

**The *Shinto* Purification Rites and the Concept of sin
in Mark 7:14-23: Towards a Contemporary Biblical
Theology of Purification in and for the context of
Japan.**

by

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Declaration

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

_Arnold Gideon Meiring_____

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I want to honour the Lord Jesus for His purifying work in my life and for inspiring me towards completing this task. My dear wife who has been a sweet encouragement to me throughout this process, and my loving parents who always believed in me and celebrate my accomplishments. Thank you to the Central Baptist Church who has supported me in the writing of this thesis along with the kind people at The South African Theological Seminary. Finally, I'd like to give a sincere thank you to Dr Robert Falconer who believed in this work and kept me excited and motivated. I praise my God for you all.

Abstract

Japanese *Shinto* has for centuries influenced much of Japanese culture. One of those influences is found in the priority of purity, recognized in many *Shinto* purification rituals. This has inspired the development of a contemporary biblical theology of purification in and for the context of Japan.

This paper begins with an exegetical study of Mark 7:14-23. In this passage, Jesus was confronted by religious leaders who placed a high priority on external purity maintained through ritual. Jesus declared that nothing outside a man's heart makes him unclean. Jesus is presented as God's purity agent and there is much to be learnt from Him regarding sin as impurity.

The Japanese notion of sin as impurity will be discovered within the cultural-religious milieu of contemporary Japanese *Shinto*. Although some traditional *Shinto* beliefs have fallen away, the concepts of purity and impurity are still recognizable in many modern Japanese practices, especially their external rituals. Some modern rituals and practices will be identified to confirm this argument.

The Jewish value for ritual purity as demonstrated in Mark 7:14-23 has developed out of Ancient Near Eastern religious culture. Sin as impurity will be examined within the Ancient Near Eastern milieu and be compared to the idea of impurity in Modern *Japanese Shinto*. This will highlight notable similarities and differences between the Jewish people of the Bible, and Modern Japanese *Shinto* people and their relationship with the concept of purification. This provides one possible narrative for sin as impurity that is both biblical and applicable to Japanese culture.

Finally, a contextualized theology of purification is the outcome of this thesis and I demonstrate how this can be done without compromising biblical authority. Some contextualized tools will be developed that can assist the Japanese context.

There is a Fountain

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains:
Lose all their guilty stains,
Lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.*

*The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away:
Washed all my sins away,
Washed all my sins away;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.*

*Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Are safe, to sin no more:
Are safe, to sin no more,
Are safe, to sin no more;
Till all the ransomed church of God
Are safe, to sin no more.*

*Ever since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die:
And shall be till I die,
And shall be till I die;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.*

*When this poor, lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save:
I'll sing thy power to save,
I'll sing thy power to save;
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save.*

William Cowper

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research Problem

Sin is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. The Bible's teaching on the subject is both consistent and comprehensive. Multiple metaphors, words, dramas, narratives and descriptions are used to shed light on the nature of sin. Some examples include lawlessness, impurity, darkness, faithlessness, falling short, wickedness, worldly passions and shame (1 Jn 3:4, Rom 1:24, Eph 5:11, Rev 21:8, Rom 3:23, Gen 6:5, Tit 2:12, Dan 9:7). Over the course of theological history, many have developed different theories regarding the essence of sin. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith (2010:13) explains,

Every sin, both original and actual, transgresses the righteous law of God and brings guilt on the sinner. Every sinner is consequently subjected to the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and death, with all the resultant miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal.

Within the Roman Catholic tradition, Thomas Aquinas (2007:898) writes about sin as a word, deed or desire which is contrary to the law of God. John Calvin (1997:np) defined sin as hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all parts of the soul.

Most of the developments in hamartiology over the years have been set within a Western world-view, using legal motifs such as personal guilt and law-breaking 'as seen in the above examples'. These themes have received great prominence, but such a theology of sin is not completely compatible with the Japanese context which is set in a cultural-religio milieu of *Shinto* purification rites.

The Japanese world-view has been greatly influenced by *Shinto* teaching which does not hold to any traditional code of morality but rather provides purification rites if a person is defiled through external impurities. *Shinto*'s ritual purification has deep religious connections and this has overflowed into many aspects of Contemporary Japanese life. Davies (2016:36-37) explains the continuing importance in the distinction between pure and impure in Japan.

(i) The idea of *uchi-soto* 内と外 'inside-outside'. Inside is considered pure and outside is considered impure. This explains why the Japanese remove their shoes before entering a home.

(ii) The colour of Shinto is white. At *Ise Jingu* 伊勢神宮 'grand shrine' everyone including priests, farmers, fishermen and carpenters wear white garbs. The dead are dressed in white. Many workers in modern Japan wear white gloves.

(iii) Water and salt are symbols of purification. *Onsen* 温泉 'Japanese public hot bath' is a well-known activity and enjoyed by all Japanese; it points to their culture's high view of purity. Every *Shinto* shrine includes a water basin for ritual cleansing before entering. Salt is placed in little piles around houses, wells and at the corners of a Sumo wrestling ring. It is also scattered on the floor during funerals and salt dishes are regularly offered at shrines.

In an article for the Japan Times Masami Ito (2015:np) writes about *Ōsōji* 大掃除 which is Japan's national cleaning day right before the start of a new year. She writes, "The Ritual is traditionally performed at the end of the year, offering households an opportunity to reset and begin the new year afresh". These are some observable traditions that demonstrate how the concept of purity and impurity has influenced modern Japanese culture. Because Japanese, and for the purpose of this paper, Japanese Evangelical Christians live in such a religio-cultural milieu, we need to explore the biblical teaching of sin as impurity and ways it can be applied to Japanese Christians. In addition, we need to explore an appropriate Gospel narrative set in Japanese purity language.

For both cultural and religious reasons, Christianity has struggled to make inroads into Japan. Part of the problem could be that Western theology is imposed upon non-Western culture and creates a theological conflict where the message does not speak to the heart of the listener; an appropriate biblical narrative for the understanding of sin and purification is one example. Even the word, *sin* is troublesome. The word for sin in Japanese is *tsumi* 罪 which directly translated means *crime*. Most morally upright Japanese people would have trouble viewing themselves as sinners if they have never committed an actual crime.

It would be much more beneficial to use a narrative of impurity when teaching about sin in Japan. This could be used to help Japanese believers to be more rooted in the Christian faith, especially since they live in a *Shinto*-cultural milieu. Such a narrative would not be difficult to demonstrate since Scripture includes a wealth of narrative regarding uncleanness or impurity. One such narrative is Jesus' teaching in Mark 7:14-23. In this passage, Jesus is teaching on what truly defiles a person. I believe there is much that can be explored around this teaching of Jesus regarding true defilement and its application for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christians. Although there might be large differences and no doubt a few similarities between sin as impurity in Ancient Near Eastern culture and that of the modern *Shinto* tradition, I do believe Jesus' words speaks truthfully towards every human being's condition. This narrative of sin as impurity would be more compatible with the Japanese/*Shinto* idea of impurity and can be presented in a way that will still remain biblically orthodox while still being meaningful for Christians in Japan who live in an environment that is absorbed in the idea of purification.

Ever since the Catholic Jesuits arrived in 1549 Christianity has been viewed by the Japanese as a foreign and Western religion. Sadly, this undermines the Lordship of Christ over all nations. It is imperative that missionaries and theologians work hard at using a biblical narrative that Japanese can understand instead of insisting on their own personal and Western narrative. For this particular reason, there is a great need for developing a biblically faithful theology for Japanese people. In this study, I hope to make a small contribution by exploring a theology of purification.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 The Western Evangelical Understanding of Sin

The Western, Evangelical understanding of sin includes Paul's views on sin as well as how the doctrine of sin has developed in Western theology. Allison (2011:342) writes that throughout Christian history different theologians and different churches have placed different emphases on the elements of sin which have led to different doctrines of sin. These different doctrines will be briefly outlined.

1.2.1.1 Paul's writing

The Apostle Paul has written extensively on sin. Moo (2013, chap. 5) argues that the sheer number of words Paul uses to describe sin is a signal for the importance of sin in his theology. Moo outlines the words that in his view are the most prominent.

Sin *hamartia*, Commit Sin *harmatēma*, Sinful *hamartanō*, Sinner *hamartōlos*, Trespass *paraptōma*, Desire *epithymia*, Transgression *parabasis*. Another regular word Paul uses for describing sin is impurity *akatharsia*, occurring 10 times in his writings. Arndt (2000:34) describes its meaning as filthiness, moral corruption, vileness, uncleanness and that which may not come in contact with the divine. This would be an appropriate word for sin in a Japanese *Shinto* context. Moo (2013, chap. 5) highlights a fundamental element regarding Paul's teaching about the essence of sin. It is not to be defined in relation to the law but in relation to God. All sin is fundamentally a break in fellowship and relational harmony with God. Or as Paul puts it, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Rom 3:23

One key text for understanding Paul's view of sin would be Romans 5:12-19. Allison (2011:343) writes that in these verses Paul links man's death, judgement and condemnation to the one sin of Adam. It seems that Paul believes the fall of Adam has brought about a sinful nature in man and now all men sin because they have a corrupted nature, inherited from Adam. Since early church history, these writings of Paul have led to the development of the doctrine of original sin, an issue the church wrestled with intensely during the Pelagian controversy.

1.2.1.2 Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy

The struggle against Pelagius raised a number of questions regarding the nature of sin and how to deal with it. Augustine was the prime theologian who wrote extensively to combat Pelagian views. One key difference between Augustine and Pelagius was around the degree of man's depravity and the extent of his need for God's grace. For Pelagius, humanity was basically good and God gave humanity the capacity to live righteously. Augustine (1887:228) writes, "Again, in the first book of his *Defence of the Freedom of the Will*, he says: 'But while we have within us a free will so strong and so steadfast against sinning, which our Maker has implanted in human nature, generally, still, by His unspeakable goodness, we are further defended by His own daily help'". For Pelagius, human beings had the capacity for good and grace was a reward and external support, not an inward, unmerited act of God. For Pelagius, grace was the law of God and the Christian teaching assisting the deserving Christian to do that which he was already able to do by his free will. Augustine felt this minimized and misrepresented the grace of God. Quoting his opponent; Augustine (1887:229) writes,

He goes on, however, to say of those who are not Christians: 'Those deserve judgement and condemnation, because, although they possess free will whereby they could come to faith and deserve God's grace, they make a bad use of the freedom which has been granted them. But these deserve to be rewarded, who by the right use of free will merit the Lord's grace and keep His commandments.

Augustine (1887:229) responded by referencing a number of Scriptures that teach that grace is unmerited favour received by faith alone. According to Augustine, God created Adam and Eve with the freedom to choose obedience, but they decided to rebel. Allison (2011:347) writes, "For Augustine, the origin of this first sin was pride". After Adam and Eve's disobedience humanity lost their freedom of will and now all people after the fall are incapable of not sinning. The Calvinist doctrine of total depravity developed from this view. Augustine depicted humanity's plight in horrific detail,

The whole mass of the human race was under condemnation, was lying steeped and wallowing in misery, and was being tossed from one form of evil to another, and, having joined the faction of the

fallen angels, was paying the well-merited penalty of that impious rebellion (1887:246).

The Council of Orange in 529 put a stop to Pelagianism along with Semi-Pelagianism and adopted an Augustinian view of sin which became the church's doctrine from the fifth century onward (Allison 2011:350).

1.2.1.3 Sin in the Middle Ages

Two of the most prominent theologians during the middle ages must be Thomas Aquinas and Anselm of Canterbury. Most theologians continued to favour the Augustinian position on sin, but Aquinas questioned and developed Augustine's views further, writing extensively on the subject. Aquinas defines sin as, "...nothing else than a bad human act" (1947, [Q71, A6]). This bad act is a willful choice which violates human reason or God's eternal law. Aquinas believed that the human will is subject to sin which then leads to inordinate acts. The will of man has the sole responsibility for sin; not even the devil can be blamed, "...the devil is a cause of sin, neither directly nor sufficiently, but only by persuasion, or by proposing the object of appetite" (1947, [Q80, A1]). In answering the question of origin Aquinas was a firm believer in original sin,

...all men born of Adam may be considered as one man, inasmuch as they have one common nature, which they receive from their first parents; even as in civil matters, all who are members of one community are reputed as one body, and the whole community as one man (1947, [Q81, A1]).

Finally, one fascinating idea regarding sin is Aquinas's thoughts on sin as a stain upon the soul, "The stain is neither something positive in the soul nor does it denote a pure privation: it denotes a privation of the soul's brightness in relation to its cause, which is sin..." (1947, [Q86, A1]). Here sin can be defined as a soul losing its brightness or glory, something that might be prevalent in Japanese thinking considering this line from a *Shinto* prayer, "Sweep the impurities from my being and purify my spirit; Grant me protection; grant me happiness; Bring brightness to my soul and give me guidance" (2001:59).

Anselm developed a new way of thinking about sin in his book *Why God Became Man*. Allison (2011:351) gives some of Anselm's background,

He worked in a context of feudalism, an economic system in which powerful lords gave protection to their serfs for food and service. Anselm pictured the relationship between God and people like that between a lord and his servants.

Anselm spoke about a debt of honour that is owed to God and those who do not pay this debt would be sinful, "He who does not render this honor which is due to God, robs God of his own and dishonors him; and this is sin" (1926:203). With this thought Anselm presented a new idea, diverting away from the traditional guilt/breaking the law narratives. This idea is likely to be more suitable for honour/shame cultures who live in the majority world.

1.2.1.4 Sin in the Reformation

Martin Luther was a Christian who felt the weight of sin most intensely. As a young man, he was struck by lightning and this awoke him to the terrible thought of God's judgement on his life. He enrolled in an Augustinian monastery and would confess his sins for hours, feeling no real sense of forgiveness or peace. At last Luther embraced the Gospel of grace and the doctrine of justification by faith alone, (Allison 2011:353). The central idea in Luther's theology of sin was his rejection of the Pelagian view of free will. In *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther confronts Erasmus of Rotterdam who was a Catholic teacher arguing for the free will of human beings. Luther (1931:CLXII) concludes his work with four penetrating arguments: (i) If Satan is the prince of this world and refuses to let go of his captives without being forced to do so by God's Divine Spirit then there can be no such thing as free will. (ii) There is nothing left in a man devoid of the Spirit that can turn towards good, it will naturally turn to what is evil. (iii) If Jews followed righteousness with all their power but rather ran into unrighteousness, while Gentiles who followed unrighteousness attained a free righteousness in Christ it demonstrates clearly that man without grace can do nothing but evil. (iv) If we believe Christ redeemed men by His blood, we are compelled to confess, that the whole man was lost. In this work, Luther brilliantly resurrects Augustinian views on sin as total depravity and inability. A memorable analogy used by Luther is the will of man pictured as a horse with one rider, God or

Satan, “If God sit thereon, it wills and goes where God will...If Satan sit thereon, it wills and goes as Satan will” (1931:XXV). In this way, Luther pictures humanity as utterly hopeless and lost apart from the intervention of God’s grace.

