

Jesus and Purity System in Mark's Gospel : A Leper (Mk. 1 : 40-45)

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Since the audience of Jesus was mainly Jewish, a proper understanding of the main elements of first century CE Palestinian Judaism is crucial for our interpretation of the life and ministry of Jesus. All the gospels testify that during his ministry Jesus came into contact with many people who were adversely affected by the purity regulations of Judaism. The real significance of much of the words and deeds of Jesus cannot be grasped without a proper analysis of the purity system of Judaism, which was strongly supported by the two pillars of Judaism, viz. the Law and the Temple. The aim of this paper is to examine the attitude of Jesus to a leper in Mark's Gospel (Mk. 1 : 40-45), with a view to arrive at his reaction to the purity system. The passage is interpreted, giving due consideration to the purity system of Judaism in general and the condition of the lepers in particular. The study is done on Markan redactional level and does not intend to go to the deeper historical Jesus level. No attempt is made to deal with all the passages that refer to purity regulations. This case study involving a leper is illustrative and representative rather than exhaustive of Jesus' reaction to purity laws and those who controlled them.

I Purity System of First Century Judaism¹

Purity is an integral part of Israel's total religious system. In the Hebrew scriptures the idea of purity and impurity is based on the Temple and cultic matters because biblical uses of purity and impurity occur chiefly in priestly documents. Sanders points out that purity laws were primarily concerned with the Temple because they regulate "what must be done after contracting impurity *in order to enter the temple*."² The substance of purity laws is pertinent to ordinary cultic affairs.

Purity refers to the cultural system and to the organising principle of a group. "It provides a map or series of maps which diagram the group's cultural system and locate a place for everything and everything in its place."³ Neyrey provides Jewish 'purity maps' for things, places, persons and times. Rabbinic Judaism classified and ranked the people of Israel in the following order of holiness : 1. Priests; 2. Levites; 3. Israelites; 4. Converts; 5. Freed slaves; 6. Disqualified priests (illegitimate children of priests); 7. *Netins* (Temple slaves); 8. *Mamzers* (bastards); 9. Eunuchs; 10. Those with damaged testicles; 11. Those without a penis.⁴ M.

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Kelim speaks of degrees of pollution derived from contact with things. According to this, the impurity contracted from a dead thing is exceeded by that from a menstruant, which is exceeded by bodily issues such as semen, urine, spittle and so on.

The appropriate strategy called for in this type of world is avoidance of contact with what is either too holy or marginal or unclean; there are reinforcements of boundaries and purity concerns. People who continually have contact with sinners, lepers, blind, lame, menstruants, corpses and the like are seen as spurning the map of people. All those who disrespect the map of persons, places, things or times would be judged in some way as rejecting the system and would be rated as unclean and thereby they would become a source of pollution to others.⁵

The purity system became the guiding principle in the division of the Jewish society into classes. Füssel notes that the purity system always strengthened the class system. It is easily recognisable that the 'pure Jews' always belonged to the rich class.⁶ The strictness regarding ritual purity and pollution, the difficulty in complying with it, the danger of transferring ritual purity from one person to another, and the profusion of the purity laws marginalised the masses and stratified the society economically and socially.⁷ This led to the ranking of the rich above the poor, the clergy above the laity, the urban dwellers above the rural peasantry, men above women, married above unmarried, healthy above the ill, and conformists above deviants.⁸

For ordinary people the major hindrances to religious conformity to the demands of the purity system were economic. The daily life situations of the peasants continually exposed them to contagion, and most of them could not afford to spend their time or money or goods on ritual cleansing processes.⁹ Since the purity laws played an important role in the society, several groups competed to control the purity system. The Pharisees interpolated their oral tradition into the purity laws and liberalised it in order to facilitate observance of these laws by the masses. The Sadducees refused to recognise the legitimacy of the oral tradition of the Pharisees because it threatened their control over the purity system.

The purity system established and controlled the social identity, social classifications and social boundaries of the Jewish people. The purity system was centralised within the framework of the cult because of the centrality of the Temple in the Israelite conception of the cosmos.¹⁰ The Temple establishment and the priests benefited economically from the purity system since the removal of impurity and the forgiveness of the sins committed through the violation of purity laws often accompanied an offering to the Temple.¹¹ The rich and the powerful always interpreted the purity laws to their advantage. Thus the purity system became instrumental in oppressing the poor and marginalising the people.

