

PURITY CONCEPTIONS IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS:  
'RITUAL-PHYSICAL' AND  
'MORAL' PURITY IN A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

Gudrun Holtz

In recent years, a large number of scholarly works have been published on purity issues in the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS). Taking its point of departure from J. Klawans' book *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, the present article aims to reexamine two aspects of the discussion about purity in the DSS. The first aspect is the question of the adequacy of extant diachronic models to explain the different perspectives on the relationship between ritual-physical and moral (im)purity.<sup>1</sup> The issue is explicitly discussed in part one and is in the background of parts two and three. The second aspect concerns the question of the specific forms of the relationship between ritual-physical and moral impurity in the scrolls (parts 2 and 3). In this context, the adequacy of the category of 'moral' purity for parts of the texts is problematized and a further category, namely 'constitutional' impurity, introduced (part 2).

1. RITUAL-PHYSICAL AND MORAL PURITY IN A  
DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE: THE PROBLEM

On the question of the development of the relationship between ritual-physical and moral purity in the DSS, J. Klawans and E. Regev have each in recent years proposed models differentiating three stages.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Mr. Trevor Hyde for revising the English of this article, and the participants of the workshop "Reinheit als kulturelle Leitdifferenz" held at Bochum in January 2009 for their contributions to the discussion of the paper, which helped me sharpen some of the arguments forwarded here.

The phenomenon of what in scholarship is mostly described as 'ritual' purity—cf. e.g. Klawans, *Impurity*, 23—here is called 'ritual-physical' purity. This term is used to indicate, on the one hand, that the purity issues in view concern a person's body and, on the other, that there are rituals that concern non-physical aspects of purity as well, namely, its ethical-moral dimension; see below, p. 531. The term 'ritual' is used in keeping with common scholarly terminology. In this article the term 'purity' is used both for the overall phenomenon of purity and impurity and for the state of cleanliness as opposed to impurity.

<sup>2</sup> See Klawans, *Impurity*, 48–56; 67–91, esp. 91; Regev, "Temple", 252–60.

Klawans recognizes a “clear evolution of ideas”. The first stage, as represented by 11QT and 4QMMT, he sees as characterized by the non-integration of physical and moral impurity. The third stage, as represented by 1QS, 1QM and 1QH, he believes to show the “full integration of ritual and moral impurity into a single conception of defilement”, whereas the second stage, as seen in CD, is said to be a combination of both the first and the third stages.<sup>3</sup> According to Regev, on the other hand, in the first stage physical purity clearly dominates, as is demonstrated principally in 4QMMT, a letter from the Teacher of Righteousness and his group to the high priest, later called the “wicked priest”. Only at the end of the letter is moral impurity, of which ‘the multitude of the people’ is accused (C 6–9), to be found. Regev judges the attempt of the ‘wicked priest’ to assassinate the Teacher to be decisive in the further development of the idea of purity in Qumran. Consequently, the Teacher’s group disqualified the ‘wicked priest’ as morally impure.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, in CD, one of the documents ascribed to the second phase, the defilement of the temple is understood to be due to the moral impurity of the high priest and some of the worshippers.<sup>5</sup> Finally, in 1QS, the document representing the third stage, “immorality, wickedness, and their defiling consequences seem to pervade the entire world outside the realm of the Qumran sect”.<sup>6</sup>

Both models have difficulties in the second and third stages. Both Klawans and Regev adduce texts from CD 4–6 for the second phase, which they understand in terms of moral impurity. These interpretations, however, are not without problems.

At the center of Klawans’ analysis is CD 5:6–9. He rightly understands the prohibition of incest (ll. 8–9) as illustrating the moral dimension of pure and impure. He claims that the same is true for the sin of cohabitation with a menstruant (ll. 6–7), since the wording of the passage “is clearly related in some direct way to the . . . prohibition of cohabitation with a menstruant (Lev 18:19)”.<sup>7</sup> This rule is part of the Holiness Code, which for Klawans is a reflection of the idea of moral defilement.<sup>8</sup> Several arguments, however, can be adduced for interpreting this text primarily in terms of ritual-physical impurity: (1) The 4QD materials point to the fact

<sup>3</sup> Klawans, *Impurity*, 91.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 1QpHab 8:8–13.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Regev, “Temple”, 257–59, on the basis of CD 6:11–17 and 4:15–19.

<sup>6</sup> Regev, “Temple”, 259.

<sup>7</sup> Klawans, *Impurity*, 54.

<sup>8</sup> But see Himmelfarb, “Impurity”, 12–13.

that the prohibition of cohabitation with a menstruant is formulated with not just Lev 18:19<sup>9</sup> but also Lev 15:24, a text clearly dealing with physical impurity, in view.<sup>10</sup> (2) In CD 5:6–7, two commonalities with Lev 15:24 can be observed: The texts share the verb ‘lie’ (שכב) as well as the idea of transmission of impurity from the woman to the man. (3) According to Lev 15:31, the physical impurities mentioned earlier in the chapter, among them impurity due to cohabitation with a menstruant, are apt to pollute the temple. Exactly this is presupposed in CD 5:6–7. Although physical impurity is the main thrust of CD 5:6–7, an interpretation that includes the additional context of CD/4QD illustrates that a moral dimension of the text cannot be completely dismissed.<sup>11</sup>

Klawans’ main example for moral impurity in CD, then, turns out to be a combination of both physical and moral impurity. In his model, the text serves as a major example for the first phase of the development of purity conceptions in Qumran. Because the main example for the first phase is not without difficulties, Klawans’ second phase, defined as a combination of the first and the third phases, stands on rather weak ground as well. In addition, it may be noted that the CD materials adduced for the third phase are rather sparse.<sup>12</sup>

