1.0 Pervasive Importance of This Topic

In the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures we often read of some thing, person or place labelled as "unclean," "common" and "polluted." In regard to foods, Israelites prohibited the eating of certain animals (Lev 11). When Peter saw the contents of the sheet lowered from heaven and was told to eat of those animals, he responded "I have never eaten anything common or unclean" (Acts 10:14). Paul twice wrote to communities in which some members considered certain foods permissible and others proscribed (1 Cor 8 and 10; Rom 14-15). Someone who ate food labelled "unclean" could himself be "defiled" (1 Cor 8:7). Paul himself stated, "I know. . .that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for any one who thinks it is unclean" (Rom 14:14). Pharisees became mightily upset that Jesus or his disciples ate with "unclean" hands (Luke 11:38; Mark 7:2-4). For his part, Jesus criticized as hypocritical the Pharisaic concern with concern for the cleanness of the "outside" of the cup (Matt 25:25-26). And Jesus himself shocked the Pharisees when he "declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19). What is meant when people label foods "clean" or "unclean"? This is clearly not a matter of hygiene or concern for viral or bacterial contamination. Why are people who eat unclean foods themselves considered as "defiled"?

In regard to the physical body, moreover, priests in Leviticus are expected to examine and declare whether certain persons are "clean" and so fit to stand and worship or whether they are "unclean" and so are to be excluded (Lev 13; see Mark 1:44). Much attention is given to the skin and surface of the body, but also to its wholeness as a condition for access to holy space and holy tasks. For example, according to Lev 21:16-21, priests with certain bodily defects may not function in the temple. This prescription extended beyond the ranks of priests and labelled the outsiders to the group (see 1 QSa 2:3-10 and 1 QM 7:4-7). It is precisely these folk whom Jesus commanded be invited to table (Luke 14:13-14, 21). In several places, Josephus recorded a fight between two high priests, one of whom mutilated his opponent and so disqualified him from further priestly service:

Hyrcanus threw himself at the feet of Antigonus, who with his own teeth lacerated his suppliant's ears, in order to disqualify him for ever, under any change of circumstances, from resuming the high priesthood;
since freedom from physical defect (holoklerous) is essential to the holder of that office (B.J. 1.269-270; see Ant. 14.366; B.J. 5.228).

Philo also explained the law of physical integrity, which, because of its importance for this study, we cite in full:

"With regard to the priests there are the following laws. It is ordained that the priest should be perfectly sound throughout, without any bodily deformity. No part, that is, must be lacking or have been mutilated, nor on the other hand redundant, whether the excrescence be congenital or an aftergrowth due to disease. Nor must the skin have been changed into a leprous state or into malignant tatters or warts or any other eruptive growth (Sp. Leg. 1.80; see also 1.117).

Why were such people labelled "unclean" and why should this exclude them from priestly service in the temple? The issue is hardly one of handicapped inability to perform the tasks.

In regard to Jesus, the mighty deeds of this prophet included the casting out of "unclean" spirits (Mark 1:23; 3:11; Luke 6:18; 9:42). One might ask why the evangelist labelled the demon "unclean"? does this add anything to our perception of it? Moreover, the leper asked Jesus to make him "clean," not simply to heal him (Mark 1:40-42). Although the menstruating woman in Mark 5:24-35 is not labelled "unclean," that would have been the common perception of the bystanders. Jairus' daughter, who was dead when Jesus came to her (Mark 5:35-42) was unclean and all who touched her would become unclean as well, since death is one of the "Fathers of Uncleanliness." Jesus' critics cannot credit him with the holy role of a prophet when he has bodily contact with a public sinner woman (Luke 7:39). A wide variety of issues and problems, then, are connected with the language of "unclean," "common" and "polluted" in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

Furthermore, besides attending to "unclean" and "polluted" and "common," we should ask what is meant by the label "holy," especially when applied to God ("Be ye holy as I am holy," Lev 11:44-45; 1 Pet 1:16). Paul stated that the will of God is our "sanctification" (1 Thess 4:3), which he clarified by adding, "God has not called us for uncleanness but in holiness" (4:7). To be holy as God is holy, ancient Jews performed extensive washing rites. The water which Jesus turned into wine was in jars kept there "for purification" (John 2:6). We read of controversy between disciples of John the Baptist and other Jews "over purification" (John 4:25). But why are certain persons and objects declared "pure"? It is more than their being separated and consecrated for temple use.

Although we mentioned three contrasting pairs of labels, "pure and profane," "clean and unclean," and "pure and polluted," the semantic word field for this topic is very broad and includes the following terms (Neyrey 1990:54-55 and 1991:275-76).

A. Terms for "Purity":

1. clean, to cleanse, cleanness (katharos, katharizô, katharismos): Luke 2:22; 5:12; 11:41; Acts 10:15; 15:9; Rom 14:20; 2 Cor 7:1


3. pure, to purify, purity (hagnos, hagnizô, hagnotes): Acts 21:24, 26; 24:18; 2 Cor 6:6; 7:11; 11:2,3; Phil 4:8

4. holy, to make holy, holiness (hagios, hagiazô, hagiotês, hagiasmos):
hagiazô: Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; 7:14; 1 Thess 5:23

hagiasmos: Rom 6:19, 22; 1 Cor 1:30; 1 Thess 4:3,4,7

hagios: Rom 1:7; 7:12; 8:27; 11:26; 12:1,13; 15:25; 16:2; 1 Cor 1:2; 3:17; 16:1, 15, 20; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1; 13:12; Phil 1:1; 4:21-22; 1 Thess 3:13; 5:26-27; Philm 5.7 (references to "Holy" Spirit not included)

5. innocent (akeraios): Matt 10:16; Rom 16:19; Phil 2:5

6. spotless (amiantos): Heb 7:26; 13:4; Jas 1:27; 1 Pet 1:4

7. unstained (aspilos): Jas 1:27; 1 Pet 1:19; 2 Pet 3:14

8. blameless (amômos): Eph 1:4; 5:27; Phil 2:15; Col 1:22; 1 Pet 1:19

9. blameless (anegklêtos): 1 Cor 1:8; Col 1:22; 1 Tim 3:10; Titus 1:6-7

10. faultless (anepilêmptos): 1 Tim 3:2; 5:7; 6:14

11. innocent (anemtôs): Phil 2:1; 3:6; 1 Thess 2:10; 3:13; 5:23

12. innocent (athôos): Matt 27:4, 24

13. innocent (akakos): Rom 16:18; Heb 7:26

B. Terms for "Pollution":

1. defilement, to defile (miasmos, miainô, miasma): John 18:28; Titus 1:15; 2 Pet 2:10, 20

2. defilement, to defile (molusmos, molunô): 1 Cor 8:7; 2 Cor 7:1; Rev 3:4

3. unclean (akathartos, akartharsia):

akatharsia: Rom 1:24; 6:19; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; 1 Thess 2:3; 4:7

akathartos: 1 Cor 7:14; 2 Cor 6:17; Eph 5:5


5. stain, (momos): 2 Pet 2:13


Rom 14:14


Even this should be expanded to include labels such as "whole" or "divided" and "complete" or "incomplete" (Elliott 1993:71-72).
The positive labels ("holy," "clean," and "pure") and the negative ones ("profane," "unclean," and "polluted") are pervasive through the Christian scriptures and the literature of second-temple Judaism. They serve, moreover, as potent weapons which can include or exclude. They pertain to the fundamental ways in which Jesus, Paul, James and other Jews perceived and classified persons and things in their world.

