophecy." Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology," 30. (E.g., Dan. 12:2-3.)

Mark's Jesus offers this, but in a way unexpected. The future breaks into the present in the life and work of Jesus. This portrayal of Jesus contributed to the later Christian conviction that he entered this world and presented a transcendence of sorts, the firstfruits or foretaste of a liberation from death by his victory over the one who holds the power of death. In Mark's Gospel, this cosmic victory is exemplified in Jesus' exorcisms.

In Mark, we have seen the purity of Jesus contrasted with impurity in its various manifestations (moral, ritual, pneumatic). Holiness and purity, as we have maintained, are significantly connected. Jesus is "the Holy One of God," and so he is also the "Pure One." Jesus' power and authority to exorcize come from the holiness that is in him, as he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As Milgrom's binary model suggests, holiness cannot dwell with impurity.⁴⁷¹ Jesus, according to Thiessen, is the dynamic force of holiness which uniquely overcomes the opposing force of impurity in order to restore purity.⁴⁷² But, as Harrington argues, holiness can only be active in a state of purity.⁴⁷³ Holiness and purity in a sense appear to have a kind of symbiotic relationship: holiness requires the state of purity it produces. While Satan attempted to defile Jesus' purity, he was unsuccessful. We have established that purity is important in the Gospel of Mark, right from the first chapter. It is significant, therefore, that, as the Holy One of God, Jesus' first miracle is an exorcism and it suggests a link between purity and exorcism. The goal of this study was to understand and explain this connection. In Mark's Gospel, the basic relationship between the purity that Jesus brings and the exorcism of impure spirits is this: *purity is the condition which makes exorcism possible*. But the force of holiness is still needed to exorcize. This is where the Holy Spirit comes in. The Holy Spirit is Jesus' source of holiness; it

⁴⁷¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 616-617; 732-733.

⁴⁷² Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 179.

⁴⁷³ Harrington, *Holiness*, 173.

is his source of power and authority to exorcize, and purity is the condition in which the Holy Spirit can be an active force.

How, then, does this relationship between purity and exorcism inform our understanding of the idea of (im)purity in the Gospel of Mark? “What the narrative arc of Mark’s Gospel suggests is that readers must understand that Jesus is involved in a broadscale purification mission.”⁴⁷⁴ Jesus purified people of various forms of impurity, including physical (e.g., healing from blindness, lameness, etc.), ritual (e.g., healing of *lepra*), moral (e.g., forgiving sins), and pneumatic (exorcism). What Jesus is doing is restoring wholeness by removing barriers. Once made whole, people are free to follow Jesus (or not). And so exorcisms are part of this process. However, more than rituals of cleansing or atonement, Mark’s exorcisms most vividly portray the spiritual forces of life and death behind the concepts of purity and impurity. Exorcism reveals the struggle, it removes the veil. The conditions of ritual impurity can sometimes portray an almost impersonal, blind, and neutral force that encroaches wherever there is a vacuum of purity. Demonic possession, however, has a will. It is a conscious, intentional, malevolent force directed by Satan. Mark’s exorcisms and his account of the Beelzebul controversy uncover the Agent behind spirit-impurity. Through exorcism we glimpse another dimension, a spiritual dimension, and its direct impact on life in this world. Mark’s exorcisms are a struggle between purity and impurity. As van Oyen states, they are, at one level, “hard confrontations between demons and Jesus.” But more than that “the real confrontation takes place on a deeper and more encompassing level. It is the struggle of God versus Satan.”⁴⁷⁵ The exorcisms are a battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil, between life and death. Earlier we upheld

⁴⁷⁴ Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 178.

⁴⁷⁵ Van Oyen, “Demons and Exorcisms,” 112.

Klawans' distinction between ritual and moral impurity, but it can now be seen that they are ultimately connected. While the Levitical law sought to "manage" these conditions through rites of atonement and purification, in Mark's exorcisms Jesus both reveals and removes the spiritual source of this corruption.

Purity, as defined by Jesus in Mark's Gospel, is more than ritual practice. It is more than healing from disease, whether the illness is caused by sin, possession, or natural factors. Purity is also more than morality. As vividly portrayed in Mark, to be pure is to have life.⁴⁷⁶ Furthermore, to be pure is not only to have physical wholeness, but also spiritual wholeness (forgiveness of sins). We referred earlier to Peter Bolt's interpretation of Mark's connection with Zech. 13:2. Here both sin and impurity are "cleansed." As mentioned earlier, according to Bolt, Israel's great sin was idolatry, which was the worship of demons.⁴⁷⁷ Bolt has stated that in Mark the cleansing which comes from Jesus' exorcisms *is* forgiveness of sins.⁴⁷⁸ If death is the consequence of sin (Gen. 3) then the removal of sin would be the restoration of life. In this sense, the idea of purity in the Gospel of Mark reflects life itself, imparted through Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Exorcism, then, is a purification rite that moves people from death to life.

⁴⁷⁶ Harrington states that holiness is life. Harrington, *Holiness*, 39. Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 733, "If [טמא] 'impure' stands for the forces of death, then [קדש] 'holy' stands for the forces of life." Perhaps we could nuance this somewhat by saying that purity is life, and holiness is its force.

⁴⁷⁷ Bolt, "With a View," 61.

⁴⁷⁸ Bolt, "With a View," 61-62.

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