Regev’s interpretation of CD materials for the second phase involves similar problems. According to CD 4:17–18, the three nets of Belial are fornication, wealth and defilement of the temple. Regev understands the latter in terms of moral defilement, thereby ignoring the fact that the defilement of the temple is interpreted in CD 5:6–9 in both moral and physical terms. Furthermore, the high priest who stands center stage in Regev’s argument is not even mentioned.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. 4Q273 5 4–5, עד ... מימי ספרה את דם [...] [...] האש את איש את האש [...] אשר י [...] and see Werrett, *Purity*, 87.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 4Q266 6 i 1–2, על [...] אלה ע[ון] נדה על, and see Werrett, *Purity*, 87.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. 4Q266 6 ii 1–2, a text alluding to Lev 15:24, which interprets the impurity of the male caused by prohibited cohabitation with a menstruant as iniquity (עון נדה). However, it is not physical impurity as caused by the flux that is morally defiling, but rather the transgression of the law; see Himmelfarb, “Impurity”, 21. For reasons of space, the arguments from the context adduced by Klawans, *Impurity*, 52–56, in support of his strictly moral reading of CD 5:6–7 cannot be discussed in detail. Suffice it to note that they are not without difficulties either.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Klawans, *Impurity*, 75–88.

<sup>13</sup> The latter is true of Regev’s second example, CD 6:11–17, as well; cf. idem, “Temple”, 258–59.

As concerns his third stage, Klawans argues both with texts that pre-date the foundation of the yahad and with texts that go back to the Community itself. Basic to his argument is the passage about the two spirits (1QS 3:13–4:26), which is believed by a number of scholars today to have originated between 200 and 150 BCE.<sup>14</sup> The same holds true of 4QTohorot (4Q274–278)<sup>15</sup> and seems to apply as well to those of his prooftexts from 1QS 5–9 that have parallels in 4QS 256 and 4QS 258. Both manuscripts go back to the very early phase of the community, possibly to the period before the Teacher of Righteousness joined the predecessor group of the yahad.<sup>16</sup>

This is to say that much of the material adduced by Klawans for the third phase of his model is older than 4QMMT and CD, which texts are claimed by him for the first and second phases.<sup>17</sup> There is good reason to assume that the different relationships between physical and moral impurity described by both Klawans and Regev already existed by 150 BCE.<sup>18</sup> It therefore seems necessary to ask for non-chronological models explaining the different relationships between ritual-physical and moral purity as well.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. RITUAL-PHYSICAL, MORAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL PURITY

In current scholarship the categories most discussed are ritual-physical and moral purity. Further clarifications, however, seem necessary.

### 2.1. *The Relationship between Ritual-Physical and Moral Purity*

As mentioned above, the third phase of Klawans' model is characterized by the identification of ritual-physical and moral impurity.<sup>20</sup> Other scholars, such as Regev and Himmelfarb, however, understand both dimensions

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Lange, Lichtenberger, "Qumran", 57.

<sup>15</sup> See Harrington, *Texts*, 57.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lange, Lichtenberger, "Qumran", 58.

<sup>17</sup> This argument partially applies to the texts selected by Regev for the first and second phases of his model as well.

<sup>18</sup> This is self-evident as regards the texts of the first phase. The texts of phase two are connected by Klawans with texts clearly dating before 150 BCE (*Jub.*). For the third phase, see n. 13–15 and the following.

<sup>19</sup> For a further critique of Klawans' diachronic model, cf. Werrett, *Purity*, 298–303.

<sup>20</sup> Further cf. Newton, *Concept*, 40; 46–47; 49, and Baumgarten, "Rituals", 209; concerning 4Q512, Baumgarten, *Damascus Document*, 56; 146.

to exist side by side.<sup>21</sup> In what follows, this controversy is analyzed afresh on the basis of two major examples that Klawans adduces to support his thesis of the identification of ritual-physical and moral impurity.

The author of 1QH 9 [1]:21–24 characterizes the human 'I' in four pairs. The first pair describes its material dimension: The 'I' is "a creature of clay and fashioned with water". The second pair is made up of two terms that need to be clarified: "a foundation of shame and a source of impurity (סוד הערוה ומקור הנדה)".<sup>22</sup> The third human 'I' is described as "an oven of iniquity and a building of sin"; these attributes are related to human action and clearly have a moral dimension. The final characterization concerns the spiritual-moral dimension of the human 'I': It is "a spirit of error and depravity without knowledge", to which "terrified by your judgments" is added as a third attribute.

As concerns the second pair, the semantic evidence and its position in the sequence of terms advocate an understanding in terms of physical impurity. ערוה is "used regularly for the dualistic portrayal of man's corporeal nature";<sup>23</sup> מקור refers to "a source of liquid flowing from the body".<sup>24</sup> As is usual in the DSS, נדה here is used of pollution caused by death and bodily discharges.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, 1QH 9 is not concerned with characterizing iniquity and sin as 'ritually' defiling<sup>26</sup> but with qualifying the bodily existence of humans in terms of physical impurity. Physical and moral impurity in 1QH 9, then, stand side by side, representing the two dimensions of the human 'I', the physical and the moral.

This can be seen similarly in 1QS 3:3–12. The text first contends with the impossibility of physical and moral purification for those who refuse to join the covenant set up within the realm of the yahad (ll. 3–6). In its second part (ll. 6–12), the conditions are formulated under which purification seems possible. Both parts of the text are closely related and interpret each other. Lines 6–8 clearly show that the impossibility of non-members becoming pure by 'acts of atonement' (כפורים; l. 4) refers to

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Himmelfarb, "Impurity", 9–10; 36–37; and Regev, "Temple", 266–77; see further Harrington, "Nature".