Yet what do they really mean? why are they so potent? so pervasive? This readers guide offers a survey of pertinent literature which aims at equipping a reader of Hebrew and Christian scriptures to appreciate these labels in terms of the culture of the ancient writers. Thus when we examine these labels, we will not simply be conducting a word study, but looking at the broad cultural system which finds expression in these terms. That broad cultural context, or symbolic universe, will be called a "purity system."

For those unfamiliar with the topic, there may indeed be some confusion in the terminology just noted and in the very idea of examining "clean" and "unclean" together. In the literature, all of the above words and terms tend to be understood and discussed under the general rubric of "the language of purity." This is so partly because the discussion has been shaped by concentration on the term "purity" in the Hebrew Scriptures (thr) and partly because "purity" is an abstract code word for what is culturally acceptable. Although Jews and Christians regularly used the language of "clean" and "unclean," the umbrella concept for this discussion is the abstract notion of "purity."

Students of late Judaism and early Christianity have been quite busy investigating these matters. And the approaches to issues of "unclean," "common" and "polluted" seem to have taken two different but compatible directions, one descriptive and historical and the other anthropological and social.

2.0 Historical and Descriptive Approaches

Although the material will at first seem strange and difficult to understand, the Mishnah contains valuable data on "clean" and "unclean." We recommend the Danby translation for two reasons. It contains (a) an excellent index to trace key terms such as "Father of Uncleanness" and (b) an appendix on "The Rules of Uncleanness" from Eliyahu Rabbah (pp. 800-4), which is a most useful summary of the topic. In particular, one should read the tractate Kelim 1.1-9, which contains elaborate lists of things clean and unclean, all of which are ranked in hierarchical order, which is another aspect of "purity systems."

We start our survey with several general dictionary articles. L.E. Toombs (1962:641-48) began his survey with an attempt to deal with the words "clean" and "unclean" first in terms of general religious language and then in terms of what they have in common with Canaanite and Babylonian religion. His main interest lay in an extensive exposition of their occurrence and use, especially in the ritual or cultic parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. Toombs' article typifies a descriptive approach to the concepts of "clean and unclean," namely what objects or persons comes under the label "clean" and "unclean" in regard to the temple and cultic ritual.

A much more enlightened article by D. P. Wright (1992:729-41) has just appeared in the new Anchor Bible Dictionary. After identifying the relevant terminology for "clean" and "unclean" in the Hebrew scriptures, Wright distinguishes between permitted and proscribed impurities. Permitted impurities are those which occur naturally and necessarily, i.e., those related to death, sex, disease and cult; proscribed impurities are controllable and unnecessary, i.e., idolatry, murder. Wright then examines each class in detail, noting how each is a "father of impurities," and what is the appropriate remedy for each (on this key term, see m. Pes. 1.6; Shek. 8.4; Eduy 2.1; Meil. 4.4; Kel. 1.1; Tor. 1.5; Maksh. 4.2, 8 and Teh Yom. 1.4, 5; 2.1, 8; 3.1). He then examines bodily excretions, blemishes, foods and mixtures as these are labelled "unclean." What sets Wright's article apart from other surveys is his attention to the meaning of these labels, which takes him into the realm of cultural anthropology. In discussing the "rationale" for impurities, he notes seven traditional reasons which are not entirely satisfactory for explaining the function of impurities in religious
communities. Then he succinctly presents a model of purity from the works of anthropologist Mary Douglas, which both he and other OT scholars have profitably adapted for interpretation of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He digests Douglas' work into three key insights: (a) purity is related to wholeness and normality; (b) the definition of purity derives not from observed reality but from the cultural understanding of particular societies; purity is a language expressing social concerns; and (c) the physical body manifests the purity concerns of the social body. He applies this material to the P tradition and its concerns with space and sacrificial foods. This article supplies excellent data about the occurrence, classification, and treatment of impurities in the Old Testament. Moreover, it is very sensitive and informed about the meaning of the data in terms of a "system" of cultural perceptions. It is an enlightened and necessary introduction to the topic.

Sooner or later Jacob Neusner was bound to turn his attention to this topic first in a book, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (1973) and then in an article (1975). Ever the careful historian, he distinguished in his book three blocks of texts in terms of their historical provenance: the biblical legacy, texts from the second-temple period, and Talmudic materials. As had been frequently noted, the materials from the Hebrew Scriptures dealing with "clean and unclean" treat mainly of priestly texts and temple matters. In describing the literature of the second-temple period, Neusner basically catalogued the various associations of "unclean," either with idolatry or moral defilement, especially sexual sins; "clean" was linked to Temple, especially ritual imagery and praxis at Qumran. In regard to the Talmudic materials, Neusner notes that concern over "clean and unclean" is still linked with Temple, but that the Rabbis were increasingly interested in the moral or allegorical meaning of these concepts for home life. Throughout, Neusner deals with the material descriptively and from an historical perspective. Yet he did raise a critical social issue: according to his historical and descriptive analysis, the language of "clean" and "unclean" tended to differentiate one sect from another. Although Neusner was adapting Douglas' seminal work on purity, he ignored the model of the body which was central to her presentation of purity. His book, then, will supply a reader with a careful historical classification of material pertaining to purity.