Calvin, like Luther, emphasized an Augustinian view of sin. He believed first of all that all humanity has become corrupted by sin through the revolt of Adam, “All of us, therefore descending from an impure seed, come into the world tainted with the contagion of sin. Nay, before we behold the light of the sun we are in God’s sight defiled and polluted” (1845:289). Calvin’s vocabulary for sin included words such as impurity, depraved, corruption, ruin, naked, destitute and pollution (1845:289-290). These words go beyond narrow law language or metaphors that are popular in Western theology. When dealing with sin, Calvin chose to speak of it as a corrupt nature that leads to fleshly acts. Calvin (1845:337) references Romans 3 to make the point that man has lost righteousness, intelligence, ‘because to seek God is the beginning of wisdom’, and a fear of God. It is interesting that Calvin understood righteousness to be integrity and purity (1845:338). I am not convinced that Luther or Calvin spoke about sin in only a courtroom narrative. They made use of many frightening symbols, words and narratives to explain their theology of sin.

1.2.1.5 Sin in Modern and Post-Modern Theology

Friedrich Schleiermacher offered a very different theology of sin, one which Berkhof (1938:228) confronts in his own Systematic Theology, “According to him man’s consciousness of sin is dependent on his God-consciousness”. In Schleiermacher’s view, there was no historical fall nor objective sin, sin existed only in man’s consciousness. Once a God-consciousness is awakened it immediately becomes aware of the lower sensual nature.

Soren Kierkegaard was the Father of Existentialism. He has had a great influence on existentialist and post-modern thinking, arguing for the importance of subjectivity. This, of course, determined Kierkegaard’s theology of sin, “Sin is this: before God, *or with the conception of God, to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself*. Thus, sin is potentiated weakness or potentiated defiance: sin is the potentiation of despair” (2016, chap. 1). He carries on to say that sin as despair is qualified before God or a person’s conception of God (2016, chap. 1).

The modern era also saw a rise in dialectical theology, especially that of Karl Barth. Barth understood there to be an unassailable gap between the divine and the finite. That human reasoning can never answer theological questions. Pinnock (1977:66) calls his theology anti-apologetic and a theology of unreason. The key elements of Barth's view of sin are outlined by Milne (1974:8). (i) It is only in the encounter with God that sin is disclosed and is thus in antithesis to Him. (ii) Sin is a movement against grace. (iii) At Golgotha, sin is seen as a great threat to the creature, especially since God had to become flesh and die to rescue man from it. Barth argued that an understanding of sin can only be understood through divine grace and revelation, especially that given through Christ. Furuya (1997:80) comments about the dominant influence that Barthian theology had on Japanese Christianity. Generally, Buddhism was understood to be more intellectually satisfying than Christianity. Furuya (1997:57) cites this as a possible reason for the success of Barth's theology in Japan, it brought a deeper level of meaning and intellectualism, which was missing from the message of most of the missionaries in Japan.

Next, we will consider more recent theologies of sin in the form of three prominent Western theologians. Erickson (1998), in typical systematic style, unpacks the doctrine of sin by explaining key biblical terms used for definitions. These terms are then connected by a common element. Erickson writes, "A common element running through all these varied ways of characterizing sin is the idea that the sinner has failed to fulfill God's law" (1998:595). Grudem (1994) chooses to explain sin by answering a number of key questions relating to the doctrine. A few examples include the origin of sin, the inheritance of Adam's guilt, degrees of sin and total depravity. Grudem's concise definition of sin is as follows, "Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude or nature" (1994:490). It is very similar to Erickson's definition; both theologians favour the law narrative for explaining the essence of sin.

Horton (2011) has quite a different approach in his own systematic theology, preferring a courtroom metaphor as a guiding narrative. Although he also writes about sin in terms of breaking a relational covenant made at creation, he still leans more towards a legal narrative throughout his hamartiology. He talks about "the cosmic trial", and "a false witness" (2011:410). He continues again later with "a false

representative” (2011:412). Horton makes clear here his preference for the courtroom analogy, “The accused are discovered fleeing the scene of the crime, covering up the evidence” (2011:412). “Through the law that was once given as the way to everlasting life, there is now because of sin only the expectation of death and judgement” (2011:412). “The accused, after offering countersuits, blaming each other for the fault, now face their sentence” (2011:413). He ends his narrative with, “verdict and sentence”. Here Horton explains the doctrine of all men breaking the creation covenant, standing in solidarity with Adam as guilty lawbreakers. He carries on to defend the doctrine of original sin and total depravity. Like many other theologians, Horton favours the courtroom analogy for the fall of man. Of course, it is a useful analogy and many Christians have benefited greatly from it, but it is not the only analogy to be used.

One helpful concept that all three theologians agree on is how sin is much deeper than merely physical, and it is not an external problem, but an internal heart problem. This is what Jesus explains in Mark 7; defilement comes from the inside out, not the outside in. This is a necessary concept for Japanese Christians to remember. These three theologians amongst others represent a popular Western understanding of sin. It still contains very helpful ideas but they are not deliberate enough in speaking meaningfully to many Asian cultures.

Two final theological thinkers to be briefly reviewed are Alan Mann and Rob Bell. Mann (2005) gives very good insight into the use of narratives and that we can no longer use narratives that are inappropriate for our modern culture. His view is that in modern society, sin is no longer recognized as moral failure before God. Mann (2015:np) writes, “If sin exists at all, we encounter it only when we fail to devote ourselves to the project of self-realization”. Mann then develops a theology of sin as inner feelings of shame, pollution, or defilement. Something he believes is more keenly felt by our current society. Bell (2005) seeks to repaint the Christian faith in his popular *Velvet Elvis* (2012). He does not speak of sin the way the Bible does but rather speaks of sin as, “Your job is the relentless pursuit of who God made you to be. Anything else you do is sin and you need to repent of it” (2012:114). Bell’s view might be popular but is far from typical Evangelicalism represented by Erickson, Grudem, and Horton.

This concludes the development of sin in Western theology. We turn now to sin in non-Western narratives.

1.2.2 The Non-Western understanding of sin

There is an increasing need to develop theologies for non-Western contexts. Thankfully there are theologians who are embarking on such projects. Works like deSilva's (2000), Mann's (2015), Tennent's (2007), Wu's (2012), and Falconer's (2015), are but a few examples of Christians who are realizing the need for developing new theologies for different contextual situations. We will consider only some of these here. Tennent (2007) gives examples of how many Eastern cultures value the importance of maintaining honour. He also highlights the need to distinguish between guilt and shame, because each is helpful to understand cultural dynamics. Mann (2015) highlights this in his chapter about sin, the cross and their relationship to theology in Japan. He leans heavily on the work of Kraus (1990) quoting him as saying, "Kraus came to realize that shame is associated with such concepts of sin as defilement or uncleanness, whereas guilt is associated with specific acts and is experienced as a burden of responsibility that a person must bear for his or her acts". The conclusion of this is that theologians should be prepared to highlight both sin as guilt, *and* sin as shame in order to effectively disciple Asian people groups. Mischke (2015:23) argues that the cultural dynamics of sin as shame and defilement are similar to that of biblical cultures and many Majority World people. He then continues to say: "Using similar language, believers can present to people in the Majority World the good news that Jesus Christ came to cleanse them of their sin and shame".

Understanding sin as shame or impurity is not a peripheral teaching of Scripture as Tennent (2007) and deSilva (2000) demonstrate. Most theologians highlight Adam and Eve's guilt, but few see the concepts of shame and fear that are equally important. Tennent (2007:82-91) demonstrates how honour and shame have a significant role in the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments. Christ was shamed and humiliated on the cross because the cross not only deals with guilt but also the restoration of honour.

Impurity is another crucial analogy for sin, especially for the Japanese because for them impurity stems from a disruption of harmony coming from lower level spirits that attach to a person. In order to restore *wa* 和 'harmony', ritual cleansing is needed and this is provided for by priests, festivals and by participating in various cleansing rituals. Purity laws, ritual cleansing and the concept of clean and unclean is also observed in Ancient Near Eastern culture. deSilva (2000) presents this successfully when he writes,

Cultures like Ancient Israel, then, draw extensive lines of purity, of clean and unclean, in an attempt to create a model of God's cosmic order and to help an individual locate his or her place in that order so that the person may know when pollution has been contracted and what needs to be done to dispel it...

In deSilva's chapters on purity, he makes much use of Douglas (1978). Both deSilva and Douglas are together valuable, highlighting the theological and anthropological elements respectively. It is rather exciting to see that as Christianity becomes more globalized, theology is expanding and growing, demonstrating the richness of God's Word and how it can be applied to all people.

1.2.3 Purification rites in *Shinto* tradition

Many scholars highlight the significance of purification rites in the *Shinto* tradition, for example, Ono (1962), Yamakage (2006), and Littleton (2002). Aston (1905:np) puts it plainly: "Uncleanness holds a far more important place in Shinto than moral guilt". Japanese people are not unguided barbarians with no moral compass; their moral compass simply functions differently from how it does in the Western world. Japan is a group-oriented culture and the pressure to conform to a moral norm is what guides the Japanese morally. This fact is mentioned in a JapanToday (2011) article, "Understanding one's behaviour and its effect upon others allows the individual to lead a happy and moral life". There is a well-known, ancient proverb in Japan: "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down", meaning those who act differently to the group will be humiliated.

Yamakage Motohisa is a *Shinto* master who recognises *misogi* 禊 as the cornerstone of *Shinto*. At every shrine across Japan, locals will visit there and cleanse

themselves by washing their hands and rinsing their mouths with the water provided at the entrance of the shrine. Yamakage (2006:94) writes:

When the physical body is made clean by water, our heart and mind are purified at the same time. The act of washing our hands before worshipping at a shrine is about more than the magical cleansing power of water. We also make a distinction within ourselves between the secular and the sacred by that act, and thus we change our attitude and our mind-set. In so doing, we wash away uncleanness.

This understanding of how to deal with sin stands in deep contrast to the Christian view. Lee (2014) did a study on why Christianity has struggled in Japan and names theology of sin as one of the reasons, “Uncleanness can easily be ‘washed away’ by a prayer or a ceremony. Thus, in the eyes of most Japanese salvation and forgiveness of sins are not needed, as ceremonies or prayers can wash away any uncleanness” (2014, chap 4.). The reason why impurity can be washed away like this is partly influenced by the Japanese’s denial of original sin. Ono (1962:np) writes: “The soul of man is good. Shinto does not have the concept of original sin. Man by nature is inherently good, and the world in which he lives is good. This is the *kami* 神 world. Evil then cannot originate in man or in this world. It is an intruder”. The Japanese purification practices are sufficient to take away *sin* because man is understood to be basically good, a fundamental difference from the orthodox Christian view. Edwards (2002:212) writes: “Uncleanness and defilement are matters of intention and the heart, not the violation of cultic rituals and formalities”.

In light of purification rites, there are a number of parallels between modern *Shinto* and Ancient Judaism. Yamakage (2006:80) writes: “Only when everything and everybody involved is purified can humans possibly come in contact with the spirit of the Kami”. Yamakage refers here to the shrine, temple worship items and the worshippers. Each of these must be pure before contact with *kami* 神 can occur. It is similar to Jewish purity codes in Leviticus and the Jewish regulations behind clean and unclean. Yahweh put a strict purification system in place that only allowed ritually clean people and worship items to come into His presence. This, of course, signified the utter holiness and glory of Yahweh and nobody had the right to casually stumble into His presence.

Another parallel is found in *Shinto's* regulations around physical impurities. Ono (1962:np) writes: "No one with any illness, open wound, flowing blood, or in mourning should worship at shrines, but sometimes this taboo is not observed today". Lee (2014, chap. 4) writes: "...Preparation of religious observances requires washing the body and putting on fresh garments. Sexual intercourse, menstruation, and childbirth were regarded as causes of ceremonial impurity...". It is interesting that both Judaism and *Shinto* include concepts of ceremonial impurity; more interesting are the similar occasions for uncleanness. Compare Lee's findings with the following scriptures from Leviticus. "If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water and be unclean until the evening (Lev 15:18). "When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening" (Lev 15:19). "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, if a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean" (Lev 12:2). These are very recognizable similarities in the purity codes of *Shinto* and Judaism. Of course, there are also a number of differences. But some form of common ground could be developed from where a contextualized Japanese Christian theology of sin and its purification could grow. This can lead to a real spiritual application for Japanese Evangelical Christians, engaging with (i) a recognized narrative of sin as impurity and (ii) the deep cleansing power of the Gospel.

Finally, Littleton (2002:61) writes, "The Shinto obsession with *wa* is also reflected in a variety of Japanese customs...such as removing one's shoes before entering a house and taking a daily bath". The concept of purification is not an irrelevant doctrine of a bygone era, but it still has a widespread influence on Japanese culture today.

1.2.4 Teaching of Sin in Mark's Gospel

The concept of impurity or uncleanness in Mark's Gospel is given special attention in Neyrey (1986), Wassen (2016), Kazen (2002), and deSilva (2000). Commentaries like Dowd's (2002) also highlight how Jesus redefines purity laws in Mark's Gospel narrative.

Throughout Mark's Gospel, we find Jesus challenging the traditional purity laws of the Jewish community. In chapter 1:40-45 Jesus touched a leper and made him clean. In chapter 2:13-17 Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners. In chapter 3:1-6 Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath. In chapter 5:25-34 Jesus touches a woman with a discharge and a dead child, healing the woman and resurrecting the child. In chapter 7:1-23 Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees because his disciples ate with unwashed hands. They were accused of defilement because of not adhering to the traditions of the elders. Jesus' response centres on his words in verse 15: "There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him". In verse 21 Jesus mentions a number of these defilements: evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, slander, pride and foolishness. I observe that many of the sins that Jesus mentions are those that damage relationships. The Japanese concept of *wa* 和 emphasises the need to maintain harmony, and Jesus clearly says that sin is that which causes relational disharmony. Sin is not only a breaking of the law but a type of heart defilement that affects those around us. Dowd (2000:71) writes: "The parable and its interpretation (7:14-23) deny the polluting character of non-kosher foods and insist that impurity is caused by behaviours that destroy human community". Additionally, some of the sins Jesus mentions describe a person's being or nature. This means that sin is not only an immoral action in the breaking of a law, but it is fundamentally about the condition of a person's heart.