<sup>22</sup> If not mentioned otherwise, the translation follows García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Scrolls*.

<sup>23</sup> Baumgarten, *Tohorot*, 93.

<sup>24</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 75. In Lev 12:7 and 20:18 מקור refers to the female flux, in 1QM 7:6 and 4Q514 4 7 to male sexual organs; see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 973. For מקור הנדה further cf. 1QH 20 [12]:25.

<sup>25</sup> See Baumgarten, *Tohorot*, 86; but see below p. 526 with n. 32.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Klawans, *Impurity*, 76; 84.

moral impurity due to iniquity and sin. From the term ‘flesh’ (בשר; l. 9), however, which signifies the corporeal nature of humans, it follows that the purification waters mentioned in ll. 4–5 refer to physical impurity.

But both physical and moral purity, according to 1QS 3:3–12, are obtained in the first place not by human purificatory rituals but by the Holy Spirit, which effects the cleansing of the human spirit by transforming it into a spirit of uprightness and humility (ll. 7–8).<sup>27</sup> In this spirit, “compliance of his soul with all the laws of God”, that is, the law as interpreted by the yahad, is attained. Only then, “his flesh is cleansed by being sprinkled with cleansing waters . . .” (ll. 8–9). Moral cleansing, then, is the precondition for the efficacy of the cleansing waters.

Again, what is in view is not the identification of moral and physical purity. Rather, both human acts of purification, the moral atonement of sin by the spirit of uprightness and humility and the—ritual-physical—cleansing of the flesh, although intimately linked, remain distinct. Yet, the clear prevalence of moral purity can be observed. It is best explained by the preceding context, which is about the conversion of the ‘heart’ from wickedness to the ‘just judgments’ of the yahad (2:25–3:3).

## 2.2. *Moral and Constitutional Impurity*

Against the background of 1QH 9:21–24 and 1QS 3:3–12, the question arises of whether ‘moral’ is an adequate category to describe the type of impurity in view in these and similar texts. The category of ‘moral’ impurity as used by Klawans on the basis of texts from the Hebrew Bible presupposes the possibility of choosing between good and evil, between obedience and disobedience to the law. In 1QH 9 and 1QS 3, however, humans do not have the capability to act morally. They are subject to circumstances that only allow them to sin. As little as they are able to influence the state of their bodily purity, so are they unable to affect their actions. The related type of impurity here is described as ‘constitutional’ impurity. It is a fundamental anthropological category that applies to all human beings without exception. For all of them, willingly or unwillingly, share in basically the same anthropological condition set for them by God and/or his agents. ‘Constitutional impurity’ is concerned with what is possessed by humans from birth. It cannot be completely removed by ritual

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the parallel expressions . . . ברוח עצת אמת אל דרכי איש יכופרו (ll. 6–7), וברוח ישר וענו(ת)ה תכופר חטתו (ll. 7–8) and קדושה ליחד באמתו יטהר מכול עוונותו (l. 8).

means. Similarly, 'genealogical' impurity cannot be overcome ritually. 'Constitutional' impurity, however, differs from 'genealogical' im/purity in that it transcends any human divide: the divide between Israel and the nations as well as genealogical differentiations within Israel or, as the case may be, within Essene Judaism, namely priests, Levites, Israelites and proselytes. 'Genealogical purity' serves inner-human categorizations that aim at defining boundaries between different groups of human beings. By way of contrast, 'constitutional purity' operates within the opposition of God's perfection and holiness and human imperfection.

'Constitutional impurity' is represented in two forms: the wretchedness of the human 'I' in contrast to the glory of God on the one hand and, in the context of dualism, rootedness in predestination on the other.<sup>28</sup> The first form manifests in 1QS 11:9–15.<sup>29</sup> The hymn first describes the wretchedness of the human 'I' who cannot but sin:

9 . . . However, I belong to evil humankind, to the assembly of unfaithful flesh; my failings, my iniquities, my sins . . . with the depravities of my heart 10 belong to the assembly of worms and of those who walk in darkness. For to man (does not belong) his path.

The hymn then turns to praise the power, mercy and justice of the God (ll. 10–15) who is the only hope for the wretched 'I':

14 . . . he will judge me in the justice of his truth, and in his plentiful goodness always atone (יכפר) for all my sins; in his justice he will cleanse me (יטהר) from the uncleanness of 15 the human being (מנדת אנוש) and from the sin of the sons of man (חטאת בני אדם), so that I can give God thanks for his justice and The Highest for his majesty.

Ritual-physical impurity and moral sinfulness are the two dimensions that characterize human constitution.<sup>30</sup> They cannot be overcome but by God's purifying acts. Human purity is the precondition for cultic

<sup>28</sup> The examples of the first form are part of Essene prayer texts that are recited by the very 'pious' ones who perceive the most fundamental divide to be not among humans but between God and human beings. They thus tend to obliterate inner-human divisions. The passages adduced for the second form stem from the teaching of the two spirits, 1QS 3:13–4:26. This text, again, is concerned with humans in general, without any sociological identifications being discernible; cf. Holtz, *Gott*, 90–91.

<sup>29</sup> For another example, see 1QH 9 [1]:21–24 (cf. above, 2.1). Impurity here is understood as a fundamental anthropological element that characterizes human beings as contrasted with the power and glory of God (ll. 21, 24).