More recently, scholars have concentrated either on specific topics or on specific texts and communities in their examination of "clean and unclean." For example, Roger P. Booth (1986) focused on the washing of hands incident in Mark 7; his interest lay in historical questions, such as the tradition history behind Mark's account, as well as the general legal issues involved. Neusner (1976:486-95) likewise investigated the history of the accusation in Matt 25:25-26 that Pharisees are concerned with the washing of the outside of cups; he demonstrates a lively debate on the issue between the followers of Hillel and Shammai. Michael Newton (1985) took up the investigation of cultic or ritual cleanliness. The first part of his book surveys the terminology of "purity" at Qumran, the basic understanding of that group as "holy" or separated, and the ritual actions in which this was embodied, either washing rites or concerns over food and meals. In regard to Paul, he dealt first with cultic terminology in Paul and its relationship to his notion of "purity." He then took up the issue of washing and entrance rites, which are described in terms of "clean" and "pure." Finally moral issues were discussed, table fellowship and the purity of food, sexual uncleanness, corpse uncleanness, and separation from evil people. Although Newton knows of anthropological studies of these concepts, his own work is basically descriptive and comparative.

Contemporary biblical scholarship, which is becoming increasingly concerned with the language and concepts of "purity," tends to focus on specific texts or topics. For obvious reasons, Qumran texts, which contain numerous references to the language of purity and pollution, have become the object of many recent studies (e.g., Isenberg, Newton). Comparably, in regard to the Hebrew scriptures, attention is regularly given to food laws (Milgrom, Soler) and to the priestly issues related to cult and temple (Neusner, Newton).

These studies, however, remain basically (a) historical (how ancient were such customs as the washing of hands or vessels? how widespread was the Jewish refusal to eat with Gentiles?) or (b) descriptive (what issues came under the rubric of "clean" and "unclean"?). Such approaches, of course, are the dominant modes of doing critical biblical scholarship and are acceptable to scholars and publishers alike. Detailed studies such as those noted above are indeed valuable, yet they are not the only approach to this topic. Nor
do they answer the basic question of what "clean" and "unclean" mean in Judaism and early Christianity or why such labelling takes place at all. These questions require different methods of analysis.

3.0 Anthropological and Social Approaches

Besides historical and descriptive approaches to "clean and unclean," other scholars have come to the biblical texts asking different sorts of questions. What basically is meant by "purity" or by "clean" and "unclean"? What is communicated by labelling something or person "unclean"? What is symbolized by categorizing things as "pure" or "polluted"? What is the social significance of labelling something "pure" or "polluted"? On one level, we can observe that all peoples declare certain persons or things "unclean" or taboo (for examples of Greek labelling, Parker 1983:357-65). Rather than merely compile descriptive lists of these objects, we can inquire about the very process of labelling itself. Labelling is itself a symbolic action which encodes considerable information about the way the labellers view the world. What is the rationale for these categories vis-à-vis specific persons or objects? The inquiry into "unclean," "common," "polluted," and "taboo" takes us into the realm of cultural anthropology.

The effort to understand the social and cultural meanings of "clean" and "unclean" leads a reader into considerations of the overarching "system" of a culture or into a reconstruction of its "symbolic universe." For example, Jacob Neusner, although he was primarily interested in the history of the material, urged us to consider historical data such as mishnaic material on sacrifice and sanctuary in terms of a "complete system" (1979:105). His presentation of this material is done systematically in terms of a "mapping," that is, the social "constructing of worlds of meaning." Although the temple lay in ruins, mishnaic authors still constructed an orderly world, classifying all things in terms of "clean" and "unclean" in relation to the sanctuary remembered and expected. Physical geography gave way to ideological geography. Neusner's article is an important orientation for readers on this topic because it reminds us that "purity" has two meanings: (a) the general sense of an orderly cosmos and an elaborate system of classification, and (b) the specific Jewish system of labelling in ancient times. This is not strictly anthropology yet, but more a matter of social description; yet it orients a reader to begin asking sociological questions about the broader meaning of "purity" in terms of cultural systems.

British anthropologist Mary T. Douglas offered an alternate way of investigating the general language of "clean" and "unclean" and its specific forms in Jewish and Christian literature. Her writings, especially *Purity and Danger* (1966), have greatly influenced biblical scholars, and are of such seminal importance for analyzing this topic that no scholar dares treat of Lev 11 without engaging her discussion. Because her new approach offers a productive line of investigation of the language of purity, we will delay here to familiarize readers with its basic concepts and models. This material, moreover, figures prominently in studies by biblical scholars whose works we will shortly survey.

In *Purity and Danger*, after surveying the standard anthropological explanations of defilement, Douglas suggests that we view these items in symbolic terms. Her key insight lies in an analysis of what people generally perceive as "dirt," which is her code word for what we are discussing under the terms "polluted," "unclean" or "taboo." "Dirt" is itself a relative term which basically means that something is "out of place" in the perception of the labellers. Objects and persons may be "clean" in one situation but "dirty" in another. The issue lies in the social situation, namely, in the sense of order or the system of classifications which people use to organize their world. "Reflections on dirt," she argues, "involve reflection on the relations of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death" (1966:5).

Lord Chesterfield defined dirt as matter out of place. This implies only two conditions, a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Thus the idea of dirt implies a structure of idea. For us dirt is a kind of compendium category for all events which blur, smudge, contradict, or otherwise confuse accepted
Dirt, then, in the context of the military would mean insubordination to a commanding officer; in a hospital it would mean unsterile material in an operating room. Something is out of place in each particular cosmos.

The analysis of "dirt," then, is a matter of social perception and interpretation. In *Purity and Danger*, Douglas takes up several specific considerations of dirt: (a) the classification of animals in Leviticus as clean and unclean and (b) the physical body vis-à-vis clean and unclean. The classification of animals in Judaism reveals fundamental values encoded in the Genesis 1 or the priestly account of creation. God made "perfect" creatures in Paradise which were distributed, some to the air, some to the land, and some to the sea. By "perfect" Douglas explains, for example, that an "air" creature is expected to stay where it belongs (in the air, not the sea), move as an air creature should (fly), and eat what air creatures should eat (seeds, not carrion). A bird which does not meet these criteria is "unclean." But at stake is a cultural perception of order: proper space, proper behavior, proper diet, etc. -- "proper" being derived from the culture.

What the creator God did in Gen 1, then, defines the meaning of "holy" or "in place." What does not perfectly fill those categories, then, is "unholy" or "unclean." The issue lies in knowing the symbolic categories of the culture so as to know what does not fit them perfectly. For example, hybrids are "unclean." What is not "whole" is "unclean," a concept relative to animals which must be whole and unblemished for sacrificial offering (Lev 22:20-25) or to persons, who because of bodily defects must stand apart from holy space and rites (Lev 21:16-20). Persons with mutilated bodies are unwhole and so in some sense "unclean," a concept important for understanding Jesus' miracle stories.