Neyrey (1986) does a study on the idea of purity in Mark's Gospel and like deSilva mentions Douglas' work and the distinction between what is in place, 'pure', and what is out of place, 'impure'. Neyrey makes the point that Jesus did what was deemed out of place by the society of his day. Mark's Gospel, according to Neyrey presents Jesus as someone who challenges the Jewish purity system and replaces it with other core values. This relationship between Jesus and purity laws is a debated issue. Kazen (2002) draws rich concepts of Jesus' relationship to purification rites and suggests different views, namely (i) the distinction between internal and external purity, (ii) a complex social dichotomy between the elite and local customs and finally, (iii) impurity as demonic influence which Jesus came to banish. Two of these concepts relates to Japanese thinking; that of impurity being an external problem,

and impurity coming from spiritual 'demonic' influence. Jesus demonstrates his authority over these problems, seen in the casting out of demons and the way in which he turns the traditional purity laws on their heads.

On the other side scholars like Wassen (2016) disagree with Neyrey, deSilva and Kazen. Wassen (2016:31) writes: "There is no evidence that Jesus transgressed, challenged or disregarded purity laws". She bases her argument on the fact that regular Jews did not go out of their way to avoid impurity. Impurity was not sinful but part of everyday Jewish life. She also argues on the grounds of Jesus' words being a relative value judgement. Jesus merely stated that eating with defiled hands is novel when compared to the defilement that comes from bodily discharges as explained in Leviticus 15.

My own view is that of Neyrey and deSilva. Jesus does not completely abolish purity laws, however as Neyrey (1986:115) puts it, "Mark portrays him as revising the maps according to a new principle". The new principle is a renewed heart through the power of spiritual regeneration. The words of Jesus in Mark 7:15 are a universal principle, not limited to the issue of hand washing alone. I will argue this view further in chapter 2.

1.3 Main Problem and Subsidiary Research Questions

The main research problem of this thesis is to determine in what ways the concept of sin as impurity, with special reference to Mark 7:14-23, may offer Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christianity a meaningful theology of sin that is spiritually enlightening and relevant to their religio-cultural milieu of *Shinto* purification rites. This problem requires answering the following subordinate questions:

1.3.1 What does Mark 7:14-23 teach us about the concept of sin as impurity?

1.3.2 What has been the understanding of sin as impurity in the modern *Shinto* religious tradition?

1.3.3 In what ways might the concept of sin as impurity in Ancient Near Eastern culture be comparable to that of the modern *Shinto* tradition?

1.3.4 How might a contextual biblical theology of purification be successfully developed that is pertinent for Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in their Japanese context?

1.4 Objectives

The objective of this thesis is to explore the biblical concept of sin as impurity, then to investigate its potential contrasts and parallels with *Shinto* beliefs regarding impurity, ending with theological implications for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in a religio-cultural environment where *Shinto* purification rites are regularly practised. The objective includes four goals. (i) To study Mark 7:14-23 as a base biblical text for understanding sin as impurity. This will be the chosen text because in this particular passage Jesus confronts the question of ritual impurity directly. The wider context of Mark's Gospel will also be considered to give greater clarity regarding the purpose of Mark's Gospel and how the Mark 7:14-23 passage should be interpreted. (ii) To probe the teaching and practice of modern *Shinto* tradition and its understanding of sin as impurity. This will provide a framework for identifying the narrative that Japanese *Shinto* people believe regarding human sin and give deeper insight into *Shinto* purification rites. (iii) To compare the concept of sin as impurity from Ancient Near Eastern culture with that of modern *Shinto* tradition. Any differences and parallels will be outlined; this will give information that can assist the process of developing a pertinent application for Japanese Christians. (iv) To develop a contextual biblical theology of purification that is pertinent for Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in their Japanese context.

1.5 Delimitations

I wish to make the following delimitations: (i) Japan is a small but densely populated country united as one distinct people group with one language. According to Eckman (2004:55) *Shinto* accounts for around 80% of Japan's population. But it is not as simple as one statistic, many Japanese classify themselves as both *Shinto* and Buddhist. The *Shinto* tradition itself is also a profoundly diverse religion; even further

complicated by its mingling with Buddhist teaching. This makes it very challenging to explore all the beliefs and practices of every sect and period. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine all the religious and cultural influences that have shaped modern Japan. However, the practice of purification rites is something deeply rooted within most Japanese people. Davies (2016:40) Writes: "...the Shintoist notion of purity, in both its positive and negative manifestations, is still one of the most significant elements of the Japanese psyche and worldview". Therefore, I shall limit my research to addressing the concepts of sin, impurity and purification rites that apply to the common *Shinto* faith.

(ii) I will also follow the theme of impurity in Ancient Near Eastern Culture and 1st century Judaism. Impurity is by no means the only significant religious or cultural concept within these two biblical contexts. Greco-Roman culture has undoubtedly influenced 1st century Christianity along with Ancient Near Eastern culture but instead of exploring every Ancient Near Eastern and 1st century influence, I will limit my research to each context's value for purity and then develop this into a purification narrative that is proven to be both biblical and culturally appropriate for modern Japan.

(iii) The target group will be Contemporary Japanese Christians who live in a *Shinto* purification milieu. This research will therefore not focus on tools or strategies for evangelizing *Shinto* followers but rather developing a theology of purification that is pertinent to Japanese Christians.

(iv) The researcher comes from a Western world-view and will naturally be limited by being a foreigner. It is trusted that my attempts will be acceptable and can stimulate further dialogue.

(v) The primary passage for the purpose of this research will be Mark 7:14-23. There are many other passages that teach on the concept of sin¹ but I have chosen this particular passage because it highlights one biblical image for sin 'impurity' that can

¹ Missing the mark (Ro 3:23), Lawlessness (1 Jn 3:4), Idolatry (Ro 1:23), Darkness (Jn 3:19), Disobedience (Rom 5:19, Eph 5:6), Rebellion (Jos 22:16, Pr 17:11, Jer 28:16), Guilt (Jam 2:11), Injustice (Eze 9:9, 18:26), Spiritual illness (Matt 9:12) Malevolent power (Gen 4:7, Rom 7:8), Slavery (Jn 8:34).

be useful for developing a theology of purification in and for the people of Japan. This does not minimize other equally important biblical images; I am simply connecting one aspect of sin that can be used as a bridge to help connect Christianity to Japan in a meaningful way.

1.6 Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to develop a contextualized, biblical Theology of Purification for Japanese Christians, based on the understanding of both *Shinto* Purification and Jesus' teaching on sin from Mark 7:14-23. Japan is one of the largest unreached people groups in the world; less than 1% of its people are Evangelical Christians. God has given me a great burden for this nation and I want to grow in my understanding of Japanese theology, culture and history, for the purpose of communicating the Gospel contextually and effectively. This research project is a small step towards that goal.

1.7 Design and Methodology

This is a study in Systematic Theology that employs a modified version of Grant Osborne's (2006) research method. Osborne's method moves from exegesis to Biblical-theology, to systematic theology. This paper follows a similar route, starting from the exegesis of Mark 7:14-23, moving to a study of purity as a Biblical theme, and ending with a systematic theology of purification. The main difference is in the inclusion of *Shinto's* understanding of sin as impurity which is used in a comparative study that contributes to the development of a more contextually appropriate theology in and for the people of Japan. Osborne's model also traces the contextualization topic through church history. This is not a particular priority of this paper. Japanese church history is only briefly considered in chapter 5 where the need for ongoing contextualization in Japan is highlighted. Here, the clash between Japanese spirituality and traditional Western Christian doctrine is demonstrated using examples from Japanese church history. These modifications are made in order to recontextualize the traditional doctrine of sin as lawbreaking and develop the idea of sin as impurity which is more commonly understood by Japanese in *Shinto* tradition. Solving the research problem will involve four steps. It will start with a thorough exegesis of Mark 7:14-23, cross-referencing with other relevant passages that will help come to a clearer understanding of sin as an internal impurity. This will

be followed with Contemporary *Shinto*'s teaching on impurity; I will lean on works from leading *Shinto* teachers, also observing how the concept of impurity influences modern Japanese life. Thirdly, the concept of impurity in Ancient Near Eastern culture will be compared to that of Contemporary *Shinto*, so that any similarities or differences will be discovered and not merely assumed. Finally, I will move towards this study's spiritual implications for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in an environment of *Shinto* purification rites, exploring ways that the research findings can strengthen their faith and demonstrate a theology of purification that is pertinent to them.

This study will contain only literary and qualitative research. In terms of methodology, I will be employing a slightly modified version of Osborne's research methodology as explained earlier. The methodology will consist of the following steps:

Step 1: In this step sin as impurity will be carefully examined, using Mark 7:14-23 as a base passage. Exegesis will be done, cross-referencing with other passages, doing word studies, background studies, textual analysis and looking at theological meaning. I believe Mark 7:14-23 is a key text for understanding sin as impurity because the primary question Jesus is confronted with in this text relates directly to the issue of impurity. Books that will be used include commentaries, lexicons, and other theological books that can help provide a biblical understanding of sin as impurity. The following titles provide a starting point: deSilva's (2000), *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, Neyrey's (1986), *The Idea of Purity in Mark's Gospel*, France's (2002), *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek text*, Edward's (2002), *The Gospel according to Mark*, Lange's (2008), *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Mark*, Balz's (1990), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* and Anon's (2011), *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*.

Step 2: In this step, the Contemporary Japanese view of sin as impurity will be carefully examined in its religio-cultural context. This step needs to follow up from the exegesis of Mark 7:14-23 because it demonstrates common ground between Mark's Gospel and the *Shinto* religion as relating to impurity. It also provides important information for the step to follow. Before an applicable biblical narrative of sin, as impurity can be applied, there needs to be a thorough understanding of what current

Japanese *Shinto* people actually do believe about the concept of sin as impurity. This will help eliminate any ignorant or misinformed views about what *Shinto* really teaches, strengthening the outcome of steps 3 and 4. Books for this step will include works on *Shinto* as a religion and books on *Shinto's* cultural underpinnings which influence the lives of Contemporary Japanese people. Some valuable works include Rankin's (2011), *Shinto a Celebration of Life*, Ono (2004), *Shinto the Kami Way*, Yamikage's (2006), *The Essence of Shinto* and Davie's (2016), *Japanese Culture: The Religious and Philosophical Foundations*.

Step 3: Here the religio-cultural milieu of Ancient Near Eastern Jewish culture will be compared to that of Contemporary *Shinto* in light of purification rites. This step is necessary to demonstrate how impurity is visible in both the Old Testament and in Japanese *Shinto*. One of the purposes of this paper is to highlight a possible connection between the biblical idea of sin as impurity and that of Modern *Shinto* in order to develop a contextualized theology of purification. No similarities and/or differences can merely be assumed, so a comparative study is needed in order to come to truthful conclusions. In order to complete this step works on Jewish and *Shinto* culture are needed, especially those relating to purification rites. Here are a few example works: deSilva's (2000), *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, Feder's (2015), *Behind the Scenes of a Priestly Polemic: Leviticus 14 and its Extra-Biblical Parallels*, Norbeck's (1952), *Pollution and Taboo in Contemporary Japan*, Yamikage's (2006), *The Essence of Shinto* and Douglas' (1966), *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.

Step 4: This final step will explore the spiritual implications for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in a context of *Shinto* purification rites. I will apply the theological understanding of sin as impurity to this specific group and explore the ways it can benefit them spiritually. This information can be used for enriching the Contemporary Japanese Christians' understanding of sin and an appreciation for what Christ achieved in making them truly pure. It will also demonstrate one more way that the Bible speaks meaningfully into the Japanese context with a narrative they can understand and appreciate. This will all be strung together in the attempt to develop a Christian Japanese Theology of Purification. This step will require application of research done in previous chapters together with

the following works: Mischke's (2015), *The Gospel of Purity for Unreached Peoples*, Lee's (2014), *The Japanese & Christianity: Why is Christianity not widely believed in Japan?*, Furuya's (1997) *A History of Japanese Theology*, Davie's (2002) *The Japanese Mind*, Morgan's (2013) *Fallen: A Theology of Sin*, Mullins's (1998) *Christianity made in Japan*, and Tennent's (2007), *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*.

1.8 Hypothesis

I believe my thesis will show that a narrative of sin as impurity is biblically sound, theologically consistent, practically useful and at the same time contextually appropriate for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in a religio-cultural milieu of *Shinto* purification rites. (i) Mark 7:14-23 provides teaching on a theology of purification that is pertinent to the Japanese. (ii) That Japanese *Shinto* already has a concept of sin but in a sense of pollution, not legal guilt. (iii) That meaningful comparison can be made between *Shinto* and Ancient Near Eastern purification rites, demonstrating the opportunity for some level of common ground between the Old Testament and Modern *Shinto*. (iv) That all the research findings can be developed into a meaningful, contextualized theology of purification for Japanese Christians.

1.9 Overview

The thesis will require six chapters. The following is a brief outline.

(i) Introduction

Here the research problem and plan are outlined, including a summary of the problem, how I intend to solve it and what literature is available to assist. It is a broad overview of the entire project and will include my own faith tradition and pre-understanding.

(ii) Sin as impurity: An Exegetical study of Mark 7:14-23

The Concept of sin as impurity is investigated by means of exegeting Mark 7:14-23. This demonstrates a biblically orthodox theology of sin that can be pertinent for a *Shinto* culture of purification rites. Mark 7:14-23 is used as a base text but I cross-

reference other related passages. This is a key passage highlighting Jesus' own teaching on the matter of defilement.

(iii) Sin as impurity in Modern *Shinto* religious tradition

The *Shinto* understanding of sin as impurity is examined in this chapter. I examine religious works on *Shinto*, the development of their beliefs regarding impurity and then investigate how their beliefs have influenced Japanese culture. This demonstrates the unique religio-cultural milieu of *Shinto* purification rites. It also provides the basis to start exploring any similarities between Old Testament Jewish culture and *Shinto*.