<sup>30</sup> Further cf. 1QS 11:21, where this aspect is circumscribed by being 'born of woman'; also see Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4; Ps 51:7. 1QS 11 probably goes back to early Essene times; cf. Lange, Lichtenberger, "Qumran", 58.

participation (l. 15), since purification achieves the partial overcoming of the absolute opposition between God and humans and thus allows humans to approach God and sing his praise. To humans as such, this is an impossibility, for the totally impure cannot praise the Holy one.<sup>31</sup>

The second form of what is called here ‘constitutional impurity’ is, as mentioned, rooted in predestination, which in the pre-150 BCE teaching of the two spirits (1QS 3:13–4:26) is a form of dualism. In contrast to the texts discussed so far, however, this text only deals with questions of moral purity.

After characterizing the effects of the spirit of truth (4:2–8), the text proceeds to specify the works of the spirit of deceit (ll. 9–11). These works are moral in nature, among them greed, sluggishness in the service of justice and wickedness (l. 9) and here, most importantly:

Impudent enthusiasm for appalling acts performed in a lustful passion (וקנאת זדון מעשי תעובה ברוח זנות), filthy paths in the service of impurity (ודרכי נדה בעבודת טמאה) (l. 10).

The thoroughly moral context advocates a moral understanding of these expressions. Similarly to passages in the Hebrew Bible, the term נדה, which originally denotes physical impurity, is used in a metaphorical sense here.<sup>32</sup> The offenses mentioned in ll. 9–11 are for the most part not especially grave sins but quite common behaviors that are part of human constitution or, in the words of the Qumranites, part of the ‘structure of man’<sup>33</sup> in the period of the existence of the two spirits.

Characteristic of the teaching of the two spirits is a cosmic dualism specified in anthropological and ethical terms.<sup>34</sup> According to the text, each human being, to a different degree, is under the power of both the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit (4:24–25). As was “decided in the predestined order of creation”,<sup>35</sup> God has allotted a portion of both spirits

<sup>31</sup> Further cf. 1QH 9 [1]:31–33; 1QH 19 [11]:10–14; 4Q284 7 2 (?); 4Q512 29–32 9 (?).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ezek 7:19–20; Lam 1:8, 17; Zech 13:1 (לנדה), and Ezek 36:17 (בטמאת הנדה). A metaphorical understanding of the second expression is further supported by the corresponding term “magnificent purity which detests all unclean idols (וטהרת כבוד מתעב כול גלולי)” (l. 5) of the preceding passage. To Klawans, *Impurity*, 76, the first expression quoted from l. 10 serves as an example of the identification of moral and ritual purity.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. 1QS 4:20; 1QH 9:22.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Frey, “Patterns”, 290–95.

<sup>35</sup> Frey, “Patterns”, 293. For a further example, see 1QS 5:13–14; cf. below n. 40. Whether what is called ‘predestination’ by Frey and others—e.g. Broshi, “Predestination”, 241, as well as in the present article—should rather be called ‘determination’ is a matter of debate. By way of contrast, Lange, Lichtenberger, “Qumran”, 69, e.g., talk about the “grundlegende

to each individual, who will thus perform a majority of works of light or darkness and will receive the corresponding fruits eschatologically. In this conception, the individual is not a moral subject who is free to choose his or her actions, but rather acts out the spirits' allotment of works.

Purification here is achieved not in this time but only at the end of time, when God is to purify the structure of the human being,

20 . . . ripping out all spirit of injustice from the innermost part 21 of his flesh (בשרו), and cleansing him with the spirit of holiness from every wicked deed. He will sprinkle over him the spirit of truth like lustral water (כמי) (in order to cleanse him) from all the abhorrences of deceit and (from) the defilement 22 of the unclean spirit (ברוח נדה).

God, in other words, eschatologically purifies humans by removing all prerequisites to do evil and by empowering them through the Holy Spirit to walk in holiness. As humans in this time cannot but perform both good and evil works, according to their portion of the two spirits, so eschatologically purified humans cannot but act according to the will of God. Freedom of choice is not given, neither in this nor in the coming world. Although human impurity in 1QS 3–4 is the consequence of ethical misbehavior, its ultimate reason, thus, is constitutional, not moral.

The constitutional dimension of impurity, however, is not a general feature of the writings of the yahad, not even in 1QS. This can be seen from a passage from Qumran law that is found in different versions in 1QS 5 and its earlier parallel, 4QS 258. The opening statement of 1QS 5–9 reads:

1 This is the rule of the men of the Community who freely volunteer to convert (המתנדבים לשוב) from all evil and to keep themselves steadfast in all he commanded. . . . They should keep apart from the congregation of 2 the men of injustice.

The term 'to freely volunteer' presupposes freedom of choice.<sup>36</sup> The argument, then, is not constitutional but moral. But there are further differentiations to be made. 4Q258 i 5–8 says:

---

Determination allen Geschehens in der Schöpfung". 'Predestination', according to their definition, is there if the "Festlegung der Welt und des Menschen" is connected with the "Heils- bzw. Unheilsperspektive", which, however, in 1QS 3:13–4:26 is the case; see esp. 4:6–8:11; 14:26. Since the idea of predestination as described is part of the dualistic passage 1QS 3:13–4:26 too, in the present paper it is held that 'constitutional impurity' is rooted in predestination as part of an overall dualism.

<sup>36</sup> For this translation, cf. Conrad, "נדב", 238; 245, and García Martínez, *Tigchelaar, Scrolls*, 71; 79, etc.

5... And whoever enters the council of 6 [the] Com[mun]ity shall... 7...  
 [...be segregated from all the men of] injustice, [and] they are not to  
 approach the pure food of [the hol]y 8 men.