II The Condition of Lepers

In the New Testament the Greek term *lepra* ("leprosy") is derived from the Hebrew word *šāra'at*, which refers to human skin diseases and not simply limited to leprosy as it is understood today.¹² Often the Old Testament considers *šāra'at* as God's punishment for sinful actions (e.g., Gehazi in 2 Kings 5, Uzziah in 2 Chr. 26 : 16-21). It has been pointed out that *šāra'at* is treated as impure because of its connection with death (cf. Num. 12 : 12 and Job 18 : 13). Later Jewish tradition considered this disease as living death and healing of leprosy as equivalent to being raised from the dead.¹³ Specific rules are given in Lev. 13-14 to control the condition of leprosy. Those persons and things suffering from *šāra'at* are capable of polluting not only holy items but also profane persons and objects. It was believed that even persons or things suspected of the disease could pollute (Lev. 13:6, 34). Therefore persons and things diagnosed

or suspected of the disease need to be kept separate from the holy as well as profane spheres. They are to be restricted in or excluded from the area of human habitation or be destroyed (Lev. 13:46; Num. 5:2-3; 12: 14-15). Using social-anthropological approaches, Mary Douglas points out that what is considered impure is largely that which is irregular or out of place. Skin diseases are treated as abnormal and shunned because they do not fit with the norm of whole, healthy skin. She further argues that purity rules pertaining to the human body reflect the society's larger concern for its social borders.¹⁴ Pilch, basing on Douglas' study, maintains that since *šāra'at* condition affects the surface of persons and things, the laws pertaining to leprosy indicate the concern for the control of social boundaries.¹⁵

In order to readmit persons recovered from this disease to full communal and spiritual life, purification rites are prescribed. This involves three stages : i) bird blood and water are sprinkled on the healed person by means of a live bird, cedar wood, crimson material and hyssop; ii) the person bathes, launders and shaves at the beginning and end of a seven day intermediate period; iii) the person brings sacrifices, and blood and oil are paced on the ear, thumb and toe of the healed person (Lev. 14: 1-32). Thus those who suffered this disease had to spend money to come back to the mainstream.

The purity system of Judaism not only socially ostracised those persons who are labelled as lepers, leading to their impoverishment, but also required them to pay to the Temple and the priesthood in order to come back to normal social life. Religiously they led a miserable life because their disease was considered as punishment for their sin. Psychologically their condition was totally hopeless because leprosy was treated as living death and healing was almost an impossibility. Thus those persons who were considered lepers were oppressed socially, religiously, economically and psychologically.

III Jesus and a Leper (Mk. 1:40-45)¹⁶

The narrative context of this pericope has already been noted. Mk. 1:40-45 functions in two ways : i) It serves as the climax of the section 1:21-45, where Jesus begins with healings and exorcisms, causing him to withdraw from the crowds (1:35-36) and ends with his interaction with a leper, resulting in widespread popularity that he had to avoid all towns for less populated places; ii) It provides a transition and introduction for the conflict section in Mk. 2:1-3:6. The main theme of this pericope, viz. Jesus' conflict with purity laws and their advocates, and Jesus' inability to enter any town publicly (1:45) set the stage for the conflict narratives in Mk.2:1-3:6.¹⁷

There are variant readings for the reaction of Jesus to the leper's request, "If you will, you can make me clean." While A B C and the bulk of the MSS read *splagchunistheis* ('being moved with compassion'), only D, a few Old Latin MSS and Ephraem read *orgistheis* ('being angry'). Most of the translations have the first reading following the UBS Greek New Testament. In all the four editions of the UBS NT the reading *splagchunistheis* is preferred mainly because of the number of MSS support and it is explained that *orgistheis* could have come into the text because of a scribe's confusing the Aramaic words.¹⁸ It seems quite possible that the scribes of Mark expunged this reference to the humanity of Jesus, like Matthew's omission of Mark's characteristic references to the humanity of Jesus (e.g., see parallels to Mk. 1:43; 3:5, 20-21; 6:5-6; 8:12; 10:12, 21; 14:33) The reading *orgistheis* seems to be more probable because of the following reasons. Firstly, this fits well not only with Mk. 3:5 and 10:14 where Jesus' anger and indignation are recorded by Mark but also with Mark's picture of Jesus.¹⁹ Secondly, it is