(iv) A comparative study of Impurity in Ancient Near East and the Modern *Shinto* Tradition

In this chapter, the researched material regarding impurity in Ancient Near Eastern culture is compared with impurity in modern *Shinto* tradition. Similarities and contrasts are identified. This information is helpful for three reasons. (i) It helps to eliminate assumptions about the similarities and/or differences between the two cultures. (ii) It draws out spiritual implications for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in a socio-cultural milieu of *Shinto* purification rites. (iii) It demonstrates that there are meaningful opportunities for contextualization between the Bible and Modern *Shinto*. This chapter provides information for the final chapter which focuses on developing a biblical theology of purification.

(v) A Theology of Purification and its Spiritual significance for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christianity

In this chapter, a theology of purification is developed. Spiritual implications for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in a religio-cultural environment of *Shinto* purification rites are outlined. These implications are beneficial for strengthening the faith of this group of believers and can potentially assist them in reaching out to unbelievers who live in Japan.

(vi). Conclusion

This final chapter summarizes the objectives, procedures, and findings of the thesis, including recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

An Exegetical Study of Mark 7:14-23

2.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the meaning of Mark 7:14-23 and how it pertains to sin as internal impurity. In Mark 7 Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem who paid great attention to ritual purity. A conflict ensues after the Pharisees witness how the disciples of Jesus are eating with unwashed hands, thus in their minds violating an established purity code. Jesus then takes the opportunity to teach about true defilement. This will be a helpful passage towards developing a contextualized theology of purification because Jesus is teaching on the source of impurity and what makes a person defiled. He accuses the Pharisees of focusing on outward purification but neglecting the greater need for inward heart purification.

In Western theology, sin has generally been understood as lawbreaking. However, in this passage sin is seen as defilement from the heart. Works like Baker's (2011) and Lee's (2014) argue that explaining sin as breaking a moral law has not been effective in Japan. I believe Mark 7:14-23 can help develop a new perspective regarding the doctrine of sin as impurity. This passage has not been selected in order to fit into a theology of purification, rather it has been selected because I believe it answers critical questions about sin as internal impurity and it agrees with the wider narrative of Mark's Gospel regarding Jesus coming as agent for God's purity. I would like to demonstrate how Jesus speaks meaningfully and powerfully into the cultural context of both Judaism and Japanese *Shinto* in terms of purification. The study begins by examining the background information to Mark's Gospel followed by its particular purpose and message. After this, the meaning of Mark 7:14-23 for the original audience is inspected followed by a detailed analysis of the passage. Next,

theological concepts are explored, ending with observable findings and principles that are pertinent to the Japanese.

2.2 Background Information

Understanding the background information of Mark's Gospel is essential for accurate biblical interpretation. This section will deal with its authorship, date, place, occasion and function.

2.2.1 Authorship

Although there is no internal proof of Mark's authorship of the second Gospel, the weight of evidence does rest in his favour. External evidence strongly supports John Mark as the author who was a faithful interpreter of the apostle Peter's testimony (Edwards, 2002:4). Papias, bishop of Hierapolis wrote in his final work 'Exegesis of the Lord's Oracles' strong evidence for Mark as author tied to Peter. The notion of Peter's eyewitness testimony contributing to Mark's Gospel is further confirmed by Eusebius (Edwards, 2002:5) who said that when Peter preached the word in Rome, many who were present exhorted Mark as one who followed Peter to put in writing what was proclaimed. The early church agrees that Mark is the author of the second Gospel, the interpreter of Peter, who wrote the Gospel from Rome (Edwards, 2002:5). New Testament references pictures Mark as an associate of the apostles along with other prominent figures. He is likely John Mark, the son of Mary, in whose home the church met (Acts 12:12). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25). At Perga Mark leaves the missionary group and travels to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). A sharp disagreement occurred between Paul and Barnabas on whether Mark should accompany them on their second Journey (Acts 15:37-41) and there was a split in the party. Paul took Silas and travelled to Asia Minor, Barnabas returned to Cyprus with Mark. A final reference shows Mark working with Peter in Rome (1 Pe 5:13). It is traditionally understood that this Mark, associate of Paul, Barnabas and Peter, is the writer of the second Gospel.

2.2.2 Date and Place

There is no available information that proves the exact date of Mark's writing, therefore, any conclusions must be tentative. Scholars are left with no information apart from external sources and internal suggestions. Early church tradition dates

the writing either shortly before, or shortly after Peter's death in A.D. 64 or 65. A large section of contemporary scholarship disregards this traditional view but there is still widespread agreement for a date somewhere between A.D. 65 and 75 (Brooks, 1991:28). Hendriksen (1975:15) favours a date between A.D. 40 and 65, preferring the earlier part of the period. His reasons include, (i) According to a statement by Eusebius it was during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) that Peter preached in Rome and Mark his follower was asked to write a record of the Gospel. (ii) Subscriptions of later uncials and cursives inform that Mark's Gospel was written in the tenth or twelfth year after Christ's ascension. (iii) A small papyrus scrap containing a part of Mark's Gospel was found in cave #7 near Qumran, the date A.D. 50 had been subscribed at its discovery. Edwards (2002:7) believes the external evidence points to a date in mid to late A.D. 60. He refers to a report from Irenaeus that Mark did not write the Gospel until after the death of the Apostles Peter and Paul. The trouble is that Clement of Alexandria and Origen reported that Mark wrote his Gospel *during* Peter's lifetime. Edwards (2002:7) concludes that church tradition locates the composition of Mark towards the end of Peter's life, or shortly after his death.

As to internal evidence, Edwards (2002:7-8) proposes that Mark's regular mention of Christian suffering (Mk 8:31-9:1, 13:3-13) suggests that the Gospel was written during a time of persecution. The most notable persecution came from Nero in the year A.D. 64. This coincides with both place and possible dating for Mark's Gospel since it is improbable that Peter went to Rome before A.D. 62 (Brooks, 1991:29). Another piece of internal evidence is found in Mark 7:19. Mark's comment about Jesus declaring all foods clean can be understood in the context of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. This is where it was decided that Gentile Christians are exempt from Jewish dietary laws. Rudolph (2002:304) believes that the motivation behind Mark's comment in verse 19b is an attempt to construct a theological basis for the Acts 15 food law exemption. It is plausible that such an emphasis was sanctioned by Peter who received a vision from the Lord regarding all foods being declared clean (Acts 10:9-16). This would, of course, date Mark's Gospel after A.D. 50. Looking at all the above evidence, it would be reasonably safe to date Mark's Gospel between A.D. 50 and 65.

Brooks (1991), Edwards (2002) and Hendriksen (1975), all agree that Mark wrote his Gospel from Rome, with a Roman Gentile audience in mind. Each of the three scholars, reference early church leaders who agree on Rome as the place of writing. Further evidence is observed in the New Testament epistles. If Paul's prison epistles were written by Paul in Rome then Mark's inclusion in Paul's greetings (Col 4:10, Phm 24) would place him at Rome in the early 60s. 1 Peter 5:13 also connects Mark with Rome and 2 Timothy 4:11 suggests that Mark would soon leave for Rome. More evidence for Mark writing from Rome is observed in his purpose for writing as it is well established that Mark wrote primarily for a Roman audience. I will deal with this in the following section.

2.2.3 Occasion and function

It is most likely that Mark composed his Gospel to satisfy a request from Roman Christians to have a good record or written summary of Peter's preaching in the city (Hendriksen, 1975:15). Although it was originally intended for Roman believers, it is not limited to them in scope but contains a message intended for a worldwide audience (Mk 13:19, 16:15). France (2002:9) suggests that Mark was written as an oral text to be read out loud since many people in the Ancient Mediterranean world were illiterate. Another point of evidence is the style of Mark's writing, coming across as a dramatic story, making use of repetition and dual expression (Mk 1:32, 2:20) as well as the *sandwich* technique (Mk 2:1-12, 3:20-35, 5:21-43) which helps the listener pay attention and remember the content. This literary style that reads like one large sermon makes sense if Mark's intention was to give a written account of Jesus based on Peter's preaching in Rome. Furthermore, a date around A.D. 64 puts Mark's Gospel after the Jerusalem council and at the height of persecution under Nero. This could explain why Mark is especially interested in focusing his Gospel to a Gentile audience because he seeks to comfort persecuted Christians. Additionally, if Mark's Gospel was written after the Jerusalem council, it makes sense that Mark, writing to a Gentile audience will offer theological weight to the decision made at the Jerusalem council regarding Gentiles not being obligated to observe certain Jewish purity laws. Knowing this helps us understand Mark's comment in 7:19b. In addition, this gives Mark's Gospel a missional and theological quality. Carson (2005:183) comments that redaction critics stress theological purposes in the writings of the Gospels. This is most certainly the case for Mark. This critique is not

something to fear, but rather gives motivation for proper application of theology, just as Mark did when writing to a Gentile audience. We now move to consider the original audience and destination of Mark's Gospel.

2.2.4 First Audience and Destination

Many hints and clues are available within Mark's Gospel when considering its original audience and destination. Easley (2002) identifies two distinct details in Mark that makes a Roman audience likely: The quick pace and business-like writing style that Mark employs. This would have resonated with Romans who were people of action. Also, several terms with Latin origins are found throughout Mark's Gospel. Brand (2003:1077) also argues for a Gentile audience and adds the following reasons: Jewish customs are explained in detail for the sake of readers unfamiliar with Judaism (Mk 7:3-4, 14:12, 15:42). Secondly, Several Aramaic expressions are translated for the benefit of a Greek-speaking audience (Mk 3:17, 5:41, 7:11,34). Thirdly, Gentile readers would have appreciated Mark's interpretation of Jesus declaring all foods clean (Mk 7:19). Lastly, his primarily Gentile audience may also explain why Mark omitted to include the genealogy of Jesus. Edwards (2002:10) adds to the above list, pointing out that Mark transliterates Latin expressions into Greek characters (Mk 5:9, 6:37, 15:16) and also presents the Romans in a neutral way, sometimes in a favourable way (Mk 12:17, 15:1-2). In light of the above evidence, Edwards (2002:10) gives the following conclusion,

These data indicate that Mark wrote for Greek readers whose primary frame of reference was the Roman Empire, whose native tongue was evidently Latin, and for whom the land and Jewish ethos of Jesus were unfamiliar. Again, Rome looks to be the place in which and for which the Second Gospel was composed.

The fact that Mark writes his Gospel to a non-Jewish audience reinforces the truth of his good news being for all people.

2.3 The Purpose and Message of Mark's Gospel

The opening verse of Mark's Gospel immediately gives the purpose for its writing, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1). This tells us that the writer is most concerned about the good news of Jesus, who is the Son of

God. It is helpful to think about the purpose and message of Mark by means of the way that Mark presents Jesus and His Gospel. Mark gives testimony about Jesus, carefully explaining the special characteristics of this Messiah. He shows us a Jesus who (i) is on a mission, (ii) is a suffering servant, (iii) has authority, and (iv) is pure, with the ability to impart purity to others. I will further elaborate on these characteristics in this next section.

2.3.1 Jesus on Mission

I have already established that Mark is primarily writing to a Gentile audience, demonstrating his intention to portray Jesus as a Messiah for all nations. People who were generally understood as being outside the community of faith are given special attention in Mark's Gospel. Outsiders, women, Gentiles, beggars, and unclean people frequently come to understanding and faith in Christ (Mk 1:40-42, 3:1-5, 5:1-42, 7:24-30, 8:22-26, 9:46-52, 12:41-44). Edwards (2002:17) observes that Mark also frequently portrays Jesus as an outsider himself (Mk 1:45, 5:17, 8:23, 11:19, 12:8, 15:22). These examples indicate that Jesus came to identify with the outsiders and that the kingdom Jesus proclaims is not identifiable with any existing social norms or worldly authorities. The kingdom Jesus preached was and is uniquely centred in His own person and mission. The scope of God's mission is radically widened in Mark's Gospel.

In the Mark 7:1-23 dispute, the widening scope of Jesus' mission is demonstrated in two ways. First, Jesus teaches that religious purity, achieved through external means, 'food laws', is impossible. This is because defilement comes from the inside (Mk 7:20). Dowd (2000:70) writes that the passage prepares for God's mission to the Gentiles by assigning an equal status to both Jew and Gentile; all people are in need of internal cleansing. Dunn (1990:45) strengthens this argument by saying that most commentators believe that Mark 7:19 is designed to provide reassurance to Gentile believers that Jewish food laws were not mandatory for them. Secondly, the scene right after the dispute with the Scribes and Pharisees shows Jesus going to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Here he was confronted by none other than a Gentile woman who begged Jesus to cast a demon out of her daughter. To this Edwards (2002:217) writes, "Jesus' visit to Tyre universalizes the concept of Messiah in terms of geography, ethnicity, gender, and religion in a way entirely unprecedented in

Jerusalem". Mark 7:14-30 helps to demonstrate the broader focus of Mark: to introduce Jesus as a Messiah for all nations.

2.3.2 Jesus as Suffering Servant

Another important theme in Mark is the idea of suffering and vindication. Brooks (1991:30) writes that one of the main concerns for Mark is to emphasize the suffering and death of Jesus as a ransom for sinners. This emphasis on suffering can be seen in Jesus' title 'Son of man', a title He gave Himself in order to teach aspects of his life namely: His earthly ministry (Mk 2:10, 28, 10:45), His passion and ascension (Mk 8:31, 9:9, 10:33, 14:21, 41) and His second coming (Mk 8:38, 13:26). Viljoen (2002:462) gives a few aspects related to Jesus as 'Son of man'. Firstly, through Jesus' earthly ministry we see His example of servanthood. This is developed in several ways, teaching the disciples that the first, the big, and the important are not favoured in God's kingdom because Jesus, the ruler of the kingdom came to serve the weak and needy. Secondly, in the passion and ascension, we find that Jesus regularly announced his imminent suffering, death and ascension. This sharply emphasized the character of Jesus as the suffering servant. Edwards (2002:14-15) writes that Mark's portrayal of Jesus as a suffering servant fulfils the Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 53 regarding the servant of the Lord who through suffering will atone for sin. Lastly, there is vindication for the Son of man who will return in eschatological glory. All the world will witness this glory and it will be a day of vindication for believers who followed in spite of persecution from the world. In summary, Mark portrays Jesus as a servant who suffers and identifies with outsiders. This suffering, however, did not lead to defeat and dishonour, but to victory and vindication. Such Gospel narrative would have been very encouraging to Christians living during a time of persecution. The portrayal of Jesus as the suffering yet victorious saviour would be a source of comfort and strength for any believer suffering injustice.