The taxonomy which Douglas developed for defining clean and unclean animals subsequently enjoyed a healthy scholarly conversation. She absorbed the insights of other anthropologists and published a richer version of her analysis of the diet of the Israelites (1975:261-73). She now adds to her examination of the classification of birds, fish and animals that we should have concern for the multiple dimensions of Hebrew culture. Douglas then states three rules for classifying meat: (a) rejection of certain animal kinds as unfit for table (Lev 11; Deut 14), (b) of those admitted as edible, the separation of the meat from blood before cooking (Lev 17:10; Deut 12:23-27), and (c) the total separation of milk from meat, which involves the minute specialization of utensils (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 14:21). Analyzing dietary restrictions, Douglas then can identify what makes an animal an abomination, a classification which now includes notions of suitability for temple sacrifice and consumption as food.

In regard to a second major aspect of *Purity and Danger*, since so many taboos are connected with the physical body (e.g., leprosy, menstruation), further consideration of this is especially necessary. Douglas' second contribution lies in her treatment of body symbolism. She urges us to see the grand sense of social order (macrocosm) mirrored in the very physical body (microcosm).

The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious (1966:115).

Just as the social body is perceived in some way as an ordered, structured system which is concerned to affirm and protect its order and its classifications, so the physical body of individuals in that same society mirrors the social sense of order and structure. Just as the social body is concerned about its boundaries (frontiers, city walls, gates), so too the physical body is the object of concern as to its surface (skin, hair, clothing) and orifices (eyes, mouth, genitals, anus). What crosses the frontier, the city walls and the door of the house is of great concern: strangers are always suspect. What flakes off of the body surface and what pours from its orifices are comparably of great concern. All of these substances are matter which is "out of place" and so dangerous, even "unclean." This might suggest why the washing of hands was so important in Jesus' world. Hands feed the mouth; and if the orifice of the mouth is the object of great concern, either in regard to what speech may exit or to what foods may enter, then "clean" hands contribute to "cleanness" of mouth and person.
Douglas' overriding concern is with the meaning of purity and pollution classification, namely, what is communicated by this type of language? Hence she asks about the social function of such labels and their relationship to the social construction of reality by a group. Labelling things or persons "pure" or "polluted" serves to establish identity and maintain the group, which now has power to include or exclude. It can also reinforce the moral code of a group (1966:133). "In so far as they impose order on experience, they support clarification of forms and thus reduce dissonance" (1968:339). Or, concerning the significance of controlling bodily orifices, she says,

...when rituals express anxiety about the body's orifices the sociological counterpart of this anxiety is a care to protect the political and cultural unity of a minority group. The Israelites were always in their history a hard-pressed minority. In their beliefs all the bodily issues were polluting, blood, pus, excreta, semen, etc. The threatened boundaries of their body politic would be well mirrored in their care for the integrity, unity and purity of the physical body (1966:124).

Douglas' work had an immediate and profound impact on biblical scholarship. Interpreters were quick to see her observations on purity and pollution as a clue to investigating the symbolic universe of the ancients. For example, Jean Soler employed many of Douglas' insights in a penetrating study of Gen 1 (1979:24-30). He demonstrated the replication of the Jewish cultural values of "whole" and "perfect" in the creation story, in the temple system, and in daily life. He clarified for us how a value such as "clean" = whole/perfect pervaded the Bible. And in a sense he made explicit what Douglas had occasionally stated but left implicit, how the basic labelling of something as whole and perfect is replicated redundantly in a culture, not only in regard to the major religious symbol of the Temple, but in terms of food and dietary rules observed in homes, and in terms of the kashrut laws which keep separate the yoking of ox and ass, the interweaving of wool and flax etc. The same sense of wholeness or perfection of category occurs redundantly in all areas of life.

Among those who perceived the utility of Douglas' models for biblical interpretation, Jacob Neusner wrote a history of purity concerns in Israel, second-temple Judaism and Talmudic times (1973). We earlier discussed his book, The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism, as an example of a descriptive, historical approach. In the last chapter he acknowledges Douglas' anthropological interpretation, but does not use it, nor did he adequately understand it. Yet Neusner helped shape the discussion by giving salience to Douglas' approach to the topic and by the very title of his book (The Idea of Purity), a concept repeated in subsequent articles ("The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism," 1975; "History and Purity in First-Century Judaism," 1978). He easily explained that rules for "clean" and "unclean" pertain to the cult, but he failed to see their replication in other aspects of cultural life. In part, this resulted from Neusner's failure to employ the second aspect of Douglas' model, the social perception of the physical body as a replication of the general norms and values of the culture.

Yet other studies have explicitly taken up Douglas' insights in greater detail and may for that reason offer a way to examine how pervasive are the concepts of "clean"/"unclean" and how extensively they are replicated in the culture of second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. As the subtitle of his book indicates, The New Testament World, Insights from Cultural Anthropology, Bruce Malina developed a fulsome anthropological model of clean and unclean, which is illustrated from first-century Judaism especially in terms of an analysis both of marriage and physical anomalies. He then applied the material to the issue of sacrifice, introducing into the consideration ideas about rites of passage which permit boundary crossings into areas normally "out of place" to "clean" people. In regard to persons crossing forbidden and dangerous boundaries, Malina has developed elsewhere the concept of a "limit breaker" who functions in rites of passage pertaining to clean and unclean boundaries (1986:143-154), an important element for assessing the apology for Jesus' commerce with the "taxcollectors and sinners" of his world (see Mark 2:17). Finally he considered Christian purity arrangements, which would necessarily be in conflict with Jewish considerations. Malina's work advanced Douglas' discussion of "clean" and "unclean" by indicating how purity concerns are replicated in a variety of areas and how one needs a model of ritual to explain why and how people lapse into unclean states and come out of them. Like her, Malina does not focus on a specific document, but illustrates the pervasiveness of this labelling in the Bible. The modeling is rich and productive, and the illustrations indicate the replication of such concerns throughout a symbolic system.
Douglas’ own works, while profound and stimulating, needed to be tamed into a workable model, which is the paramount value of Malina’s discussion. Hence, it is an excellent introduction to the topic.

Concerning the issue of holy people dealing with the unclean, Douglas’ material was applied by Jerome Neyrey to the perception of Jesus in Mark’s gospel (1986a). Jesus is proclaimed by some as holy and sinless, yet others perceive him as constantly “out of place” because: (a) he has commerce with unclean people (lepers, menstruants, sinners, etc.); (b) he does not observe sacred times such as the Sabbath or sacred places such as the Temple; or (c) he disregards food rules and washing customs. Douglas’ abstract ideas about “pollution” as matter “out of place,” can be fleshed out in terms of the general cultural expectations about what it means to be “whole,” “perfect” or “in place.” The Temple constituted the chief symbol for the order of the universe for first-century Jews, a symbol articulated by priests and described in priestly writings in the Scriptures. Using the priestly documents as symbol, one can gain a sense of the basic cultural lines whereby second-temple Jews classified and located persons, times, places and things. These classifications can be expressed in a set of “maps” such as a “map of persons” (T. Meg. 2.7), “map of places” (m. Kelim 1.6-9), “map of times” (m. Moed) and “map of things” (m. Kelim 1.3). “Maps” come from the endless lists of things found throughout Jewish, Greek and Christian literature. We include the following four “maps” or lists as characteristic examples of pervasive classification systems. [Figure One] Such maps redundantly indicate what is meant by “clean” and “unclean” both in the temple context but also in various areas of life: food and table fellowship, body emissions, kashrut laws and agricultural customs.