more likely that the reading *orgistheis* would have been changed to *splagchunistheis* because it is unlikely that human emotions such as anger would have been added by the scribes to a text which originally read *splagchunistheis* which would have seemed to them perfectly appropriate.²⁰ Thirdly, this reading makes *embrimēsamenos* (v. 43) and the negative reading of *eis marturion autois* (v. 44) more intelligible. Significantly, both Mt. and Lk. replace *orgistheis* with *splagchunistheis* (Mt. 8:1-4; Lk. 5:12-16), like some scribes of Mark have done, and toned down the anger of Jesus at the purity system.²¹ “Jesus is moved to anger by the religious hypocrisy which declares this person unclean, but cannot heal him.”²² Thus the first reaction of Jesus to the purity regulations that made a person socially ostracised is anger.

It is through the leper that Jesus healed him (vv. 41, 42). Mark makes no mention of the impurity which had been imparted to him by his touch or of his removing that impurity.²³ As we have already seen, according to the Old Testament, lepers were separated from the community. Neither did the leper call-out “unclean” nor was it a problem for Jesus. The law regarding leprosy is completely left out in the narrative.²⁴ However, seen from the background of the first century Jewish purity system, Jesus is evidently crossing the lines of purity by touching the leper. As Belo says, the symbolic order determined by the purity laws is subverted by Jesus’ touching the leper because the touch did not make Jesus unclean but the unclean leper clean.²⁵ The cultically impure come to Jesus and they are made pure by his “offensive purity,” which spreads purity and turns impurity into purity.²⁶ Jesus’ touching the leper was a challenge to the existing tradition that leprosy is contagious.

This pericope emphasises not the healing but the cultic purification of the leper. It has been held that this pericope stressed healing of a leper as a messianic action of Jesus since the Jews expected the removal of leprosy in the Messianic times. Mt. 11:5 & par. and Mt. 10:8 are cited to support this.²⁷ But these verses in Mt. refer to “cleansing lepers.” It appears that the messianic action in this pericope is cultic purification. This is supported by the terms used in this pericope. The verb used for cleansing *katharisō* is mentioned thrice here (vv. 40, 41, 42) and the noun *katharismos* once (v. 44). The focus is on making and declaring clean, although healing (‘the leprosy left him’) and cleansing (‘and he was cleansed’) are distinguished in v. 42.²⁸ The Mosaic law made no provision for curing leprosy but only for the return to cultic purity after the leprosy had been healed by a physician. Only a priest is authorised to declare a healed leper clean after examining him/her, and the purification required sacrifices from the healed person (Lev. 13-14; M. Neg. 3:1).²⁹ Following J. Weiss, C. H. Cave argues that *katharitsein* meant not ‘to cleanse’ but to declare clean’ in the Levitical sense. When Jesus cleansed the leper, he seems to be disregarding the Torah and assuming priestly prerogatives.³⁰ By assigning both healing and pronouncing the cleansing to Jesus, Mark presents Jesus as the priestly servant of God-apart from the Temple and its lineage. This provides a glaring contrast to the priests of the Temple, and Jesus’ priestly action shows a radical break with the Mosaic laws.³¹

The word *embrimēsamenos* in v. 43 has caused problems for those who prefer the reading *splagchnistheis* in v. 41 and interpret v. 44 as showing Jesus’ respect for the law. Kee claims to solve the confusion and awkwardness of this word by suggesting that the word is another way of rendering the technical Semitic term for exorcising the demons, *g’r*, and what is thrown out in v. 43 is not the leper but the demon. This suggestion is far from convincing because of the lack of evidences for the use of this term for casting out demons.³² Cave observes that in the

Septuagint the verb *embrimaomai* is used in the sense as *orgisesthai* or in association with *orge*.³³ Intense emotion is involved in all the three occasions (Mk. 1:43; Jn. 11:33, 38) in which this word is applied to Jesus. The word conveys the meaning of strong feeling which boils over and finds expression.³⁴ It conveys the sense, "he stumbled over words, the loud and harsh tone of his voice indicating agitation" and the closest to its meanings is "he roared at them".³⁵ Mk. 1:43 is considered as redactional not only due to the presence of *embrimēsamenos* but also due to the use of *ekballein* and *euthus*.³⁶ The omission of *embrimēsamenos* in the accounts of Mt. (8: 1-4) and Lk. (5: 12-16) further confirm the emphasis in Mark on Jesus' furious reaction to the purity regulations and those who control them.