2.3.3 Authority of Jesus

Not only does Mark portray Jesus as an inclusive, missional Messiah who identifies with outsiders through suffering, he also seeks to show the authority of Jesus as a preacher and teacher. In Mark 1:38 we read that Jesus recognizes that part of His purpose in coming to the world was to preach. Edwards (2002:13) writes, "The

characteristic of Jesus that left the most lasting impression on his followers and caused the greatest offence to his opponents was his *exousia*, his sovereign freedom and magisterial authority". Jesus' preaching was not as a student of the law, but as one with authority over it. We only need to look at Jesus' teaching about fasting, (Mk 2:18-22), the Sabbath, (Mk 2:23-28), the traditions of the elders and what is considered pure and impure, (Mk 7:1-23), cleansing of the temple, (Mk 11:15-19), paying taxes, (Mk 12:13-17), and the great commandment, (Mk 12:28-34). Jesus' teaching is directly linked with His divine authority. Although the teaching of Jesus is challenged over and over, every time, it is his accusers who leave shamed.

The scene in Mark 7:1-23 is a good example of Jesus' unique authority. Another fault-finding delegation is sent from Jerusalem, challenging Jesus' apparent disregard for purity laws, specifically those related to hand washing. Jesus' response calls their entire religious system into question and He exposes the hypocrisy in their hearts. In establishing their traditions, they set aside the commands of God and this for selfish gain. They use *Corban* as a means to escape their obligation towards honouring their mother and father. In this dispute, Jesus is seen as the Messiah who has authority over all religious matters. He does not teach as a student of the law or as an equal to the Scribes but rather as the author, claiming sole jurisdiction for expounding its true meaning. When understanding Mark's intention to bring his audience to a fuller appreciation for the authority of Jesus, the reader will be better prepared to accept Mark's comment in Mark 7:19b. Mark demonstrates throughout his Gospel that Jesus indeed has authority to reshape the commonly understood purity lines. Not just in the authority displayed in his teaching, but also in the binding of Satan, (Mk 3:27), His authority to forgive sins, (Mk 2:10) and His authority over nature, (Mk 4:39). Edwards (2002:14) makes an important point regarding Jesus' authority, "The authority of Jesus, which everywhere permeates his demeanour and bearing, is employed not for self, however, but in the service of others". This demonstrates that the authority of Jesus is linked closely to His mission of calling sinners to God (Mk 2:17).

2.3.4 Jesus as Purity Agent

Finally, it is necessary to consider Mark's portrayal of a pure Messiah, one with the ability to impart purity to others. Purity was an important social mechanism in Israel²; it, therefore, makes good sense for Mark to start his Gospel by authenticating the purity of Jesus. Neyrey (1986:106) shows how Mark highlights those who testify to Jesus' purity, namely: John the Baptizer, although a holy prophet himself, is not worthy to touch the feet of Jesus. In addition, the purification actions of Jesus, namely baptism of the Spirit, is deemed more effective than John's baptism (Mk 1:7-8). Secondly, God the Father testifies to the purity of his son (Mk 1:9-10). Jesus is acceptable and pleasing in the sight of his father. Thirdly, an unlikely figure in Mark 1:12-13 also indirectly testifies to the purity of Jesus. Satan, understood to be the ultimate unholy being, tries to tempt Jesus but fails. Mark wants his readers to understand that Jesus did not fail the purity test. Neyrey (1986:106) writes that Mark was not indifferent about the purity of Jesus, but he affirms Christ's purity rating throughout the Gospel.

While Mark portrays Jesus as pure and close to God, he also writes about Jesus who regularly crosses Jewish purity lines. This often resulted in conflict with Jewish leaders as is the case in Mark 7:1-23. deSilva (2004:227) gives a few examples of these purity *transgressions*: Firstly, Jesus touches people who ought not to be touched. A leper, (Mk 1:40-45), a woman with a discharge, (Mk 5:25-40), a corpse, (Mk 5:41). Secondly, Jesus does not guard against food or table defilement, eating with tax collectors and sinners, (Mk 2:15), not teaching his disciples to observe the hand washing ritual, (Mk 7:1-2), feeding thousands of hungry people and never raising the question of hand washing, (Mk 6:37-44, Mk 8:1-9). Finally, Jesus does not observe sacred times as He heals on the Sabbath, (Mk 3:1-6), and allows his disciples to pluck wheat on the Sabbath, (Mk 2:23-24).

One of the reasons why the Scribes and Pharisees were so determined to destroy Jesus was that of his apparent disregard for Jewish purity; in their minds, Jesus was

² In Levitical law God gave Israel commands regarding purity (Lev 10:10). The purity map included appropriate terms; *common* items and spaces contrasted with *holy* items and spaces. Behaviour was regulated by means of a *clean* state in contrast to an *unclean* state. Certain activities will make a person *unclean*, and the appropriate method of purification could restore a *clean* state. Being *clean* ensured benefits for God's people whereas unholiness resulted in disfavour and cursing (deSilva 2000:253).

spreading defilement across Israel. But Mark makes every effort to show that Jesus does not spread defilement, on the contrary, he imparts wholeness or purity to others. He does so by cleansing lepers, healing the woman with a discharge, casting out demons, and bringing forgiveness to Gentile sinners. Scholars like Wassen (2016) and Kazen (2013) are not prepared to accept that Jesus redrew the purity lines. Kazen writes that the idea of Jesus abrogating food laws is out of the question (2013:182). These scholars do substantiate their views as I explain under the literary perspectives; however, in my view, the overall purpose of Mark's Gospel seems to point to a Jesus who radically shifts the traditional purity lines. Mark demonstrates that Jesus does this for a specific reason. deSilva (2004:228) explains,

Jesus' actions in his ministry make a deep impression on his followers. Jesus' disregard for many boundaries, and his commitment to crossing those boundaries for the sake of bringing God's mercy to others, led the church to understand that the crucial boundary of Jew and Gentile was no longer to be observed.

The purpose of Mark is to introduce Jesus as the missional, suffering servant who has divine authority and does everything in absolute purity of heart. These Christological themes in Mark's Gospel harmonize with the traditional view that Mark wrote to a Gentile audience during Roman persecution. This explains the particular focus on Christ as the victorious Son of God who preaches with authority but also stands with suffering outsiders as the Son of man. Because Mark wrote this Gospel after the Jerusalem council, it makes sense that Mark would include a focus on the purity of Jesus. Jewish authorities accused Jesus of transgressing established purity lines and it is possible that Gentiles in the early church were pressured with similar accusations. Yet Mark demonstrates that Jesus taught and represented a superior level of purity to theirs. True purity is not found in external observance but in internal love for God and neighbour.

These four themes in Mark make his Gospel a powerful tool for evangelism and discipleship. They demonstrate the authority of Christ, His willingness to identify with those who suffer, and His concern for Gentiles. The theme of purity can be of particular use to the Japanese. Neyrey (1986:124) makes the point that the idea of purity is important for understanding the way Mark portrays Jesus throughout his

Gospel. Purity is thus the theological key needed to unlock Mark's portrayal of Jesus. This theological key can be meaningfully applied to the Japanese people who have a great concern for purity. The purpose and message of Mark's Gospel is thus compatible with Japanese thought as it relates to purity. What follows next will be an examination of what the Mark 7:14-23 passage meant for the original readers.

2.4 Meaning of Mark 7:14-23 for Original Readers

In this section, I will start to narrow the scope of research to Mark 7:14-23 and its surrounding verses. I will begin by determining the meaning of this specific text for the original readers. This original meaning can be discovered when looking at the historical context, and discerning clues after making some literary observations. Through these, one can start to reveal somewhat of an understanding of the original intent and meaning of the passage.

2.4.1 Literary Observations

Mark 7:1-23 introduces a scene of confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. In this chapter, Mark includes no less than three explanatory notes. In verses 3-4 he explains that the washing ritual was a strict Jewish practice. He also includes that there were *many* other traditions of the elders that the Jews observed. No doubt, Mark included these explanations because these traditions were unfamiliar to his Gentile audience. Mark then highlights how these ritualistic traditions did not help to change the hearts of the Pharisees because of *Corban* – through which they nullify God's Word by their tradition. It would seem that Mark is putting Jewish traditions in a negative light; I believe this is for the benefit of a Roman Gentile audience who did not value these traditions like their Jewish counterparts. He then moves on to explain emphatically in verse 19b that Jesus declared all foods clean. The basis of this is Jesus declaring that nothing outside coming in brings defilement, but defilement comes from the inside out. It is not too difficult to believe that Mark wants his Roman Gentile readers to see that adhering to external purification rites does not make someone clean, and in fact, they are no longer necessary. We see this as the Gospel unfolds and salvation is attained through faith in Christ alone. In addition, from verse 19b we can deduce that he is reinforcing the Jerusalem council's decision about Gentile converts not needing to become Jewish in order to be part of the

family of God. Mark puts Jew and Gentile on equal footing; both are corrupt from the inside out and stand in need of a purification from the inside out.

The passage that follows on from Mark 7:14-23 is about the Syrophenician woman's daughter being delivered from a demon. The Gentile woman's faith is commended right after the Pharisees were reprovved, indicating that Jews were by no means closer to the kingdom of God because of their many traditions and rituals. These observations demonstrate that Mark sought to write a contextualized Gospel for a Gentile audience who did not share the same Jewish values. These teachings in Mark 7:14-23 would have reinforced the New Testament teaching that salvation is found exclusively in the cleansing power of Jesus and not in external ritual washing. Therefore, the original readers would have understood that Jesus emphasized sin as defilement from the heart and not as a failure in observing rituals. They would have understood that the Gospel is defined as inward transformation through the cleansing acts of Christ. I believe this was the primary lesson they learned from this text. We now move to the historical context which will further assist in understanding why Mark 7:14-23 was a powerful, contextualized Gospel message for its original readers. It will also explain why early Christians faced such great opposition from the Judaizers who insisted that to be truly saved one had to adhere to all parts of the Mosaic Law.

2.4.2 Historical Context

The historical context of Mark 7 is set during Jesus' earthly ministry which was frequently challenged by the Scribes and Pharisees. These were the theological gatekeepers of Jesus' day and both groups were present in the Mark 7:1-23 dispute. Lenski (1961:281-282) writes, "The Pharisees were that Jewish sect or party which laid utmost stress on the strictest outward observance of the law, including the rabbinical traditions and regulations which professed to build a formidable protecting hedge about the law". Scribes were experts in the Old Testament law and they are included in this fault-finding committee, travelling all the way from Jerusalem to Galilee in order to challenge Jesus' teaching (1961:282). It is important to remember that Pharisees and Scribes were influential Jewish leaders who helped shape the religious thinking in Israel. This confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders must immediately inform us that Jesus did not fit in with their religious

system³. This makes Mark 7:14-23 a pivotal moment in the Gospel story, especially for the original readers who were chronologically closer to the Jewish purity system than modern readers. deSilva (2000:242) argues that Protestant Christianity has deregulated access to God. Today it is widely believed that the path to God is open to anyone; there is no longer a need for any ritual purification before communing with God. In addition, the enlightenment era insisted on rationalism and by effect, taboos and ritualistic rites have been largely disregarded. This has shaped Western rationalistic, modern culture. deSilva (200:242) writes, “Our entrance into sacred spaces is not hedged in by a standard of purity to be attained before entering the presence of the Holy One, and we frankly regard any culture that still has such regulations as primitive”. This reality distances modern readers from a text like Mark 7:14-23 and so it is of great importance to bridge this gap with a background study.

In order to understand Jesus’ words in Mark 7:15, we must be aware of how the Jewish religious system viewed defilement or impurity. The purity map is an important cultural milieu that helps the reader understand the meaning for original readers better. The issue of impurity was the main point of contention between Jesus and His opponents. The evidence for impurity being the immediate issue is clearly seen in Mark 7:2-3, “they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. (For Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders)”. Mark’s comment in Mark 7:3 informs us that Pharisees and in fact all the Jews were highly concerned about ritual purity. This was the 1st-century Jewish situation. deSilva (2004:114) writes,

Cultures like ancient Israel, then, drew extensive lines of purity, of clean and unclean, in an attempt to create a model of God’s cosmic order and help people locate their place in that order so that they

³ Several factors contributed to significant changes and pressures upon Jewish identity. (i) The introduction of Hellenism. (ii) Persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes who sought to outlaw Jewish laws. (iii) The successful revolt by the Maccabeans. (iv) The establishment of a semiautonomous state under the Hasmonean dynasty (Wright, 2013: Chapter 25). In light of this, debates about Jewish identity, belief, and practice was common and led to the start of different sects. Jewish religious leaders would undoubtedly be fiercely defensive of their own identity, beliefs and practices. This is why the Pharisees contended so strongly against Jesus. Since He was popular with the people, they were deeply concerned that his lack of adherence to purity boundaries would threaten their entire religious system.

may know when pollution has been contracted and what needs to be done to dispel it.

For those in early Judaism, God commanded Aaron to, "...distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (Lev 10:10). These words undergird Israel's purity maps, defining what is holy, neutral or defiled.

1st Century Jews had a heightened sense of purity regulation because of their identity as God's holy people, "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deut 7:6). It is important to remember that almost all 1st century Jews lived in this cultural-religio milieu, one where purity was to be maintained and where the appropriate purification was required if a purity line was crossed⁴. deSilva (2004:118) writes, "God's presence gave Israel access to great benefits as God protected and prospered God's people as long as the people maintained the purity of the land so that God could continue to remain there". As God's special people, Jews naturally sought to be clean, pure and holy and by effect, wanted to separate themselves from Gentile sinners. When Jews rubbed shoulders with Gentiles in the marketplace, they felt it was essential to wash before a meal, lest the Gentile defilement on their bodies contaminate their food and enters their bodies. This historical backdrop highlighting the high regard Jews had for purity is essential to understanding why the Pharisees and Scribes were so angry with Jesus in Mark 7:1-23. In their minds, Jesus had crossed an important purity line. The specific purity line was that of contaminated hands touching food and thus bringing defilement to the body. These food defilement lines were a felt concern for many 1st century Jews. The books of Maccabees detail the level of importance Jews

⁴ It must be added that although there was a wide concern for ritual purity among 1st century Jews, not all sects or groups were equally strict. (i) Pharisees had a deep concern for ritual purity (Cox, 2007:245). (ii) Sadducees were not as strict and were more Hellenistic and cosmopolitan than their Pharisee counterparts (Brisco, 1998:213). (iii) Essenes rejected Herod's temple and priesthood as corrupt. They held to a very strict adherence to the law (Cox, 2007:247). Purity played a big role in the sect. They considered oil to be defiling. They wore white veils and participated in daily purification baths (Barnewall, 2013: Chapter 18). (iv) *Am ha Arets* were common Jews and had the reputation for being ignorant and uneducated (Acts 4:13). Their name means *people of the land*; they were not too bothered by legalism and ritual law but were concerned about death, disease, paying taxes and making a living (Cox, 2007:247). (v) Jews in the diaspora tended to be more Hellenised because they stayed among the Gentiles. However, boundaries had to be set up to protect their Jewish heritage (deSilva, 2013: Chapter 23). The most central of these were avoiding idolatry, observing dietary laws, observing the Sabbath, and circumcision.

placed on food purity, “But many in Israel were determined and resolved in their hearts not to eat anything unclean; they preferred to die rather than to be defiled with food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die” (1 Mac 1:62-63). This was not something Jews were willing to negotiate on; it was part of their national identity, part of their obligation in remaining pure before a holy God.