Neyrey leads readers who are aware of such pervasive cultural maps to see how pervasively Jesus was “out of place” according to the perceptions of his culture. So much of the conflict in the gospels has to do with peer censure of Jesus as “unclean” for his breach of cultic and bodily purity rules. Yet, of course, his followers perceived him as authorized to cross these lines; they acclaimed him as “the Holy One of God,” innocent, sinless and fully within God’s camp. Neyrey’s study of Mark clearly depends on the theory of Mary Douglas and the modeling of Bruce Malina. It offers a lucid and systematic presentation, not only of the concept of “purity,” but of the specific Jewish articulation of this in the interpretation of a gospel text. His study itself can serve as a model for reading other New Testament documents, and so commends itself for its insight, thoroughness and utility.

In a subsequent analysis of Mark 7, Neyrey developed further his use of the model of purity for a “symbolic interpretation” of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees (1988b:63-91). This article begins once more with a model of purity drawn from Douglas and Malina. Neyrey wishes to examine why, on the one hand, the Pharisees are said to be concerned with washing rites and with things external, and conversely, Jesus is credited with both abolition of food concerns and espousal of things internal. This required him to develop a model of the physical body, especially the notion that control of the individual physical body replicates issues of social control of the group. This led Neyrey to pay special attention to the historical statements credited to the pre-70 Pharisees. It turns out that 67% of the remarks have to do with meals, food, tithing, and the cleanliness of food vessels:

The Houses’ rulings pertaining either immediately or ultimately to table-fellowship involve preparation of food, ritual purity relating directly to food or indirectly to the need to keep food ritually clean, and agricultural rules concerning the proper growing, tithing, and preparation of agricultural produce for table use. The agricultural laws relate to producing or preparing food for consumption, assuring either that tithes and offerings have been set aside as the law requires, or that conditions for the nurture of crops have conformed to biblical taboos. Of the 341 individual Houses’ legal pericopae, no fewer than 229, approximately 67 percent of the whole, directly or indirectly concern table-fellowship . . . The Houses’ laws of ritual cleanness apply in the main to the ritual cleanness of foods, and of people, dishes, and implements involved in its preparation (Jacob Neusner, From Politics to Piety [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973] 86).

The Pharisees’ guarding of the mouth in regard to food and the relative unconcern for it by Jesus symbolizes the relatively closed or open boundaries of each group. This social strategy embodies and replicates a more complete ideology of each group:
PHARISEES JESUS & FOLLOWERS

Core Value God's Holiness God's Mercy

(Lev 11:44) (Exod 33:19)

Symbolized in Creation-as-ordering Election and Grace

Structural Exclusivistic Inclusivistic

Implications Strategy Strategy

Legitimation in Exodus, Leviticus, Genesis and Prophets

Scripture Numbers, Deuteronomy

Thus using models both of Jewish purity concerns and of the physical body, Neyrey argues for a thorough correlation between socio-political strategy and bodily concern:

Strong purity concerns Weaker purity concerns

(replicated in) (replicated in)

Strong bodily control Weaker bodily control

(expressed by) (expressed by)

Concern for actions, surfaces (hands), Concern for motives, interior and orifices (mouth) (heart); disregard of orifices

This article takes the reader well past Neyrey's earlier study of "The Idea of Purity in Mark" (1986b), for it examines a specific controversy story in depth. It is more than a mere demonstration that purity concerns are operative in the gospel presentation of Jesus, for it seeks to explore not only the strategy and behavior of Jesus but also that of his rivals, the Pharisees. Its attempt to link social ideology and bodily behavior is a critical step forward in interpreting biblical documents. And since foods, meals, and table etiquette remained persistent and controversial throughout early Christianity, Neyrey's study offers readers a cogent analysis of the symbolic significance of this issue.

Several years later Neyrey applied his model of purity to the interpretation of Luke-Acts (1991). Here he offered a first attempt at constructing a semantic word field for these labels (1991:275-76) as part of an articulation of the specific cultural meanings of purity in Luke's world. Most of his attention was focussed on boundaries, either social or physical boundaries, which Jesus is portrayed as ignoring or transgressing. Again employing "maps" to indicate the classification system of Luke's world, he summarized the typical social perceptions concerning purity and pollution as applicable to persons, places, times and things in Luke-Acts (1991:282):

1. Consecrated Judeans, especially priests, are in place in God's holy land. Gentiles, especially Romans, are out of place in the holy land of Israel, its sacred city and especially its temple (see Acts 21:28).

2. The dead do not belong in the realm of the living but in their own realm of tombs and graveyards.
3. The sick do not belong in the realm of the healthy; lepers should dwell apart and cry "Unclean!" (Luke 5:12-16). To a certain extent, so should paralytics, the blind, the deaf etc. What a surprise, then, to hear of a paralytic being lowered through the roof into Jesus' "home" (Luke 5:17-19).

4. Inasmuch as holiness is related to wholeness (one must be completely what one is), people with defective bodies (e.g. eunuchs) are unclean; a man with crushed testicles, for example, may not enter the temple area to offer sacrifice (Lev 21:20); defective animals are not fit offerings for the holy God.

5. Sinners, likewise, do not belong in the same space as observant Jews, which occasions criticism when Jesus eats at the table of a tax collector (Luke 5:27; 15:1; 19:5).

6. Certain foods do not fit the full definition of what it means to be a sky, earth, or sea creature (Douglas 1966:51-57), and so they are marginal, unclean, and polluting. Until a heavenly voice told him otherwise, Peter would never think of eating such (Acts 10:11-14).

7. Since there is a specific time for everything, especially a time for "work" and a time for "rest," if "work" is done at the wrong time, that is, on the Sabbath, it is out of place (Luke 6:1-5).

8. Finally, apropos of wholeness, there is a general prohibition against mixing kinds:

   clothing: wool and linen should never be mixed,

   agriculture: plowing should be done by either ox or ass, but never by the two yolked together,

   crops: only one kind of seed should be sown in a given field at any one time,

   husbandry: cattle of one kind should not be bred with that of another kind (Lev 19:19; Deut 22:9-11).