Jesus' command in v. 44 to the healed man to offer according to the Mosaic law for his purification has been understood by most scholars as Jesus' recognition or respect for purity laws of Judaism.³⁷ Taylor's comment that the instruction of Jesus "...illustrates the recognition by Jesus of the validity of the Mosaic law (Lev. 13:49) in cases where moral issues are not at stake," is typical of many commentators.³⁸ This interpretation can neither explain the anger of Jesus (vv. 41, 43) nor fit the wider context of Jesus' ministry, where we have overwhelming evidence to show that Jesus disapproved and disregarded the purity laws of Judaism in his words and deeds.³⁹ Moreover, as Gaston has observed, since the leper is not only healed but also cleansed, the prescribed sacrifices no longer make any sense.⁴⁰ Then, how do we account for Jesus' command to go to the priest and offer sacrifice? The key to the interpretation of this verse is the translation of the phrase *eis marturion autois* (v. 44). Strathmann has shown convincingly that this phrase means, 'witness against them' because when the phrase *eis marturion* is used with the dative of the person for whom the witness is significant, it has the sense of witness against him.⁴¹ This use of *autois* is well within the operative range of the dative case.⁴² Furthermore, the fact that in Mk. 6:11 and 13:9 *eis marturion autois* is used as a technical phrase for testimony before hostile audiences suggests that the offering was intended as a witness against the entire purity system controlled by the priests.⁴³

If v. 41 and 43 indicate that Jesus was angry, then what is it that made him angry? Scholars who accept that Jesus was angry and agitated in this pericope differ in their views regarding the cause of the anger. Some interpret the anger in v. 43 as ritual agitation by the miracle worker (e.g., 3:5; 7:34; 8:2).⁴⁴ As Guelich points out, this is unlikely because of the lack of uniformity of expressions, and none of the examples in the NT convey the sense that Jesus was taken over by a power that vents itself in various ways.⁴⁵ Others understood the anger as due to the disease of leprosy, which represented a distortion of God's creation by the forces of evil.⁴⁶ Some others explain Jesus' anger as "a righteous anger" that recognises the work of the Evil one in the sick.⁴⁷ Thus most of the interpreters think that Jesus' anger is directed either at the evil one or the disease itself. Unable to explain the anger of Jesus in v. 43 some scholars even suggest that this pericope combines more than one version of the story.⁴⁸

When interpreted in the context of the purity system of Judaism and Jesus' general attitude to it, it could be held that Jesus' anger in Mk. 1:40-45 was directed at the oppressive purity system and those who controlled it. As we have already seen above, in the purity system of Judaism, on account of their disease the lepers suffered from social as well as economic oppression.⁴⁹ The purity laws and those who controlled them not only treated the lepers as outcasts but also made them to pay for their impurity by offering sacrifice in the Temple after they had been healed. In Jesus' Temple action (Mk. 11:15-19) he attacks not only the dove-

sellers, who catered for the poor lepers who came to offer a sacrifice but also the priestly leadership.⁵⁰ In Mk. 7:1-23, his attitude to ritual purity laws is clearly negative, culminating in his repudiation of all food laws in Mk. 7:15. In Jesus' eating with the cultically unclean (Mk. 2:15-17 & par.) also we find Jesus' opposition to the purity system.⁵¹ All these fit well with the anger Jesus expressed through his strong emotions *orgistheis*, *embrimēsamenos*, healing touch, pronouncement of cleansing and the command to offer sacrifice as a witness against the purity system. Thus Markan Jesus' attitude, words and actions in his confrontation with one of the worst affected victims of the purity system of Judaism, namely a leper, point to Jesus' disapproval of the purity system, which became detrimental to the interests of the poor and the marginalised.