This historical insight gives evidence that Jesus’ words in Mark 7:15 must have been revolutionary to the original audience. In that statement, Jesus reorganized the Jewish purity maps to a completely new focus, he turned their thinking upside down. Defilement does not come from the outside in, but rather it comes from the inside out, requiring an internal kind of purification that works from the inside out. Both Jew and Gentile reading Mark’s Gospel were to be confronted by this new redemptive reality.

2.5 Analysis of Mark 7:14-23

In this section, I will write a literary analysis of Mark 7:14-23 and give further verbal and literary perspective to enhance the understanding of the passage.

2.5.1 Literary Analysis

The Mark 7:14-23 text can be broadly understood as Gospel narrative. Mark seeks to present Jesus as the Messiah, highlighting His ministry, teaching, death and resurrection. He does this so that people might believe in His name, especially Gentiles whom he is specifically writing to. The more specific genre is pronouncement story, including elements of controversy and parable. These sub-genres are explained by Achtemeier (1985:565) as follows:

(i) *Pronouncement Story*. This is a narrative scene where the main figure responds to something in the form of a decisive pronouncement. The scene is usually set in some kind of dramatic interaction where the highlighted person responds in a striking and remarkable way. In the Mark 7:14-23 text, the decisive pronouncement is, “There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him”. This was a remarkable statement that disturbed the Scribes, Pharisees, and to some extent, Jesus’ own disciples. In verse 17 they respond by asking Jesus to explain to them this parable.

(ii) *Parable*. This literary style was often used by Jesus in powerful ways. A parable is a metaphorical story that teaches a significant truth. It often gave new perspective through its strangeness, compared to normal ways of speaking. In addition, parables were not often understood as is the case for Jesus' disciples in Mark 7:17. Edwards (2002:211) writes, "A parable cannot be understood from the outside but only by entering into it and seeing the reality that depicts from within". The parable in Mark 7:14-23 was kept hidden from the crowds but the disciples were given the explanation. Non-kosher foods did not cause sinful defilement; true defilement comes from inside the heart of man and is manifested in destructive behaviour.

(iii) *Controversy*. The Mark 7:1-23 passage is full of controversy. The scene opens with a Jerusalem fault-finding committee coming to accuse Jesus of transgressing a purity line. Jesus responds with remarkable teaching, giving a parable that amazes not only the religious leaders but the disciples themselves. Afterwards, Jesus spends time alone with His disciples to explain exactly what this parable means. Through the controversy genre, readers are drawn into the drama and are taught in a way that catches their attention. This teaching on impurity is strikingly different from what the Pharisees were emphasizing.

The structure of the Mark 7:14-23 passage will be helpful as a precursor to understanding the rhetoric. For the sake of context, one must begin with the opening scene at the beginning of the chapter.

(i) Controversy Mark 7:1-13.

Regarding purity and eating Mark 7:1-5

Regarding human tradition as opposed to God's will Mark 7:6-13

(ii) Teaching the crowds through parable Mark 7:14-15

(iii) The parable's private explanation Mark 7:16-23

The origin of defilement Mark 7:18-20

The effects of defilement Mark 7:21-23

This short structural outline, along with our understanding of the literary style, will help to understand the way Jesus reasoned with his listeners and gives deeper insight into what exactly is being taught here. Salyer (1993:140) writes that many pronouncement stories are abbreviated *χρεία*. This is a Greek term which Salyer explains as follows: “Short statements or actions which are attributed to some character and are apt for the situation or the character of the person”. An example of *χρεία* is found in Mark 7:14-15. From this *χρεία* we can follow the rhetorical features. Salyer (1993:142-143) helps to bring them into focus: here follows my own adaptation:

(i) *χρεία*: Calling the people to Himself Jesus declared that nothing outside a person brings defilement; things coming from within are what defiles.

(ii) *Interrogation*: After Jesus entered the house, His disciples wanted to know the meaning of His parable.

(iii) *Restatement*: Jesus seemed surprised at their lack of understanding; He restates his sentence that nothing outside going into a person can bring defilement.

(iv) *Rationale*: Jesus explains that external things like food, go into the body then move through the stomach and are later expelled.

(v) *Inference*: Mark inserts his comment that Jesus thus declared all foods clean.

(vi) *Rationale*: Jesus elaborates on how internal sins, like evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness are what brings true defilement. Jesus’ rhetoric is not complicated, it is straight-forward, simple, yet profound. The message is clear: defilement does not come from external sources; its source is internal, from the heart.

2.5.2 Verbal Analysis

Lexical and grammatical examination will help bring further clarity to some exegetical and theological issues stemming from this passage. The important words and

phrases to consider for lexical analysis are *defile*, *nothing outside* and *out of the heart of man*.

(i) *Defile* *κοινώω* 'κοινοό' is a keyword, occurring 5 times in the passage. The first occurrence is Mark 7:15 "There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him". *κοινώω* in this instance is used as an aorist active verb, meaning the subject is in a state of defilement. It is also in the infinitive form. Heiser (2013:np) explains this form, "A word that has characteristics of both verb and noun; that is, a 'verbal noun'". The sense in which it is used in Mark 7:15 is to defile something, especially in a ritual sense. The same sense is used in Mark 7:18. Louw (1996:535) writes, "to cause something to become unclean, profane, or ritually unacceptable". Instead of "defile", the NIV uses the word "unclean". The problem with this translation is that in most languages and cultures ritual uncleanness can easily be confused with hygiene. Louw (1996:535) writes, "In some languages it is necessary to translate *κοινώω* or *βεβηλόω* as 'to take away its holiness' or 'to make something unacceptable to God'". This helps us understand the real meaning of the word *defile* and how it was understood by Jesus' listeners. Defilement has to do with ritual transgression which effectively makes the person unacceptable in the sight of a holy God. The same word *κοινώω* is used in Hebrews 9:13, "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of *defiled persons* with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh". In this case, we see the word used again in a ritual transgression sense. This ritual transgression requires the appropriate method of purification. A working definition for defilement is thus, to be in a state of ritual unacceptability, unfit, and unsuitable for any acts of worship before a pure and holy God.

In Mark 7:15b, 20 and 23 the verb sense is slightly different, not making significant changes to how the word has already been explained. But in the attempt to be thorough, the verb sense in the above three cases is the present, active form. The subject (defiled person) is in a state of defilement, and this defilement is presently active. The important lesson from this word is that defilement is not simply something that you do; it is something that you are. It is more than breaking a law; it is being in a constant state of unacceptability.

(ii) *Nothing outside* ἔξωθεν ‘*esōthen*’ is an important phrase for understanding that which does not bring defilement. The word ἔξωθεν is used to describe an external source, a position that is beyond a particular area, or an exclusion (Arndt, 2000:354-355). A simple reading of this suggests that sin or defilement is not an external problem. Jesus uses the phrase in Mark 7:15 and Mark 7:18. The phrase is linked with the idea that nothing outside going inside has the power to contaminate. We get the idea that the word refers to any external source. What brings more light to the meaning is the word nothing οὐδείς found before ἔξωθεν in verse 15. It is describing the outside as a quantity of no importance to the issue of defilement. This is certainly going beyond the immediate matter of food. Jesus did not say, “There are no kinds of food that go in and defile a person”. His choice of words is, “There is nothing outside a person”. Louw (1996:814) writes that οὐδείς is, “a negative reference to an entity, event, or state – no one, none, nothing”. I take this to mean that no evil spirit, no foods, no disease, nothing, in fact, coming from the outside of a person is the cause of ultimate defilement. Rather, this next phrase “...out of the heart of man...” (Mk 7:21) is the true source of defilement.

(iii) *Inside out* ἐκπορεύομαι ‘*ekporeuomai*’ is the phrase found in Mark 7:15b, 20 and 21. It is an active verb meaning, “to be in motion from one area to another or to come forth from” (Arndt, 2000:308). Another Scripture where this verb is used is in Acts 19:12, “so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits *came out* of them”. The idea of this word is that the object moves from the internal source to the external space. In the context of Mark 7:14-23, Jesus explains the specifics of this internal source: true defilement comes from the heart καρδιά of a person. Lust (2003:np) highlights some of the different nuances related to the word heart, “as centre and source of physical life, as centre of the whole inner life into which God looks, as the faculty of thought and understanding, of the will and its decisions, of emotions, wishes and desires, of moral life, as feeling for good and evil”. The heart of a man is thus representative of his inner being. In Psalm 51:10, after his sin with Bathsheba, David asks for his heart to be renewed. Jeremiah 17:9 warns, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it”. Proverbs 4:23 gives this very significant instruction, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life”. The heart is, therefore, to be understood as a person’s core, the seat

of their emotions, thoughts, desires, ambitions and will. Jesus teaches in Mark 7:14-23 that evil comes from within the heart and spills over to the outside in the form of sinful acts that are described in 7:21-22.

We have considered some of the keywords and phrases in the passage and it has given some insight into the meaning of Jesus' teaching. Both the literary and verbal analysis confirms that the problem of defilement is an internal one. It does not come from the outside in; in fact, nothing from outside coming in brings defilement. True defilement comes from the inner person, from the heart, that which is the centre of a person's emotions, intellect, and will. In the discussion to follow I will explore the different literary perspectives from this passage.

2.5.3 Literary Perspectives

There are different literary perspectives regarding the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish purity laws as put forth in Mark's Gospel. Stettler (2004) argues from Mark 7:14-23 that Jesus transcends traditional purity laws in order to establish his *basileia ethics* or '*kingdom ethics*'. He argues that for Jesus, the purity laws set forth in the Torah were only symbolic of the all-embracing purity of God's kingdom (2004: 493). Stettler goes on to say that humanity requires a purification of the heart; this reality is only foreshadowed by the traditional Torah purity laws. They have now been done away with in Christ who is the fulfilment of these laws. Stettler also emphasizes that this new reality is not only for Jews but for all people. The idea of heart purification that produces *basileia ethics* could be a meaningful salvation narrative for the Japanese.

Wassen (2016) is not convinced that Jesus abolished the Torah purity laws and references to scholars who question the authenticity of Mark 7:15, namely Meier (1991-2009) and Sanders (1985). The reason stated as to why it is unlikely that Jesus abolished Jewish food laws is firstly, that He had a sense of being a prophet sent to his people Israel, not to the Gentiles. Also, the controversy about Jewish food laws evident in the early church (Wassen, 2016:29). The point being made is that if Jesus emphatically abolished Torah purity laws regarding food, then there would have been no controversy regarding this in the early church councils. Furthermore, Wassen argues that Jesus on many occasions worked within a common purity

paradigm. She references the baptism of Jesus, Mark 1:40-45, Matthew 23:25-26, and Matthew 23:27 to substantiate her view. Regarding the emphatic statement in Mark 7:19, "...Thus he declared all foods clean", Wassen concludes that it is Mark's own view in the context of the food controversy in the early church.

Rudolph (2002) uses similar arguments as Wassen (2016). He does not believe that Jesus completely abolished the Torah food laws, stating the following additional reasons: Firstly, Levitical food laws were outside the scope of controversy in the Mark 7 dispute. Rudolph (2002:294) makes a very valid observation, arguing that the issue of conflict was over ritual hand washing, not legitimate Torah food laws. It is good to be reminded that the Mark 7:1-23 dispute is not a hygiene issue, it is a purity issue. Edwards (2002:205) brings this point into sharp clarity,

...to underscore for Mark's readers the radical difference between Christians and Jews on questions of food, cleansing, and the essential meaning of morality and what is pleasing to God. The difference between inner motives (v. 21) and ceremonial observances (v. 18) is honed to a fine edge in the present passage.

It is clear that the immediate point of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees was over manmade rituals, not the written Law of God. Secondly, Jesus is presented in Mark's Gospel as a prophet of Israel. Rudolph (2002:295) makes the point that Jesus would not call on the Jews to renounce the traditions of men in favour of the Torah, and then abolish important parts of the Torah related to food laws (Mk 7:19b). Thirdly, Rudolph (2002:295-99) explains the difference between moral and ritual impurity, arguing that Jesus did not believe that the Torah's ceremonial purity system affected the morality of a person. Wassen (2016:20-21) concurs, "...by fulfilling certain obligations, such as the command to be fruitful and to bury one's parents, people became impure. Clearly, impurity was a part of life". In response to this Rudolph (2002:297) writes, "Jesus' position may be contrasted with the Pharisaic interlocutors, who prioritized ritual purity over moral purity". These reasons, together with the food law controversy during the Jerusalem council are used to reassess the classic interpretation held by scholars such as France (2002), Neyrey (1986) and deSilva (2004).

Although the views of scholars like Rudolph and Wassen are commendable, there are counter-arguments presented by others. Regarding Mark's comment in verse 19b, France (2002:279) writes that it should come as no surprise that the full significance of Jesus' uncomfortable statement on food laws took some time to penetrate. It is possible that some 1st century Christians took longer to process it than others. Regarding the apparent lack of evidence in the Mark 7:1-23 dispute to validate the abolishment of Jewish food laws, France makes the point that verse 15 shows a fundamental realignment of the traditional Jewish purity codes. Nothing that goes into a person defiles him, but defilement comes from the inside out, out from a person's heart. France (2002:288) writes about verse 15, saying, "No specific regulation is now in view, but rather the basic principle of defilement by means of external contacts which underlies all the purity laws of the Old Testament and of scribal tradition". It would be naïve to limit Jesus' response to only include the issue of hand washing without recognizing the greater application. Mark's comment in verse 19 about all foods being declared clean should be understood in that context.