The text presupposes that the men of injustice would, if allowed to approach the pure food of the holy men, morally pollute it. The moral interpretation of the passage is suggested by its context: The men of injustice have not converted from evil and joined the Community but continue to “walk in the stubbornness of (their) heart” (l. 4). Consequently, they keep from exercising the works demanded, such as “humility, justice and right, [compassionate] love [and se]mely behaviour” (l. 3).<sup>37</sup> Since the whole passage is morally centered, without aspects of ‘physical’ impurity even being mentioned, the main thrust of the text is ‘moral’ impurity. ‘Physical’ impurity is included, if at all, in the general remark on converting to the Law of Moses as interpreted by the Community (ll. 6–7). The constitutional dimension, however, is missing.<sup>38</sup>

A later variant, 1QS 5:13–14, which is supposed to go back to the group behind 1QS 1–3,<sup>39</sup> shares some of the aspects of 4Q258 but also contains considerable differences:

13... He (sc. probably one of the men of injustice) should not go into the waters to share in the pure food of the men of holiness, for one is not cleansed, 14 unless one turns away from one’s wickedness, for he is unclean among all the transgressors of his word.

Both traditions know of the prohibition addressed to the men of injustice against approaching the purity of the men of holiness. The implied reason is moral impurity. 1QS 5:13–14, however, raises two more issues: (1) The prohibition against going into the waters reflects the use of water by the members of the yahad to ritually-physically cleanse themselves before eating. (2) The reasoning given for the prohibition is in line with 1QS 3:3–12 as part of the dualistic passage 1QS 1:16–3:12. The immediate reason for the prohibition against approaching the pure food, thus, is the moral impurity of the men of injustice; in the background, however, is the constitutional

<sup>37</sup> For further, clearly moral aspects of the passage, cf. 4Q258 i 10–11: The expressions “their works are uncleanliness (מעשיהם לנדח)” and “there is uncleanliness in al] [their possessions] (הונום) [וטמא מכ]ל” imply moral impurity as well. Further cf. CD 6:15: “to abstain from wicked wealth which defiles”.

<sup>38</sup> For a similar text, see 1QS 8:16–19: As in 4Q258 i 5–8, it is ‘moral’ impurity that prevents transgressing members of the yahad from approaching the pure food of the men of holiness.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Murphy-O’Connor, “genèse”, 546–47; Knibb, *Qumran*, 110; and Metso, *Texts*, 10.

impurity of those who belong to the lot of Belial.<sup>40</sup> It needs be underlined that the latter dimension is only part of the reasoning given for the rule, not part of the rule itself.

### 2.3. *Chronological Aspects*

A comparative evaluation of the texts discussed, both those produced by the yahad after the re-founding of the Community by the Teacher of Righteousness around 150 BCE and earlier texts from the DSS, shows that the later texts add the ritual-physical dimension of impurity to the moral one. Much more strongly than in the earlier texts, then, humans are perceived as corporeal-spiritual/moral entities in the Essene texts. To this a second aspect needs to be added: The later traditions interpret both moral *and* ritual-physical impurity in constitutional terms. In contrast to the constitutional interpretation of physical impurity first found in the texts from the early Essene period, this type of interpretation is already seen in reference to moral impurity in earlier texts, namely in the proto-Essene teaching of the two spirits found in post-biblical wisdom literature<sup>41</sup> and in a strand of the wisdom texts from the Hebrew Bible.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, the motif of purification of humans by the Holy Spirit can already be found in texts produced before the foundation of the yahad, that is, in the teaching of the two spirits and in Ezekiel.<sup>43</sup> In both these texts, in contrast to 1QS 1–3, purification by the Holy Spirit is understood as an eschatological event. Still, the present understanding of purification in 1QS is not a fundamental innovation by the yahad but is already found in Ps 51:12.

The traditio-historical changes that can be observed in the post-150 BCE texts, namely the parallelization of ritual-physical and moral impurity, with both categories being interpreted in ‘constitutional’ terms, are best explained by supposing a linkage between wisdom tradition and priestly tradition. This new synthesis seems to go back to the Teacher of Righteousness who, being of priestly descent, around the year 150 joined

---

<sup>40</sup> The argument presupposes that belonging to either the lot of God or the lot of Belial (1QS 2:2, 5) cannot be influenced by humans. Along this line, those who ‘freely volunteer to convert’ from wickedness to join the community (1:7, 11) act according to their—predestined—membership in the lot of God.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Lange, *Weisheit*, 128–30.

<sup>42</sup> See esp. Job 25; for further texts, cf. Job 4:17–19; 14:3; 15:14–16; Ps 51:4.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ezek 36:25; 11:19. Ezek 18:31, on the other hand, expresses the notion that the people of Israel are to get themselves a new heart and a new spirit. The combination of both elements reminds us of 1QS 3:6–9.

up with the predecessor community of the yahad. His and his group's interest in ritual-physical purity is evident from 4QMMT. In the literature of this new group, these priestly ideals seem to have merged with the constitutional interpretation of purity issues already to be found in wisdom circles. Especially clear is the evidence of 1QS 3:3–12, a text that goes back to the yahad. This passage shares several traits with the pre-yahad wisdom text of the two spirits, 1QS 3:13–4:26, namely the Holy Spirit as agent of purification, dualism, a 'constitutional' understanding of purity and the preponderance of moral purity. An additional aspect, ritual-physical purity, comes into view in 1QS 3:3–12. Against earlier evidence, it is this linkage of moral and physical purity, both interpreted 'constitutionally', that in the texts going back to the yahad could be observed time and again.<sup>44</sup>

In its own way, however, this combination is already found in Leviticus. The major examples in the Priestly Code are the two he-goats of Yom Kippur<sup>45</sup> and, in the context of the purificatory ritual for scale disease, the sacrifices following the sprinklings and washings that also have a moral connotation.<sup>46</sup> In the Holiness Code, the combination of moral and ritual-physical purity can be discerned with respect to murder, fornication and idolatry.<sup>47</sup> But quite apart from the fact that the passages in Leviticus do not explicitly combine physical-ritual and moral aspects of impurity, they do not include the constitutional element of impurity found in the wisdom traditions discussed either.