IV Relevancé of the Study in the Indian Context

The foregoing study provides us some insights for the formulation of a relevant Christology and for action. The following pointers which emerge from this short study may be of value in the Indian context, which is characterised by abject poverty, religious and cultural pluralism and caste discrimination.

Christology : Our investigation has shown that Mark portrays an angry Jesus in Mk. 1:40-45. This picture of Jesus is opposed to the popular understanding of Jesus as a sweet, soft, and humble person. In fact, it is this Christology that motivated some scribes to replace the angry Jesus with a more acceptable compassionate Jesus. The fact that most NT scholars who come from the affluent west prefer the compassionate Jesus to the angry Jesus also point to the general tendency among Christians to present a mild Jesus. Mark's portrait of Jesus in this pericope as fuming with anger at the forces of oppression presents a challenge to this understanding of Jesus. A proper understanding of Christ is important because it determines our Christian life. It is true that the gospels speak of the compassion of Jesus in many places (e.g., Mk. 6:34; 8:2). At the same time the Markan portrait of an angry Jesus must not be overlooked. If we understand Christ as someone who can never get angry, even in the context of injustice and oppression, then we lose our sensitivity to the problems that confront us. Whereas the portrait of an agitated and angry Jesus is a challenge to the powerful and the ruling class, the picture of a compassionate Jesus is always harmless and safe. The Christology that emerges out of this study can contribute to a Dalit Christology.

Attitude to Injustice and Oppression : The purity system of first century Judaism was oppressive to the poor and the marginalised. We have seen that Jesus opposed not only those who supported the system but also the system itself by disregarding the purity laws. He was not reluctant to express his anger at it and challenges it through his attitude, words and deeds. Jesus' attitude to injustice done to the marginalised groups, like lepers, can motivate us to follow the example of Jesus in our society today. In our country poverty is not simply an economic problem. This problem is produced and perpetuated by a system of exploitative structures which makes the rich richer and poor poorer.⁵² Inequitable distribution of natural resources, economic wealth and life opportunities are the root causes of this situation, not only in the national level but in the international level also.⁵³ In this context Mark's presentation of Jesus' subversion of the oppressive system of purity and pollution through his words and deeds encourages us to actively oppose the forces of oppression and injustice in our country.

Open Community : Discrimination on the basis of caste is a widespread problem both inside the Christian church in India and outside. Whereas the so-called high-caste Hindus used the Scriptures (e.g., *Rg Veda* X, 90, 11-12; *Manu Dharma Shastra* VIII, 413-414) to justify

the division of the society on the basis of caste, the Jews of the first century employed their Scriptures (especially, Mosaic law and their interpretations) to legitimise the stratification of the society, using extensive purity regulations. Parallels could be drawn between the high-caste Hindus' and Jews' use of Scriptures in this regard, and the results of the stratifications. As in the case of first century Jews, in our country too those who are considered low-caste are discriminated against and oppressed on the basis of caste, while the high-caste enjoy the power, wealth and privileges. Jesus' direct attack on the oppressive purity system of his day and its various manifestations can inspire us to oppose the caste system both inside and outside the church in all possible ways. Jesus endeavoured to create a counter-cultural community, where all are treated equally and all are committed to service.

Conclusion

The foregoing study of Jesus' attitude to a leper in Mk. 1:40-45, taking into consideration the dynamics of the purity system of Judaism and the condition of lepers, sheds light on Jesus' attitude to the purity system. The analysis of the passage has shown that when Jesus came across a person who was doubly oppressed by the purity system and its custodians, his emotions, actions and words expressed strong protest against the injustice done to the underprivileged of the society. The biting criticism of Jesus in Mark's gospel against the purity system, which proved to be detrimental to the interests of the poor, the suffering and the outcasts, presents us with a corrective to the popular picture of a soft and sweet Jesus. His actions beckon us to actively oppose oppression and injustice in our society and work towards open Kingdom communities characterised by sharing, service, humility and equality.