In contrast to Rudolph and Wassen, deSilva (2004) highlights Jesus' seemingly casual approach to Torah purity laws. Touching the leper (Mk 1:40-45), eating with tax collectors and sinners (Mk 2:15), healing on the Sabbath (Mk 3:1-6). deSilva (2004:227) makes this important point by explaining Jesus' apparent lack of concern for Torah purity laws, "The explanation lies not in Jesus' neglect for purity but in his redefinition of purity. Mark presents Jesus as one who has the authority to define what is clean and unclean". When applying this idea to Mark 7:15 we can draw out a new, or updated purity line. One which focuses on the inward, the heart of a person. Neyrey (1986:113) gives this summary of the Mark 7 dispute:

...according to Mark, Jesus is not abrogating the idea of purity when he violates the rules of purity. On the contrary, Jesus is reforming the rules of purity current in his day, offering his interpretation of what God wants and what makes one whole, clean, and holy.

This is the view I will adopt for the purpose of this paper and for formulating my own theology of purification. Next, I will explore theological concepts that are derived from Mark 7:14-23 and what it teaches about sin as impurity.

2.6 Theological Concepts

There are many significant theological concepts that we can learn from Mark 7:14-23, especially regarding sin as impurity. Jesus uses the word *κοινώω* 'defile' to describe man's impurity. This speaks about sin as a state more than an action. Defilement speaks about humanity having a fallen status or corrupted position before a holy God. Purity and impurity determine where one stands in relation to God; purity brings one closer to the divine, and impurity drives you away. Purity enables participation, defilement results in separation. A defiled status renders a person out of place and in a constant condition of unacceptability; there is no way the unclean can be in the presence of the holy. Impurity, therefore, disrupts bright harmony with God. Sinners are lawbreakers, but in the same vein, they are defiled beings.

Besides disrupting harmony with God, impurity also disrupts social harmony. Mark 7:21b-22 describes many impurities such as, "evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness" which have a horizontal effect, damaging the relationships between people. Dowd (2000:71) confirms that this is the interpretation of Jesus' parable in Mark 7:14-23, "The parable and its interpretation (7:14-23) deny the polluting character of non-kosher foods and insists that impurity is caused by behaviours that destroy human community". Considering Mark 7:14-23, a fresh definition for sin can be explored: Sin is defilement before a holy God, placing a person in a constant state of unacceptability, breaking harmony with God, and harmony with people. The end result is shame and exclusion. This explanation for sin fits in well with the next scene in Mark's Gospel where a shamed, excluded Gentile woman and her demon-possessed daughter receives not only salvation but honour. Matthew 15:28 records more of Jesus' words to this woman, "Then Jesus answered her, 'O woman, great is your faith!'" The honourable faith of this Gentile woman stands in sharp contrast to the Pharisees who challenged the authority of Jesus. Although she did not share in the purity traditions of Israel, she and her daughter were cleansed and honoured by Christ. The purifying power of Jesus not only gives righteousness, but it also offers inclusion and honour. Additionally, this incident proves that external rituals are not needed for heart cleansing.

Jesus' new purity paradigm is also an important theological and interpretive tool for understanding much of the New Testament controversy. Jesus radically redefined the common Jewish purity regulations and this explains why the Scribes and Pharisees were so offended by Him. It also explains why the early church wrestled with the old purity laws as they stood in opposition to the new law of Christ and walking in the Spirit. Jesus' words in Mark 7:15 justify Mark's comment in verse 19b and it coincides with Paul's teaching in Colossians 2:16 about being free from laws regarding food, drink, festivals, or special days because these were but shadows pointing to the substance of Christ. The Mark 7:14-23 passage gives a strong argument for the purity maps shifting. Stettler (2004:501) writes,

...Jesus did away with the Purity Torah but not in order to put an end to Judaism. Rather he wanted to bring God's will for Israel and the world, the binding revelation of which was in the Torah, to its realization, and bring to Israel the complete purity of God's people in the last days.

True purity which God requires from all people is inward, heart purification by means of Christ's redemptive work. The Old Testament purity laws were but foreshadows for this new covenant reality. A significant theological application from this text is how Old Testament rules and rituals that focused on regulating external behaviour was not the ultimate goal of God's redemptive work in the life of an individual. Rather, personal salvation is accomplished through God's redemptive purposes on the cross, resulting in a renewed heart made pure by Jesus; the agent of God's purity.

Another important theological concept is that Jesus did not teach that ritual uncleanness was on par with moral failure. The Pharisees in contrast held ritual law and moral law on equal ground. deSilva (2000:254) writes that the first century Jews saw no distinction between moral and ritual law. Idolatry and sexual sin were the same as failing to keep dietary laws and both forms of transgression were pollutions for which the land would vomit them out (Lev 18:28). Interestingly, Maccoby (1999:3) disagrees with deSilva's view, he believes that ritual impurity is never sinful. The unclean person must only be careful not to contact holy areas or objects until he has been cleansed through the appropriate ritual. Although there are different views regarding the seriousness of ritual impurity, it does seem that Jesus highlights only

moral failure, at least in the Mark 7:14-23 passage. The list of vices in this passage are limited to moral sin; nothing is said of ritual transgression bringing defilement. Additionally, all these defilements have an internal source; there is no mention of external sources like blood or unclean food bringing defilement, in fact, Jesus in Mark 7:15 emphatically says it does not.

After investigating the passage, it seems very clear that Jesus was trying to correct erroneous teaching from the Pharisees who set the moral law and ritual law on equal ground, even going a step further; elevating ritualistic traditions over the moral law of God as seen in their practice of *Corban*. I feel this text teaches that the ritual and moral law of God do not hold the same level of weight nor importance. Remembering that Mark has a Roman Gentile audience in view helps with understanding this point; he is concerned about presenting the good news of Jesus Christ, and not the traditions or rituals of the Hebrew people. Maccoby (1999:4) strengthens this argument by saying,

Neither the dietary laws (*kashrut*) nor the purity laws were regarded as obligatory for non-Israelites. Nations or peoples castigated in the Bible for immorality (the generation of the Flood, the people of Sodom, the Canaanites) were never accused of breaches of purity, but only basic morality.

Mark 7:14-23 also provides important theological teaching regarding the origin of sin. Jesus' teaching on sin as internal defilement flared constant conflict between Himself and the Jewish religious leaders. Neyrey (1986:107) writes that Jesus' most determined critics were those who had the highest purity rating within the Jewish system. The Pharisees insisted on purity rituals which only affected the person externally. Jesus was focusing on the internal defilement of man's heart, explaining that the heart is the primary source of pollution. A dramatic lesson from the passage is that although the Pharisees had clean hands, their hearts were still evil, as demonstrated in their misuse of *Corban*. Two parallel Gospel passages help to shed further light upon the notion of man's heart as the source of impurity. In Matthew 23:25-26 and Luke 11:37-41 Jesus rebukes the Pharisees because they purify themselves externally while internally they remain corrupt. Although they were ritually clean, they failed to recognize that the source of impurity was not external but

internal. Stettler (2004:484) writes that both evangelists conclude that when a man's interior is clean, his exterior will be clean also with no need for any further cleansing.

More parallel passages on the subject harmonize with Jesus' teaching in Mark 7:14-23. In Luke 10:7-8 the 72 disciples are sent out and they are commanded to eat anything that is put before them, implying that they were not required to fulfil the legal regulations for purity. In Luke 10:30-36 we see the example of an unclean, apostate Samaritan who does the right thing whereas the Priest and Levite regard ritual purity as more important than loving their neighbour (Stettler, 2004:484).

Based off these teachings, we must appreciate from Mark 7:14-23 how Jesus traces the origin of sin, not to Adam in the garden, nor to external polluting influences, but to the heart of man. This speaks to the individual and universal condition of man as a defiled being by nature. Jesus does not explain the cosmic existence of evil but focuses on the heart of man in the here and now. Berkhof (1938:223) explained this idea well when he said: "Sin does not reside in any one faculty of the soul, but in the heart, which in Scriptural psychology is the central organ of the soul, out of which are the issues of life".

This leads to a deeply theological question: how then can the heart be purified from defilement? Jesus makes it clear that it cannot be purified through external means. Clean foods do not make the heart clean, just as defiled food does not make the heart defiled. As already stated, this is not only limited to food but Jesus gives a universal principle. No external rituals such as washing, abstinence, temple worship, diet, circumcision or any other external action can cleanse a person's heart. No matter how religious these actions are. A deep cleansing, internal work of God is required. An internal form of defilement requires an internal form of purification. This introduces the biblical concept of purification through grace, an idea that will be developed in chapter 5.

2.7 Findings and Principles

In this section, I will highlight discoveries in the text that have particular relevance to the Japanese context. These discoveries include, (i) Jesus declaring that nothing external to man's heart brings defilement. (ii) Impurity according to Jesus is moral

failure and not ritual uncleanness. (iii) Mark's presentation of Jesus as God's purity agent being pertinent to the Japanese and useful for developing a theology of purification.

After an analysis of the text, we find that the issue of purity and defilement is the key subject. The Pharisees and Scribes had a different view of purity and defilement to that of Jesus. For them, purity was to be achieved by protecting their internal heart from external pollution coming in. Jesus declares that heart purity is not possible through observing external rituals at all since the source of this impurity is not external but internal. In my view, the controversy began with the issue of hand washing but ended with a more universal principle. This universal principle is that true defilement does not come from the outside in; rather it moves from the inside out. The sinful effects that are visible in the outside world exist only because of its source, the human heart. This stands in sharp contrast to the Japanese *Shinto* view because similar to the Pharisees, the Japanese have the notion of sin as external defilement which can be swept away or washed away through ritual (Yamakage 2006:88-123).

Not only is sin internal as opposed to external, sin is impurity caused by moral failure. It is not a matter of ritual uncleanness but a failure to maintain a heart that is bright, pure and clean. The internal impurity of the heart according to Mark 7:20-23 is manifested in ways that destroy relationships; sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, deceit, envy, slander, pride and foolishness are some examples Jesus gives of sins that break down relationships. It is these actions that find their origin in the human heart and this is what brings defilement. These sins are *felt* sins or *actual* sins. They are neither mystical nor ritual but a failure in God's bright, pure and clean moral standard. The chief concern in Mark 7:14-23 is not only about what foods are clean; it is about what brings defilement, it is about the essence of sin. Dowd (2002:70) writes, that the result of Mark 7:19 is that although all foods are clean 'external' no human beings are 'internal'. The emphasis of Mark 7:14-23 is first and foremost on the defilement of people. Jew and Gentile are therefore both on equal ground, both are equally in need of an internal kind of purification, indeed this

is why Jesus came to give His life on the cross⁵. The literary setting of this passage also gives evidence to this view, because immediately afterwards Jesus travels to a Gentile region and casts a demon out of a Syrophenician woman's daughter. I believe this type of narrative can be useful to Christianity in Japan because of their high value of purity maintenance.

Lastly, one should appreciate Mark's portrayal of Jesus as God's purity agent. One must be careful not to think of Jesus as an ancient rebel who defied all purity laws. No, Jesus was at all times very concerned over the issue of purity. Neyrey (1986:113) writes, "...according to Mark, Jesus is not abrogating the idea of purity when he violates the rules of purity. On the contrary, Jesus is reforming the rules of purity current in his day, offering his interpretation of what God wants and what makes one whole, clean and holy". This fits in with the wider teaching of Mark's Gospel, especially Mark 2:22 where Jesus says nobody can put new wine into old wineskins. Jesus was teaching about a new kind of vitality that He himself is bringing into religious experience and that this cannot simply be attached to the old or traditional system of things because it is radically new. This reality of 'inner experience' apart from external ritual is vitally important to Japanese Christians who are constantly tempted by the many external purity rituals within their Shinto cultural milieu. The complete purifying work of Christ on the cross must bring a unique sense of security and peace to the Japanese. These are some ideas that I will develop more in chapter 5.

Mark's presentation of Jesus as the missional, authoritative, and pure Messiah could be used as a way to explain the Gospel to Japanese people. Jesus showed himself as a Messiah not only to the Jews but to all people. More than that, we see Jesus giving special attention to those who are seen as unclean, in addition to challenging those who took pride and comfort in their external, ritual purity. I believe that Jesus offers the promise of true, everlasting purity to the Japanese if they would confess their heart's moral impurity and turn to Him by faith. Japanese Christians can take heart in the pure Messiah who is the agent of God's own purity, imparting that same purity of God to His followers. There is no longer a need to restlessly and repeatedly

⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:11, Hebrews 1:3, 9:14, 2 Peter 1:9, 1 John 1:7, 1:9

seek purity through rituals, or abstinence, the substance has come, the cry of human hearts for purity can find rest in the finished purifying work of Christ. Terry (1910:42-47), speaks about the ritual of the Great Purification, one of the most solemn ceremonies in *Shinto* tradition. It is by means of this purification ceremony that the whole population of Japan are purified from *sin*. It is believed that through this ritual, the gods are called upon to sweep away impurity and cast it down into the underworld, the realm of death and pollution where all impurities find their origin. According to the ritual it is expected that no offence will occur again in the whole region under heaven. Remarkably, the same ritual is repeated every six months. This ritual is still practised in the imperial household. Based off what has been observed in Mark's Gospel, I believe Jesus offers the Japanese a more secure and potent purification that is permanent and all-sufficient. I will develop this idea further in chapter 5.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to understand the meaning of Mark 7:14-23 and answer why it is relevant for a contextualized understanding of purification. In an effort to discover the true meaning of the text I started the chapter by commenting on the background information and then investigated the broader purpose and message of Mark's Gospel. After this I explained what the passage meant for the original readers, followed by a detailed analysis of the Mark 7:14-23 passage. This has led to a number of theological concepts which I have noted and commented on. These theological concepts, along with all the other discoveries in this chapter resulted in some findings and principles that can be used towards developing a contextualized theology of purification for the Japanese. Some of the key ideas from this chapter that will be further developed in the chapters to come are how nothing external to man's heart brings defilement. That defilement finds its origin in the heart of man. How impurity breaks bright harmony with God and people. And that Jesus can be understood as God's purity agent who not only teaches on the nature of impurity but also accomplishes absolute purity for sinners through His death and resurrection.

The next chapter will move from the biblical teaching of sin as impurity to the Japanese notion of sin as impurity. This will provide another layer of research that is necessary for creating a theology of purification in and for the people of Japan.