It must be noted, however, that the passages from Leviticus are legal texts, whereas the large majority of the Essene texts discussed are, in terms of literary form, hymnic-liturgical<sup>48</sup> or hortatory texts.<sup>49</sup> In the

<sup>44</sup> Priestly influence, however, can be observed elsewhere as well. It is an accepted scholarly thesis that 1QS 5–9 is a later version of 4QS 256 and 258 reworked by priestly circles linked to the Teacher of Righteousness; cf. esp. 1QS 5:2 and 4Q 256 ix 2–3 par 4Q258 i 2–3; 1QS 5:9–10 and 4Q256 ix 7–8 par 4Q258 i 7, and see Lange, Lichtenberger, "Qumran", 57. Also see above, pp. 527–28, with the observations made on the parallel versions of 4Q258 i 5–8 and 1QS 5:13–14.

<sup>45</sup> The offering of the he-goat selected for sacrifice is meant to cleanse the sanctuary from all kinds of pollution, both physical (מטמאת) and moral (ומפשעיהם לכל־חטאתם); cf. Lev 16:16 and see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 857.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Lev 14:4–9 (ritual-physical dimension) and 14:10–20 (moral dimension). The "battery of all four sacrifices—reparation, purification, burnt, and cereal offerings", mentioned in vv. 10–20 is to make sure that "all possible misdemeanors" of the scale-diseased person "have been covered" (Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 858). In view here, obviously, is moral impurity.

<sup>47</sup> See Himmelfarb, "Impurity", 12.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. 1QH 9 [1]:21–26 and 1QS 11:9–15; further cf. the texts mentioned by Klawans, *Impurity*, 78 (1QM 13:5; 1QH 4 [17]:19; 19 [11]:11; 4Q512 29–32).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. 1QS 2:25–3:12 and 4:2–14; 4:20–22.

strictly legal parts of 4QMMT, CD/4QD and 1QS/4QS, the constitutional dimension is missing, just as it is in Leviticus.

### 3. RITUAL-PHYSICAL AND MORAL PURITY IN THE MIRROR OF THE PURIFICATION RITUALS: PURITY CONCEPTIONS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN THE ESSENE MOVEMENT

So far the argument of this paper is to a large extent based on 1QS. 1QS, however, only reflects the perspective of one group within the Essene movement. To round off the argument, the purity liturgies of Cave 4, which reflect a different branch of the movement, need to be included.

As Regev has shown, the purity rituals of 1QS mainly serve to attain moral purity. Prominent among them are “judicial scenes and ceremonies . . . such as the stages of observing the character of a novice and different legal procedures against transgressing members”, the ceremony of the “annual entry into the covenant” and, most importantly, the “ablution in ‘the holy spirit’”.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, 1QS only briefly mentions two rituals for the attainment of ritual-physical purity. One consists of the sprinklings and washings in the context of the annual entry into the covenant (1QS 3:3–12), the other of the washing before meals (1QS 5:13).

This is not to say that the community behind 1QS did not practice any other physical rituals. Genital discharges, for example, although not discussed in 1QS, can be assumed to have been an issue in this community as well and, consequently, to have been addressed by the corresponding rituals. The fact that physical purity, as opposed to moral purity, hardly plays a role in 1QS probably hangs together with the structure of the community behind 1QS. It seems to have been a community of men who perceived themselves as a substitute for the Jerusalem temple. This explains the high purity standards of the group as well as its separation from all impurity, especially that of the men of injustice. The observance of the rules of physical purity by the members of the group can be presupposed. The importance given to moral purity in 1QS, however, indicates that the social life of the group and the integration of new members were not free from problems. This situation, then, is addressed by the rituals of moral purity.

A different picture emerges from the purity liturgies of Cave 4, 4Q284, 414 and 512, which, albeit in different ways, deal with both the rituals

---

<sup>50</sup> Regev, “Temple”, 272–73.

themselves and with the social structure of the group behind them. The purificatory rituals described ideally consist of three elements, two physical rituals—immersion and sprinkling—and different prayers that interpret the water rituals.<sup>51</sup> The rituals are meant to cleanse a person from ritual-physical impurity, especially that caused by contact with death or by genital discharges. According to proto-Essene and Essene understanding, impurity caused by genital discharges, on analogy to the procedure prescribed in the Torah in case of impurity caused by death, demands a purificatory period of seven days with purifications on the first, the third, and the seventh days.<sup>52</sup>

According to 4Q Purification Liturgy, the following blessing is to be said after the sprinkling at the end of the seven-day purification period, after sunset (4Q284 3):

3... Blessed are yo[u, God of Israel (אל ישראל)] 4 [...] you engraved true purity (טהרת אמת) for your people (לעמכה) to [...] 5 [...] to be] purified (מכול טמאתם) with them from all their uncle[an]liness (מכול טמאתם).<sup>53</sup>

‘God of Israel’ is not among the characteristic names used to address God in the Essene parts of the DSS.<sup>54</sup> The term defines God in relation to the people of Israel as a whole. This pan-Israelite interest is also seen in the expression ‘your people’. In using the term ‘true purity’, however, the blessing at the same time points at demarcating the purity standards of the group behind 4Q284 from those of other groups, namely those of the Pharisees.<sup>55</sup>

The blessing 4Q Ritual of Purification A (414) 2 ii 3, 4 starts out similarly, by praising the God of Israel for commanding the ‘purity of all’ (טהרת כול). In what follows, however, the moral and the exclusivist aspects are stressed. According to the text as reconstructed by Eshel, the commandment aims at the separation “from all] 8 impure people (מכול אנשי נדה) according to their guilt (באשמתם), they could not be purified (יטהרו) in water of purification (מי רחץ).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Eshel, *Ritual*, 136 with n. 7.