NOTES

1. This section draws heavily from Sam P. Mathew, *Temple-criticism in Mark's Gospel : The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple During the First Century CE* (Doctoral Dissertation, SATHRI, Bangalore, 1998, pp. 100-103, subsequently published by ISPCK, New Delhi, 1999)
2. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London : SCM, 1985), p. 182; However, J. Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, Studies in Judaism and Late Antiquity (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 28-30, 108 points out, purity was neither primarily a cultic concern, nor important only when a non-priest intended to go to the Temple.
3. J. H. Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity in Mark's Gospel," in *Semeia* 35, ed., John H. Elliot (Decatur, GA : Scholars Press, 1986), p. 93.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96; T. Megillah 2:7; M. Kelim 1:6-9; see Mathew, *Temple-criticism*, pp. 100-101 for the purity maps of places and times.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
6. K. Füssel, *Drei Tage mit Jesus im Temple : Einführung in die materialistische Lektüre der Bibel* (Münster : Edition Liberación, 1987), p. 34.
7. A. Oppenheimer, *The 'Am Ha-aretz : A Study of the Social History of the Jewish People in the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 18; also J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus : An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions During the New Testament Period*, trans. F. H. & C. H. Cave (London : SCM, 1969), pp. 271-358.
8. J. H. Elliott, "Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts : A Contrast in Social Institutions," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts : Models for Interpretation*, ed. J. H. Neyrey (Peabody, Massachusetts : Hendrickson, 1991), p. 222.
9. C. Myers, *Binding the Strongman : A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, New York : Orbis, 1988), p. 76.
10. Neusner, *Purity in Judaism*, p. 29.

11. See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 183.
12. D. P. Wright & R. N. Jones, "Leprosy", in *ABD*, Vol. IV (1992), p. 277.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 281; 2 Kings 5 : 7; H. L. Strack, & P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*. 4 vols. (München, 1922-28), Vol. 4, p. 745.
14. M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London : SCM, 1966), pp. 114-28.
15. J. J. Pilch, "Biblical Leprosy and Body Symbolism," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 11 (1983), pp. 103-113.
16. Much of the material in this section is drawn from Mathew, *Temple-criticism*, pp. 190-95.
17. R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8: 26*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 34 A (Dallas : Word Books, 1989), p. 73.
18. So B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York : United Bible Societies, 1971), pp. 76-77. Although Metzger gives a D rating to this reading in his commentary, a B rating is given to the reading *splagchnistheis* in the UBS Greek NT fourth edition!
19. J. K. Elliott, "An Eclectic Textual Commentary on the Greek Text of Mark's Gospel," in *The Language and Style of the Gospel of Mark : An Edition of C. H. Turner's 'Notes on Marcan Usage' Together with Other Comparable Studies* (Leiden/New York/Köln : E. J. Brill, 1993), pp. 194-95. He also agrees that the slender MSS support for the reading *orgistheis* should not be relevant and points to the UBS Greek NT 3rd ed. committee's preference for readings with slender MS support in Jn. 9:36; Col. 2:2; Acts. 16:12 and Jn. 3:27.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 195; Turner, *Mark*, p. 17; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London : Macmillan, 1959), p. 187 also prefer the reading *orgistheis*.
21. It is quite probable that Mk. 1:41a is redactional. So E. Best, *Temptation and Passion : The Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge : University Press, 1965), p. 116; R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 212; J. Schreiber, "Die Christologie des Markusevangeliums." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 58 (1961), p. 183; E. Schweizer, *The Goodnews According to Mark : A Commentary on the Gospel*, trans. D. H. Madvig (London : SPCK, 1971), p. 57.
22. E. J. Broadhead, "Christology as Polemic and Apologetic : The Priestly Portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark," *JSNT* 47 (1992), p. 25.
23. This is seen in Mt. 8:2-4; 10:1,8; 11:5; Lk. 5:12-14; 17:22; 17:11-19). This is also true with regard to the touch of the woman with a flow of blood (Mk. 5:24-34 and par.) or touching a dead (Mk. 5:35-43) or coming into contact with demoniacs (Mk. 5:1ff). Neusner, *Idea of Purity in Judaism*, p. 60.
24. H. Sariola, *Markus und das Gesetz : Eine Redaktionkritische Untersuchung* (Helsinki : Suomalainen Tiedeakatemei, 1990), p. 67; L. Gaston, *No Stone on Another : Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels* (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1970), p. 91.
25. Belo, *Materialist Reading*, p. 106.
26. K. Berger, "Jesus als Pharisäer und frühe Christen als Pharisäer," *NovT* 30 (1988), pp. 240, 247. Jesus' eating with "tax-collectors and sinners" (Mk. 2:15-17) has the same effect.
27. For instance, Michaelis, "*lepra...*", *TDNT*, Vol. 4 (1967), p. 233; also Guelich, *Mark 1-8: 26*, p. 73.
28. Gaston, *No Stone*, p. 91.
29. *Ibid.* E. P. Sanders, *Judaism : Practice and Belief 63 BCE-66 CE* (London : SCM; Philadelphia : Fortress, 1992), p. 177; J. D. M. Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament*, IV (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1986), pp. 5-6.
30. C. H. Cave, "The Leper : Mark 1:40-45," *NTS* 25, no. 2 (1979), p. 246. He also notes that in the Greek version of the Law of Leprosy (Lev. 13-14) the characteristic meaning of *katharitsein* is "to declare clean" and there is no reference to healing at all (*Ibid.*).
31. E. J. Broadhead, "Christology as Polemic and Apologetic : The Priestly Portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark." *JSNT* 47 (1992), pp. 24-25. Crossan says that both the performing of the cure and declaring cured "sets Jesus' power and authority on par or even above that of the Temple itself" (J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus : The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1991), p. 322).
32. H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age* (London : SCM, 1977), p. 35; *Idem*, "Aretology and Gospel," *JBL* 92 (1973), p. 418.
33. Cave, "Leper," p. 247.
34. Taylor, *Mark*, p. 188.