Neyrey then demonstrates how Luke portrays Jesus and Paul "perverting our nation" (Luke 23:2, 14; Acts 21:28) by transgressing the purity expectations of their society. This is followed by an exposition of the Lukan defense of these actions, which includes notice of the righteousness of Jesus' family and their pedigree, their observance of certain rituals, the evaluation of Jesus by God and John the Baptist, and the proclamation of Jesus' sinlessness. Jesus, moreover, did not inherit uncleanness from any "father of impurity," but rather extended wholeness and cleanness to others. Even as he describes Jesus transgressing Jewish purity rules, Neyrey shows how Jesus established new maps and so new boundaries and new rules. These new rules are grounded on a new view of the "holy" God of Israel, one that includes God's loosening of boundaries for a more inclusive membership in the covenant community. Like his study of purity in Mark, this interpretation of Luke-Acts presents a cogent model for perceiving the purity system in a biblical document, which can then be used by students to analyze other pieces of literature.

Yet "clean" and "unclean" are not labels exclusively pertaining to cult and temple, although that institution may be the chief symbol of the values and structures of Israel. The human body is also classified in these terms. John Pilch (1981:108-13) began a study which first pursued historical issues: what was the "leprosy" which Jesus healed? Scientific, not biblical, investigation indicates that biblical leprosy is not the modern disease (mycobacterium leprae). Further pursuing the issue of disease from a cross-cultural perspective, Pilch was led to an anthropological understanding of body and hence of bodily surfaces. Using Douglas' materials as well as other perspectives on purity and body symbolism, Pilch explained how in certain conflictual social situations there tends to be great concern over social and also bodily boundaries. Douglas herself suggested that when "rituals express anxiety about the body's orifices the sociological counterpart . . . is a care to protect the political and cultural unity" of a group (1966:124). This kind of intuition was given full scope by Pilch's examination, where the issue of "leprosy" (bodily surface or boundary) functions in a larger social world where social boundaries are threatened and needed to be guarded. The importance of
Pilch's article lies in showing how purity concern are not exclusive to cult and Temple, but are replicated in the symbolic world of a culture and in particular in the way the physical body is perceived.

Apropos of the physical body, Neyrey applied Douglas' suggestions about "clean" and "unclean" to body symbolism in Paul's first letter to Corinth (1986b:129-70, reprinted in 1990:102-46). The same concern for order, wholeness and boundary defense found in the macro level of society is replicated on the micro level in the way the physical body is perceived and controlled. Since what crosses boundaries is dangerous and potentially polluting, it is not surprising that Paul focuses intently on bodily surfaces, in particular hairdo's (1 Cor 11). Men wearing feminine hair styles and women wearing masculine hairdo's blur the categories of male and female, and so are considered "unclean" and are proscribed. Again in regard to the crossing of boundaries, the orifices of the body (eyes, ears, mouth, genitals) are likewise the object of Paul's concern and control because they are the gates and portals whence cross foods, speech, semen and menses. Especially in regard to bodily orifices, Paul strongly regulates (a) the sexual orifice (1 Cor 5-7), (b) the oral orifice for eating (1 Cor 8-11) and (c) the oral orifice for speech (1 Cor 12-14). His concern is with what goes in or comes out, that is, with what is "in place" or "out of place." Certain sexual unions are a pollution; certain foods corrupt the innocent conscience; certain speech offends the "wholeness" of the body. And so it is perceived as "unclean" and proscribed. Comparably, certain foods (i.e., the Eucharist), certain sexual unions (i.e., marry in the Lord) and certain speech (i.e., confession of Jesus as Lord or prophecy) are "clean" and so prescribed. Paul's strong control of the physical body mirrors his urgent need to control the chaotic social relations of the Corinthians.

"Holiness," moreover, is related to "wholeness," which helps to explain Paul's dedication to the unity or wholeness of the social body. For any mutilation or defection would endanger its wholeness and so its holiness before God. Hence Paul is greatly concerned over events or behavior which cause division in the body or which might lead to a divorce, that is a divided body, or which tend to exclude others. "Clean" and "unclean," then, define what is bodily "out of place" or what threatens bodily wholeness.

4.0 Miscellaneous Studies Worth Noting

There are other studies which deserve attention. We can only mention them briefly and hope that we do not slight their value and importance. In regard to discussions of creation, we recommend first the brief article of Michael Barré (1981:41-43). He is unconcerned here with issues of purity but focuses on the sense of "order" pervasive in Jewish Wisdom literature. Most importantly, he demonstrates the pervasive desire for and articulation of "order" over "chaos" in the Bible. Without using the jargon of anthropology, he urges that we attend to the cultural value of order and its systematic replication in various aspects of Hebrew ideology and praxis:

But from the view of antiquity the "order" of the created world is not merely physical. The physical aspect is only one manifestation of an all-pervasive orderliness that lies at the heart of creation. Religious, social, moral order -- these too are simply facets of the fundamental world-order (p. 41).

The task of "wise" persons, then, is to find their proper place in the orderly scheme of things. Since the study of "purity" is an investigation both of the macro system of order in a given culture and its micro classification of specific things as "clean" and "unclean," this article, then, orients a reader to think abstractly in terms of large cultural patterns, which are the social construction of the biblical writers.

In regard to creation, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz digested and revised Douglas' analysis of the abominations of Leviticus in a study of the ideological relationship of priestly materials and accounts of creation (1987:357-81). He attempts to show the intrabiblical relationship of texts from Gen 1 and Lev 11 and Deut 14, but his analysis is guided constantly by concerns for "classification systems" and correspondences between ideology and practical issues. He argues that the biblical and mishnaic taxonomies move
progressively away from mere physical criteria for uncleanness and toward "human activity" in the creation of elaborate classification systems. The use of anthropological categories, while present and determinative of the argument, are lightly used, which makes this a recommended article for readers more inclined to historical and textual discussion. Nevertheless, Eilberg-Schwartz insists that readers begin understanding taxonomy and classification systems as the creation of the community, and so he urges that we be open to the various links between social structures and symbolic thought.

Dietary issues in both testaments remain a constant focus of discussion. Apropos of this interest, the article of G. Wenham (1981:6-15) provides an excellent survey of the food laws, with special attention to their explanation in terms of Douglas' study their symbolic meaning. More historical studies are also worth noting, which deal with questions such as eating with "unclean" hands in Mark 7 (Dunn 1985; House 1983), or on the cleanness of vessels used in eating in Matt 23 (Neusner 1976; Maccoby 1982) or on the cleanness of those who could share a Jewish or Christian table (Dunn 1983).