<sup>52</sup> Comp. 11QT 49:17–21; 4Q274 1 i 4.7.9; 4Q274 2 i 1–2; 4Q284 2 i 3; 4Q284 2 ii 4; 4Q284 3 2; 4Q414 2 ii 3, 4 2; 4Q512 1–3 1; 4Q512 10–11 5; 4Q514 3.

<sup>53</sup> Translation according to Baumgarten, *Purification Liturgy*, 127.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Lange, Lichtenberger, “Qumran”, 57.

<sup>55</sup> The anti-Pharisaic dimension of the blessing follows from the timing of the prayer at sunset; cf., e.g., Schiffman, “Halakhah”.

<sup>56</sup> Texts from 4Q414 are given according to the reconstruction and translation of Eshel, *Ritual*; here pp. 141–42.

In contrast to 4Q284 3, impurity in this text is both physical and moral. It is ascribed to the opponents and seen to be caused by their sinful refusal to submit to the purity law of the Community. Outsiders cannot be purified. Still, the polemic against outsiders is linked to a pan-Israelite perspective.<sup>57</sup> Just as in 4Q284, this text combines the perspective of the group with that of all Israel. Unlike 1QS, which advocates strict separation from outsiders, 4Q284 and 414 reflect openness towards Israel as a whole, comparable to CD.<sup>58</sup>

In explicitly referring to the sin of the praying 'I, the blessing 4Q512 29–32 stresses the moral dimension of the purificatory process. The text says:

May you be blessed, [God of Israel, who] 9 [forgave me al] my sins and purified me from the shame of impurity (ערוות נדה)/and atoned (תכפר)/so that (I) can enter (לבוא).<sup>59</sup>

In interpreting both physical and moral purity with regard to human constitution, the blessing, as can be seen from 1QH 9, 1QS 3:3–12 and 1QS 11 especially, reflects Essene anthropological thinking. The moral side is expressed in the motif of forgiveness of sin, the physical dimension in the term 'shame of impurity'.<sup>60</sup> As in other Essene texts, the comprehensive purification of the individual appears to be the presupposition of cultic access to the presence of God and/or the angels.<sup>61</sup>

The pan-Israelite perspective of the Cave 4 purification liturgies seems to correspond to the social structure of the group behind them. 4Q414 7 8–9—and similarly 4Q512 9 3—reads: "... in Israel's purity to e[at and drink in the cities of] 9 [their dw]ellings [and to be a holy people". The text of 4Q414 is followed by a reference to a "female and the menstruating woma[n] (l. 11), whereas 4Q512 9 3 is preceded by mention of a man purified from discharge (l. 1) and followed by a reference to "his wife" (l. 4).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. the inclusive terms 'God of Israel' (l. 6) and 'purity of all' (l. 7). The latter term is a strong indication that the author has Jews rather than non-Jews in mind, since the purity laws in biblical and early Jewish thinking apply to Jews only; cf. 4Q266 11 9–14.

<sup>58</sup> For details, see Holtz, *Gott*, 318–25.

<sup>59</sup> Translation according to García Martínez, Tigchelaar, *Scrolls*, 1039, with the exception of the rendering of ערוות נדה.

<sup>60</sup> As in 1QH 9:21–24, ערוות and נדה here represent the physical dimension of humans (see above, p. 523); also see Harrington, "Nature", 614. According to Himmelfarb, "Impurity", 36, נדה implies the aspect of 'condemnation' as well, which points to a moral dimension.

<sup>61</sup> See above, n. 31.

The community that emerges in these texts is part of the Jewish people both geographically and religiously, though a separate part.<sup>62</sup> Similarly to CD, the group visible in the purificatory liturgies comprises men and women and most probably lives in families in the cities of Israel. Its main purificatory rituals are physical in nature. Whether the group observed distinctly moral rituals we do not know. As can be seen from some of the prayers accompanying the physical rituals of immersion and sprinkling, however, in articulating their sinfulness those reciting the blessings add the moral dimension of purity to the physical one.<sup>63</sup> This specific balance between physical and moral impurity may thus be assumed to reflect the lifestyle and social structure of this part of the Essene movement.

1QS and the purification liturgies of Cave 4 represent two different forms of purity practice in the realm of the Essene movement. To both groups purity has a ritual-physical and a moral dimension, but the importance of these aspects in each case differs. In 1QS the moral dimension dominates, in the liturgies the ritual-physical one. The differences in the ritual practice of both groups seem to reflect their specific social structure and place within the whole of the Jewish people.

To summarize: (1) The relationship between ritual-physical and moral purity in the non-legal texts of the community is best described in terms of both aspects existing side by side; though intimately linked, they still remain distinguishable. (2) What in these texts is often described as 'moral purity' is rather to be understood as 'constitutional purity', since 'moral' acting here is the result of the innate constitution of human beings, not of the free will of the moral subject. This dimension of purity is first to be found in wisdom texts from the Hebrew Bible. (3) The diachronic model developed by Klawans to illuminate the relationship between ritual-physical and moral purity is based on chronological classifications of the relevant texts from the DSS that meanwhile have been strongly refined. Whether diachronic models based on such refined chronological classifications can be made, further research will have to show. What seems to be clear, however, is that non-chronological explanations, among them,

---

<sup>62</sup> For a further pan-Israelite tradition, see 4Q284 1 3–6 and Baumgarten, *Tohorot*, 94–95, and idem, *Liturgy*, 125.