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35. J. H. Bernard, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, ICC (Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1928, repr. 1958), II pp. 329-10. But unfortunately, most of the translations read "he strictly charged him" (e.g., RSV).
36. E.g., Bultmann, *History*, pp. 212, 237; Schreiber, *Theologie*, p. 163; Taylor, *Mark*, p. 188; E. J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Markan Gospel. A Study of Syntax and Vocabulary as Guides to Redaction in Mark*, SNTSMS 33 (Cambridge : University Press, 1978), p. 90.
37. E.g., T. A. Burkill, "Anti-Semitism in St. Mark's Gospel," *NovT* 3 (1959), p. 41; E. W. Stegemann & W. Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte : Die Anfänge in Judentum und die Christuskirchen in der Mediterranean Welt* (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln : W. Kohlhammer, 1995), p. 186; D. J. Antwi, "Did Jesus Consider His Death to be an Atoning Sacrifice?" *Interpretation* 45, no. 1 (1991), p. 19; D. E. Nineham, *Gospel of St. Mark : A Commentary* (London : Penguin Books, 1963), p. 87.
38. Taylor, *Mark*, p. 190. R. P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity : Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7*, JSNT Sup. 13 (Sheffield : JSOT Press, 1986), p. 109. Sariola, *Markus und Gesetz*, pp. 68-69 also sees Jesus' attitude to law as positive, but finds implicit negative attitude to law because when the purity laws are violated it is not spelt out by Mark (e.g., touching the leper, unannounced coming of the leper etc.). Theissen finds here a reflection of the less radical and ambiguous attitude of the Palestinian Christian communities who accepted the priestly declarations of wholeness (Mk. 1:44). They considered the declaration of the wholeness by the priest superfluous because they were aware that they had been released from the Temple tax (cf. Mt. 5:23; 17:24 ff.) [G. Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 18-19]. Crossan argues that though the original story presented Jesus as an "authoritative and healing alternative to the Temple," obedience to purity regulations was added to it later. Thus, for Crossan, in the present Mk. 1:40-45 "Jesus both is and is not a conscientious and obedient observer of Levitical purity regulations." (Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, p. 322). But we maintain that Mark's attitude to the purity laws was far from ambiguous and clearly negative (See Mathew, *Temple-criticism*, pp. 190-204 for details).
39. The disapproval of the purity system is also seen in Jesus' table fellowship and in the total rejection of the ritual purity laws.
40. Gaston, *No Stone*, p. 91.
41. For instance, in Gen. 31:44; Deut. 31:26; Jos. 24:27; Jam. 5:3; Mk. 6:11, cf. Lk. 9:5. H. Strathmann, "*martus, martureo, marturia...*," *TDNT* 4, pp. 502-03; Cave, "The Leper," p. 249.
42. See A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville : Broadman, 1934), pp. 538-39. Broadhead, "Christology as Polemic," p. 25.
43. Myers, *Binding the Strongman*, p. 153; E. Lohmeyer, *The Lord of the Temple : A Study of the Relation Between the Cult and the Gospel*, trans. S. Todd (Richmond, Virginia : John Knox Press, 1962), pp. 25-26; Budesheim, "Jesus and the Disciples", p. 198 says it means "the testimony of Moses against the Jewish cultic regulations and its priests." Also Gaston, *No Stone*, p. 91. Some consider it as a testimony against the priests for their refusal to believe in Jesus' authority (e.g., H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, *NovT Sup VIII* (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 486; S. H. Smith, "The Role of Jesus' Opponents in the Markan Drama." *NTS* 35, no. 2 (1989), p. 164). Kee, *Community*, p. 210, n. 5 and Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, p. 323 interpret the phrase as witness against the priests. However, some scholars translate the phrase as "witness to them" and see no hostility here (e.g., R. A. Gundry, *Mark : A Commentary on the Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Michigan : Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), p. 103; S. E. Johnson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark*. Harper NT Commentaries (New York : Harper & Row, 1960), p. 53; W. Schmithals, *W. Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 2/1, ÖTKNT (Gütersloh : Gütersloher Verlaghaus; Würzburg : Echter-Verlag, 1979), p. 145; Taylor, *Mark*, p. 190). Gnillka, *Markus*, I, p. 91; E. Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu : Eine Erklärung des Markus-Evangelium und der kanonischen Parellelen* (Berlin : Töpelmann, 1966), p. 95; E. Stegemann, *Das Markusevangelium als Ruf in die Nachfolge* (Unpublished Dissertation, Heidelberg, 1974), p. 124; and J. P. Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as a Model for Action : A Reader-Response Commentary* (New York/Mahwek, N. J. : Paulist Press, 1992), p. 56 consider the phrase as referring to official confirmation that a cure has occurred.
44. E.g., R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, HTKTNT 2/1 (Freiburg : Herder, 1977), p. 144; J. Gnillka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 2 vols. EKK 2/1 (Köln/Zürich : Benziger/Neukirchener, 1978), p. 93.
45. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 74.
46. E.g., Schweizer, *Goodnews*, p. 58; Grundmann, *Madras*, p. 68; and Taylor, *Mark*, p. 188 among others.