In regard to issues of marriage and sex, several publications recommend themselves. Bossmann's brief analysis of Ezra's marriage reforms, although it does not use the anthropological concepts of purity, calls attention to issues of endogamy, the stages of the history of prohibited marriages, and the relationship of this to the values and the larger cultural system of Israel (1979:32-38). Marriage rules replicate concern for group identity and coherence. Wenham's brief note on the defilement of sexual intercourse in Lev 15:18 is important for it adapts Douglas' analysis of purity/pollution more specifically to the Israelite values of life/death (1983:432-44). Loss of blood, menses or semen involve a loss of "life fluids." Hence, since God is whole, alive and perfect, only those who are themselves clean and who enjoy full life (i.e., no loss of "life fluids") may approach this living God. No investigation of the Hebrew bible would be complete without some reference to the pollution attached to menses and semen. Eilberg-Schwartz's article (1990:177-94) offers a sophisticated interpretation of these materials using the works of Mary Douglas.

In discussing sexual ethics, L. W. Countryman spends the first third of his book on "Dirt" and its counterpart, "Purity" (1988b:11-143). The study begins with acknowledgement of Douglas' influence on shaping our understanding of clean and unclean. Countryman then surveys the shifting notions of purity in ancient Israel, first-century Judaism, the Gospels and then Paul. He argues that although Christianity retained the dynamic of labelling things clean and unclean, it paid less attention to physical purity (i.e., bodily integrity or fluid emission) than its parent, Judaism. He attends, moreover, to the interpretation of sexual issues in the New Testament in a way which both relativizes their stringency and explains their plausibility in terms of a specific culture. "Purity of heart" is identified as the determining factor in consideration of behavior. One need not accept Countryman's conclusions to appreciate his careful focussing on issues of purity, especially in relation to the physical body.

The monograph of the late John Gammie examines the concept of "holiness" in the Hebrew scriptures (1989). This book attempts to show that "holiness" meant one thing in the context of the Temple and its priests, another to the prophets, and still another to the individuals in villages and cities. Gammie, then, is sensitive to the different meanings that "clean" and "unclean" have in terms of the social location of different groups. The whole study, moreover, is cognizant of the anthropological contributions of Douglas and others, and so offers a satisfying historical and cultural examination of the topic.

In regard to New Testament documents, several studies should be noted. Neyrey turned from investigating the gospels in terms of the idea of purity to the letters of Paul. In two articles he employed the hybrid model of "witchcraft accusations" of Mary Douglas to interpret the social conflict first in 2 Cor 10-13 (1986c:160-70) and then in Galatians (1988a:72-100). At the heart of a society which makes accusations of sorcery or witchcraft lies a pervasive sense of purity and pollution. A witch is someone who externally appears pure, but who internally is polluted. The witch seeks to corrupt what is clean or to suck the life from what is living. By identifying someone as a witch, the accuser alerts the listening social group to a threat to its very life, namely, the unwarranted presence of a corruption which will destroy it. Neyrey shows how Paul labels both his rivals at Corinth as Satan or as disguised angels of light and his opponents in Galatia as those who "bewitch" the orthodox group. By labelling them as sorcerers who threaten the group's "purity," Paul can then invoke intolerance toward them and demand their expulsion from the group. These two studies
articulate the power of labels of "uncleanness," especially their ability to motivate people to respond intolerantly in ways they may not wish to in other circumstances. Likewise they indicate how groups view their cosmos and all reality in dualistic terms, that is, in terms of purity and pollution or what is permitted or proscribed.

Then, in a study of the symbolic universe or "purity system" of Paul's letters, Neyrey applied Douglas' model of purity once more (1990). This time he focussed on patterns of order and disorder in 1 Corinthians (pp. 21-74). Neyrey shows that Paul tends to perceive the world like any first-century Pharisee in terms of a highly ordered cosmos, with an appropriate place for every person, thing or time. His explanation of the macrocosmic sense of order in Paul's perception of reality illustrates Douglas' contention that "purity" pertains to the larger system of order found in all societies. His investigation of the microcosmic patterns of order calls attention to Paul's (a) persistent inclination to list things and persons in hierarchical order, which is an characteristic sign of purity, (b) maps of persons, places, times, and things, and (c) his endless comparisons and rankings. Neyrey argues that the rationale for such labelling and classifying lies in Paul's attempt to exercise control over his congregations.

In addition, he describes Paul's perception of "sin" and "cosmology." Sin is understood both as a pollution threatening the pure group (1 Cor 5:6-8) and a violation of specific rules (1 Cor 6:9-10). As a life-threatening corruption, it warrants intolerance and so excommunication of the offender (1 Cor 5:3-5, 13). Paul's world is described as a cosmos of competing cosmic powers of good and evil, which are pure and polluted respectively. Thus Paul's symbolic universe is structured around a radically dualistic perception, which is replicated in the order (or disorder) of the cosmos and the community, the control or non-control of the body, the understanding of sinful pollution corrupting a pure body, and a cosmic war between the forces of God and Satan. Purity and pollution, then, are replicated at every level of Paul's perception. The value of this book lies in its thorough and sure handling of Paul's letters, in particular 1 Corinthians. Readers will be schooled in both the general sense of purity-as-order and in the specific illustration of purity and pollution concepts in regard to social and bodily issues. Paul, then, is shown to be a typical example of first-century perceptions of purity common to Jews and Christians alike.

Most recently John Elliott (1993:71-81) has examined the Letter of James in terms of purity and pollution. Quoting Jas 1:2-4, he notes that James casts his argument in the formal terminology of wholeness and incompleteness, which is but a specification of the more general labels of clean and unclean. He quickly explains what is meant by these symbolic terms and indicates their social function:

Cultures variously use purity and pollution schemes in order to organize everything in its proper place, to define and demarcate what is complete or incomplete, who is damaged or whole, sick or sound, what is allowable or forbidden, who belongs to the society and who does not, what preserves the society and what endangers it. Accordingly, to call a person or a social unit impure, unclean, or unholy is to identify and evaluate the object as out-of-order, damaged, incomplete (1993:73).

This indicates clearly that Elliott is attentive to the social control exercised by the use of these labels. He then shows how James invokes these labels when he addresses issues of personal, social and cosmic disorder and order. Noting how the letter presents an extended series of contrasts, Elliott shows that these contain both the author's diagnosis of an unclean or unwhole situation and his prescription for cleanness or wholeness.