<sup>63</sup> Apart from 4Q512 29–32 9, see 4Q512 28 4 and 4Q512 34 3 (according to the counting of García Martínez, Tigchelaar, *Scrolls*, 1036–41).

not least, literary form and social structure,<sup>64</sup> can contribute to the understanding of the different perspectives in the DSS on the relation between ritual-physical, moral and, as may now be added, constitutional purity.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baillet, Maurice. "Rituel de Purification (4Q512)". Pages 262–86 in *Qumran Grotte 4. III (4Q482–4Q520): Discoveries in the Judean Desert VII*. Edited by M. Baillet. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- Baumgarten, Joseph. "Purification Liturgy (4Q284)". Pages 123–30 in *Qumran Cave 4. XXV Halakhic Texts: Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXXV*. Edited by J. Baumgarten, T. Elgvin, E. Eshel, E. Larson, M. R. Lehmann, S. Pfann and L. H. Schiffman. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.
- . "Tohorot (4Q274–278)". Pages 79–122 in *Qumran Cave 4. XXV Halakhic Texts: Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXXV*. Edited by J. Baumgarten, T. Elgvin, E. Eshel, E. Larson, M. R. Lehmann, S. Pfann and L. H. Schiffman. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.
- , ed. *Qumran Cave 4. XIII The Damascus Document (4Q266–273): Discoveries in the Judean Desert XVIII*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- . "The Purification Rituals in DJD 7". Pages 199–209 in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research*. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 10. Edited by D. Dimant and U. Rappaport. Leiden: Brill, 1992.
- Broshi, Magen. "Predestination in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls". Pages 238–51 in *Bread, Wine, Walls and Scrolls*. Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series 36. Edited by M. Broshi. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Conrad, J. "נדב ndb". Pages 237–45 in vol. 5 of *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. Edited by G. J. Botterweck. 10 vols. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986.
- Eshel, Esther. "Ritual of Purification (4Q414)". Pages 135–54 in *Qumran Cave 4. XXV Halakhic Texts: Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXXV*. Edited by J. Baumgarten, T. Elgvin, E. Eshel, E. Larson, M. R. Lehmann, S. Pfann and L. H. Schiffman. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.
- Frey, Jörg. "Different Patterns of Dualistic Thought in the Qumran Library: Reflections on Their Background and History". Pages 275–335 in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues. Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies. Published in Honour of Joseph M. Baumgarten*. Studies on the Texts of the Deserts of Judah 23. Edited by M. Bernstein, F. García Martínez and J. I. Kampen. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- García Martínez, Florentino, and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Harrington, Hannah K. *The Purity Texts*. Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 5. London: T&T Clark International, 2004.
- . "The Nature of Impurity at Qumran". Pages 610–16 in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997*. Edited by

<sup>64</sup> Further explanatory models have to be taken into account as well. As regards the differences to be observed in the purity halakhah of the DSS, Werrett, *Purity*, 301, suggests that they might better be explained by exegetical reasons than by differences in chronology. Furthermore, he considers them to reflect "legitimate disagreements" between *different groups*. This suggestion comes close to the proposal forwarded in the present paper. Differently from Werrett, however, the textual basis here, in re-examining the texts interpreted by Klawans, is mostly in the field of non-legal texts.

- L. H. Schiffman, E. Tov, J. VanderKam and G. Marquis. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000.
- Himmelfarb, Martha. "Impurity and Sin in 4QD, 1QS, and 4Q512". *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8 (2001): 9–37.
- Holtz, Gudrun. *Damit Gott sei alles in allem: Studien zum paulinischen und frühjüdischen Universalismus*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 149. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007.
- Klawans, Jonathan. *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. Oxford: University Press, 2000.
- Knibb, Michael A. *The Qumran Community*. Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 2. Cambridge: University Press, 1987.
- Kratz, Reinhard G. "Gottes Geheimnisse: Vorherbestimmung und Heimsuchung in den Schriften vom Toten Meer". Pages 125–46 in *Vorsehung, Schicksal und Göttliche Macht: Antike Stimmen zu einem aktuellen Thema*. Edited by R. G. Kratz and H. Spiekermann. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Lange, Armin. *Weisheit und Prädestination: Weisheitliche Ordnung und Prädestination in den Textfunden von Qumran*. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 18. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- , and Hermann Lichtenberger. "Qumran". Pages 45–79 in vol. 28 of *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Edited by C. J. Thornton. 36 vols. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1997.
- Levine, Baruch A. *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*. The JPS Torah Commentary. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989.
- Metso, Sarianna. *The Serekh Texts*. Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 9. London: T&T Clark International, 2007.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries 3a. New York: Doubleday, 1991.
- Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. "La genèse littéraire de la Règle de la Communauté". *Revue Biblique* 76 (1969): 528–49.
- Newton, Michael. *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul*. Society for New Testament Studies: Monograph Series 53. Cambridge: University Press, 1985.
- Regev, Eyal. "Abominated Temple and a Holy Community: The Formation of the Notion of Purity and Impurity in Qumran". *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10,2 (2003): 243–78.
- Schiffman, Lawrence H. "Pharisaic and Sadducean Halakhah in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Case of Tevul Yom". *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1 (1994): 285–99.
- Werrett, Ian C. *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 72. Leiden: Brill, 2007.