47. So Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 74, following K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium : Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Muenchen : Koesel, 1970), p. 67.
48. E.g., Lohmeyer, *Markus*, p. 47; Kertelge, *Wunder*, p. 68.
49. The woman with a flow of blood (Mk. 5:25-34), who was healed by Jesus, also suffered from this double oppression and even more as a Jewish woman. Here also we find Jesus bypassing purity regulations relating to women. It is noteworthy that there is no command here regarding offering for the purification of this healed woman according to the law.
50. See Mathew, *Temple-criticism*, p. 156.
51. See *Ibid.*, pp. 195-203 for details. Crossan argues that Jesus' "open commensality", i.e., his willingness to eat with anyone, is the key to understanding Jesus and it implies a total rejection of the purity laws (J. D. Crossan, *Jesus : A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco : Harper Collins, 1994), p. 70.
52. K. C. Abraham, "The Struggle for Peace and Justice as a Context for Biblical Interpretation," *Religion and Society* 21, no. 1 (1974), p. 50.
53. Whereas in India 86 families own nearly 40% of wealth in the country, 200 richest people in the world own the wealth of 41% of the world's people. See G. Mar Osthathios, *Theology of a Classless Society* (Madras : CLS, 1980), p. 139; also a report on the UN Human Development Report 1999 in C. T. Kurien, "Globalisation with a Human Face," *Frontline*, August 27, 1999, p. 78.