Elliott pays acute attention to the way that value classifications of wholeness and incompleteness are replicated throughout the document in regard to crises occurring on the personal, social and cosmic level. He indicates how moral exhortation such as the Letter of James is fundamentally structured around the notions of purity/wholeness and pollution/incompleteness. In doing so, he give salience to the notion of "perfection" of holiness both in regard to God and to the Church.

In his recent commentary on Jude and 2 Peter, Neyrey has applied his highly developed model of purity and pollution to these unfamiliar documents (1993). Indeed he interprets both documents specifically in
terms of social-science models, including purity/pollution concepts and a model of the physical body. Here Neyrey weaves together anthropological models of purity and pollution and their incarnation and illustration in Greco-Roman literature. Then, he carefully interprets through this lens the numerous passages in Jude and 2 Peter concerning "corruption," sexual perversions, self-control, and the like. The same method is used for presenting the way Jude and 2 Peter urge control of the physical body as indication of orthodox theology.

Although this survey has focussed thus far exclusively on the use of purity and pollution in regard to Israelite, Jewish and early Christian literature, readers should be cognizant of a thorough study of pollution concerns in Greek religion (1983). Robert Parker's magisterial investigation of taboo, pollution and purification takes us through studies of birth and death, the shedding of blood, sacrilege, curses, and disease. Besides a fine analysis of each of these items, the book is distinguished for its appendices and indices, which will serve as guidance for identifying new vocabulary in regard to "clean" and "unclean, as well as a keen sense of the wider Mediterranean nature of the idea of purity.

5.0 Where Does This Leave a Reader?

This readers guide has identified studies of certain passages and documents from the Bible, the interpretation of which has been the focus of authors concerned with issues of "clean" and "unclean." In the Hebrew scriptures, attention is regularly given to the creation story in Genesis 1, the "abominations of Leviticus" in Lev 11, pollution materials in Deut 14, and bodily impurity in Lev 21:17-20. In the Christian scriptures, Mark 7 has attracted attention for its concern over washing rites, dietary rules, and concern for externals. Both Mark and Luke have been interpreted in terms of a model of purity, as well as 1 Corinthians in terms of a model of bodily control.

What does one know if one knows this? Historical and descriptive studies richly inform a reader about a specific issue in a specific document. Anthropological studies contribute by suggesting what were the common cultural perceptions of the way the world was perceived to be ordered, classified and structured. They also indicate the redundance of purity concerns, not only in cult and Temple, but in various other areas of social life: illness, hygiene, sexuality, food, eating, agriculture, and so forth.

The specific use of the two anthropological models of (a) "clean" and "unclean" and (2) body symbolism can equip a reader to understand a wide but interconnected series of issues, such as dietary concerns (Acts 10-11), mission to "unclean" people (Mark 5; Acts 8), sexual morals (1 Thess 4:1-9), and hand washings (Mark 7). A reader knowing this material has a firm basis for sympathetically understanding the conflicts between Jesus and Pharisees which run through the gospel stories. Learning this code, moreover, one learns not just particular details of specific conflicts, but one begins to sense the coherence of different theological and social points of view in the first century. One learns how the ancient classification system worked because one understands its general principles and how they are replicated again and again in specific areas.

How readers begin and what they might choose to read will probably depend on the intellectual aesthetic of the individual reader. If history and description are paramount concerns, then the works of Jacob Neusner are excellent places to begin. If cultural concerns loom large, then Douglas's writings are important; we commend in particular Purity and Danger, chs 3, 6-8. Her writings, while perennially fruitful, are not easy to mould into a workable model for interpretation of biblical texts. Hence, the materials of Malina and Neyrey precisely for their digestion and organization of anthropological approaches to the topic. Neyrey's studies of Mark, Luke, Paul and Jude and 2 Peter consciously present the issue of "purity" both in its abstract sense of order and system and in its specific and detailed realization in the world of early Christianity. Precisely because he focusses on interpretation of texts, Neyrey's writings indicate the
underlying importance of purity language for correct understanding of ancient documents and offer readers a refined series of models for their own further reading.

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10. The System Shattered and Renewed. Bibliography. Index. Purity and Danger. This remarkable book, which is written in a very graceful, lucid and polemical style, is a symbolic interpretation of the rules of purity and pollution. Mary Douglas shows that to examine what is considered as unclean in any culture is to take a looking-glass approach to the ordered patterning which that culture strives to establish. Such an approach affords a universal understanding of the rules of purity which applies equally to secular and religious life and equally to primitive and modern societies. MARY DOUGLAS. No one knows how old are the ideas of purity and impurity in any non-literate culture: to members they must seem timeless and unchanging. But there is every reason to believe that they are sensitive. Unclean, Common, Unholy (2839)(koinos probably from sun/syn = with) is an adjective which means primarily common. More generally, and usually in a negative sense, koinos means defiled (corrupted in regard to its purity or perfection), unclean (because it is treated as common and thus considered morally or spiritually impure) or profane (not holy because unconsecrated, impure, or defiled). In later Greek it came to mean what is profane as in Mark 7:15 (verb form koinoo is used) contrasted to the hallowed or sacred. â€œProfaneâ€ is used in the sense of secular, non-religious. In the Levitical sense, as opposed to holy or pure. Compare Mark 7:2, â€œWith defiled (common), that is to say, with unwashed hands.â€ See Acts 10:14 ( unholy). unclean, defiled, infamous, polluted, pollution. Usage: 88.

References. Moreover, they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. 1 Peter 1:14-16. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance Religious system and purity-impurity. â€¢ Purity concept defines the religious structuring of worlds. â€¢ Every religious system makes a distinction. between those actions that conform to its goals or sub-goals and those that do not. â€¢ Some behavior enhances the status of the. sacred; other behavior diminishes or contradicts it. â€¢ Every system has its own moral compass. â€¢ they use their left hand for unclean activities. Pregnant women are regarded as dangerous. The Lele consider pregnant women further endanger the sick. â€¢ The Nyakusa ask women to avoid going near grain. so that their presumably voracious appetites won't reduce the supply. 2/12/2019 G. A. Somaratne, BSTC1003, HKU 32. Primal peoples believe. â€¢ Breaches of avoidance and observance rules bring evil consequences. Purity and Pollution is also known as the basis of untouchability practice. For understanding hierarch process we will take an example of India in which there were four varnas in which Brahmins held the superior position and Shudras had the lowest position among everyone. It is even said that the purity of a person can be measured from his/her caste. â€¢ It was firmly believed that their mere presence can pollute their earned purity from their respective castes. In those times a Shudra condition was no less than the slaves of other countries. They were not the free man and were restricted to enter any temple, well or any public place. Untouchability was a common practice erupted from the Purity and Pollution concept. The lower castes always found harassed by the names like Chandaals.