Chapter 3

Sin as Impurity in Modern Shinto Religious Tradition

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will seek to understand the concept of sin as impurity from a modern *Shinto* perspective. It could be perceived that I am making a sudden jump from the 1st-century biblical narrative to that of Modern *Shinto*. However, the purpose of this paper is to trace the concept of sin as impurity in Scripture *and* in Japanese *Shinto*. This is a paper in systematic theology and the goal is to provide common ground that can be used as a contextualized Gospel narrative when introducing my theology of purification. I believe it is reasonable to make this jump in order to demonstrate one possible connection between Scripture and *Shinto* when it comes to the concept of sin as impurity. It is also important to deal with *Shinto*'s notion of sin as impurity after the Mark 7:14-23 passage because it provides necessary information regarding *Shinto* for when I compare it with the Ancient Near Eastern world of the Old Testament. If this information is not given now, it will make the comparison study ineffective.

The first task will be to determine the importance of purification within the *Shinto* tradition and to examine its key terms. This cannot be done apart from highlighting other *Shinto* beliefs that give the context for their chosen understanding of sin as impurity. These other religious concepts will be explored in order to understand and appreciate their view of sin. After which I will examine how this has contributed to modern cultural expressions in the daily life of the Japanese. Finally, I will outline ways in which this understanding of sin is incompatible with the traditional Western view of sin.

3.2 Foundational Elements of *Shinto*

The *Shinto* tradition is complex and so one must be cautious of focusing on any one aspect of *Shinto*, like sin or wrongdoing, without first understanding the wider belief system that gives meaning to its individual parts. Boyd (2005) gives a helpful sequence of topics that sketches out the *Shinto* world-view and the idea of purity relates to each. What follows is an adaptation of these topics namely: (i) *Musubi* 産靈 and *Kami* 神, (ii) *Pollution and Purity*, and (iii) *Ritual*.

3.2.1 *Musubi* 産靈 and *Kami* 神

The word *Shinto* 神道 means “way of the gods” and the deities *Shinto* followers believe in are called *kami* 神. Hara (2003) explain three types of *Kami* 神: Nature deities ‘Rocks, Trees, Water, Fire’. Mythological deities such as those recorded in the *Kojiki* 古事記. Then there are also significant people who have been given deity status. These would include great historical leaders such as the Meiji Emperor. This list helps to explain how the Japanese *kami* 神 are not transcendent, all-powerful, or even immortal beings. One can see how the idea of *kami* 神 is complex and a definition is difficult. However, Ono (1962) helps with a good starting point for understanding *kami* 神, they are noble, sacred spirits that generate a sense of adoration for their values and authority. Takamizawa (1985:17) tells of the 18th century *Shinto* Scholar Norinaga Motoori who defined *Shinto* as: “whatever extraordinary, whatever superior, and whatever awesome, we call them *kami*”. Mitsuo (2012:np) highlights this same idea when he writes,

The *kami* are numerous, even innumerable, as is suggested by the phrase *yaoyorozu no kami* (vast myriads of *kami*). Originally, any form of existence that possessed some extraordinary, awe-inspiring quality was called *kami*. Mountains, seas, rivers, rocks, trees, birds, animals-anything that evoked awe was regarded as *kami*.

From these writings, it is seen that *Shinto* has a love, respect and adoration for nature and anything that gives the impression of awe and greatness. A good example of *Shinto*’s love for nature is found in Yukio Mishima’s *The Sound of Waves* (1956:35),

His prayer finished, Shinji gazed out over the Gulf of Ise, already shining in the moonlight, and breathed deeply. Clouds were floating above the horizon looking like ancient gods. The boy felt consummate accord between himself and this opulence of nature that surrounded him. He inhaled deeply, and it was as though a part of the unseen something that constitutes nature had permeated the core of his being. He heard the sound of the waves striking the shore, and it was as though the surging of his young blood was keeping time with the movement of the sea's great tides.

The *Kojiki* 古事記 records the beginning of heaven and earth along with the birth of the first *kami* 神, “The names of the Deities that were born in the Plain of High Heaven when the Heaven and Earth began were the Deity Master-of-the-August-Centre-of-Heaven, next the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity, next the Divine-Producing-Wondrous-Deity” (Chamberlain, 1981:np). The *Kojiki* 古事記 records a number of other deity births before the mythology really begins. Two deities who descend from heaven, the *Male-Who-Invites* and the *Female-Who-Invites* were charged by all heavenly deities to give birth to the drifting land,

Standing upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven, pushed down the jeweled spear and stirred with it, whereupon, when they stirred the brine till it went curdle-curdle, and drew (the spear) up, the brine that dripped down from the end of the spear was piled up and became an island (Chamberlain, 1981:np).

This gives the record for the birth of Japan. After a number of other deity and island births the *Female-Who-Invites* dies and goes to the land of Hades. The *Male-Who-Invites* follows her but after seeing her hideous pest-ridden face, she becomes vengeful and chases him out of Hades. After he escapes, this *kami* 神 had to go through a ritual of purification to cleanse the pollution from Hades. During this purification, many more deities are born, including the three illustrious August children; *Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity*, *Augustness Moon-Night-Possessor* and *His-Brave-Swift-Impetuous-Male-Augustness*. The *Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity* is also known as *Amaterasu* 天照⁶.

² Most highly revered *kami* in the *Shinto* religion. She is worshipped as the sun goddess and understood to be the direct ancestor of the Japanese emperor. She is enshrined at Ise shrine in Ise, Honshu.

One can see that the *Shinto kami* 神 worked together for the creation of the earth as there is no one all-powerful creator; instead, responsibilities are shared amongst the different deities. This is closely connected with the idea of *musubi* 産霊 – creative energy. Rankin (2011:110) writes,

It is the shared experience that connects ancestors and descendants for all time. Musubi is the organic process of development and growth. We witness it in the flower that turns toward the light and opens, in the cry of the newborn child, in the spread of moss over damp stones.

In *Shinto* thought, *musubi* 産霊 is the life force that connects all beings into a harmonious and constantly developing existence. All beings find its place in the *musubi* process and must live in harmony to achieve it. Human beings are the manifestation of a life-giving power which is the cosmic force that binds nature together. This is why people are believed to be *kami* 神 themselves and must, therefore, be inherently good (Ono 1962:np). Ishida (1983:np) examines the origin of *kami* 神 and understands it as a mystical power of life and production. People are called to renew this power through ritual, festivals and other forms of worship. Additionally, the fusion of *kami* 神 and *musubi* 産霊 becomes clear when the mission of the *kami* 神 is understood. Sacred spirits and the developing life energy come together in the concern for the harmonious, progressive and creative advancement of the natural world, making *Shinto* an extremely optimistic faith. Ono (1962:np) explains how each *kami* 神 has its own characteristic or mission. This is also attached to the idea of *musubi* 産霊. The role of a *kami* 神 can be anything from the guardian spirit of a clan, the distribution of water, to the manufacture of medicine, explains Ono (1962:np). It is this harmonious, energetic, *kami* 神 way that Japanese *Shinto* followers seek to live out. In the next section, I will explain how pollution or impurity hinders *musubi* 産霊 and must be expelled.

3.2.2 Pollution and Purity

Kami 神 are not limited to morally good personalities. There are crooked *kami* 神 that bring pollution and disrupts the positive life force *musubi* 産霊. Muraoka (1988:

24, 57) refers to the 'bending' *kami* 神 or the 'crooked' *kami* 神. These obstruct the life-giving process. Boyd (2005:36) explains that *Shinto* impurity diminishes one's participation and involvement in the creative power of *musubi* 産靈. It is like dust that forms on a mirror that inhibits our ability to look at life clearly. Boyd writes, "In Japanese terms, our *kokoro*, our unique set of personality traits, dispositions, and sensibilities, hardens and becomes opaque". Our *kokoro* 心⁷ is not irreparably broken by moral failure; it is only polluted through external, disruptive forces. This pollution hinders an individuals' participation in the *kami* 神 way, it does not separate from a holy transcendent God as with Christianity. The *Kojiki* 古事記 (1981:35-36) refers to straightening *kami* 神 who help restore creativity so the *musubi* 産靈 process itself is understood as involving both disruptive and corrective powers.

Because of the Japanese appreciation for nature and its harmonious life-giving creativity through its *kami* 神, sin is that which disrupts harmony; that is socially and spiritually. Lee (2014:np) writes that sin is a disturbance of *wa* 和 'harmony'. Things that break the harmony between ancestors, nature or one's group is considered evil. Political, social and family regulations have merged to become an all-embracing group system that governs relationships in Japan.

When Japanese convert to Christianity this break in harmony becomes a hindrance to their faith because not participating in ancestor worship, neighbourhood festivals or family traditions disrupts *wa* 和 and in the Japanese mind, this is equivalent to sin. Ono (1962:np) gives us the near best definition of sin in the Japanese context,

That which disturbs the social order, causes misfortune, and obstructs worship of the *kami* and the peaceful development of this world of *kami* is evil. Sin and evil, including disasters, pollution, and even the abnormal are caused by evil spirits which must be exorcised.

This highlights again the fact that sin is an external problem that does not originate in the heart. It is an external *bending* or *crooked* form of power that disrupts spiritual participation with the *kami* 神, and social participation with one's group.

⁷ Meaning, heart.

The final aspect of sin in the *Shinto* tradition is the idea of ritual impurity. There are certain conditions that produce impurity. These ideas relate very closely to Jewish purity codes, a connection that I am trying to demonstrate throughout this paper. The Israelites drew purity maps around certain polluting factors. According to Neyrey (1986:94) a purity map is a sophisticated social system that coordinates and classifies things according to that which is deemed appropriate and that which is inappropriate. In Japanese *Shinto* thought, the *kami* 神 are pure beings who impart purity, and in order to participate with these beings, one needs to be pure as well. Just like certain impurities prohibited Jews to worship God⁸, certain impurities prohibit the worship of *kami* 神. Norbeck (1952:270) writes, “The outstanding feature of Shinto is the attention paid to ritual purity”. Here we see a potential connection point between *Shinto* and the theme of purity in Scripture. Sansom (1931) was a British diplomat and Japanese historian, known for his attention to Japanese culture. He explains that everything offensive to the *kami* 神 was called *tsumi* 罪. Modern dictionaries translate *tsumi* 罪 as ‘guilt’ or ‘sin’. Avoidance of these things was called *imi* 忌み, meaning ‘taboo’. In order to approach the *kami* 神, *imi* 忌み had to be adhered to. Sansom (1931:51) writes, for the Japanese person,

Uncleanness of the person, from mere dirt, was scrupulously avoided, and it was a necessary preparation for religious observances to wash the body and to put on fresh garments. Sexual intercourse, menstruation and childbirth were regarded as causing ceremonial impurity, which must be removed by lustration, abstention, and prayer.

Sansom (1931:51-52) reveals a number of other impurities, namely disease, death, sores, discharges and contact with sick persons. The Japanese word for this kind of impurity is *kegare* 穢れ. Like the Greek, κοινῶν, ‘impure’, ‘defile’ or ‘to make common’ (Mk 7:15, 18, and 23; Arndt 2000:552), *kegare* 穢れ is to be in a constant state of defilement.

The Japanese idea of sin as impurity or defilement has a direct effect on their understanding of how to deal with *kegare* 穢れ. Because it is an external problem, it

⁸ Unclean foods (Lev 11), Childbirth (Lev 12), Skin diseases (Lev 13-14:32), Bodily discharges (Lev 15), Eating blood (Lev 17:10-16) and Unlawful sexual behaviour (Lev 18).

can easily be dealt with through external solutions. Motohisa Yamakage is a *Shinto* Grand Master and writes about the way *kegare* 穢れ is dealt with in *Shinto*; he writes, “It is believed that we can completely remove error and uncleanness by washing them away with *misogi* 禊 or purifying them with *harai* 祓い. They are treated, therefore, as if they were forms of material ‘dirt’ that can be expunged by washing” (2006:122). Yamakage teaches here on the external nature of sin in *Shinto* tradition. Since it is an external problem, it is reasonable to believe that an external purification ritual can bring cleansing. There are a number of such purification rituals that the Japanese practice to remove impurity, we move our attention now to these.

3.2.3 Ritual

Shinto does not have a concept of sin, as in the Judeo-Christian sense of failing to uphold the law of a Holy God. Rather, sin is seen as impurity that makes someone impotent, ineffective, and unable to participate in the *kami* 神 energy and creativity. Sakamaki (1967:27) explains that at the core of all *Shinto* ceremonies is the idea of purity. Purification is applied in various ritualistic or ceremonial ways before asking for a *kami*'s 神 blessing. The forms of purification rituals include exorcism *harai* 祓い, cleansing *misogi* 禊, and abstention *imi* 忌み. I will consider these three separately.

Any activity with a prayer to purify oneself is called *harai* 祓い (Hara, 2003:91). The *Shinto Norito* 祝詞 ‘Book of Prayers’ contain a number of model prayers for purification. The following was translated by Evans (2001),

Purity of Heaven, purity of Earth, Within and without, Sweep impurities entirely from all beings. Bestow clarity on our era, our destiny, and our universe; Remove obstacles and impurities from this Earth. The kami of the Earth, the thirty-six primary guardians – sweep impurities from within and without our homes, And purify the kami of Three Treasures. Purify the six roots of our being; Remove obstacles from our path; Sweep away impurities and bestow clarity

One of the key ideas in this prayer is that of sweeping away impurity. This is the general idea with *harai* 祓い. Priests use what is called a *harai – gushi* ‘Purification Wand’ when performing the ritual of *harai* 祓い. This wand has paper streamers and strands of flax and is waved before the person or object to be purified (Ono, 1962).

This gives the impression of impurities being swept away. Yamakage (2006:108-120) lists a number of superstitious ritual practices that are used during *harai* 禊い. These include receiving spiritual light, power words, music, incantations, salt as a purifying agent, fire as a purifying agent and most interestingly, *katashiro no harai* 禊い 'purification through a human-shaped object'. This *katashiro* is believed to absorb a person's impurity and afterwards it is burned up. Many of these *harai* 禊い rituals are also observed for improving human relations, marriage, passing exams, healing, as well as land and house purification (Yamakage, 2006:119). In order to participate in *musubi* 産霊, and to maintain favour with the *kami* 神, purity is required. This purity is achieved through the practice of *harai* 禊い, allowing a *Shinto* follower to be worthy of the *kami*'s 神 blessings.

Misogi 禊 is a form of water purification that finds its way back to the *kami* 神 named *Izanagi* who purified himself by bathing in a stream after being polluted through his time spent in the underworld (Chamberlain, 1981). Today there are different forms of *misogi* 禊. Yamakage (2006:91) believes the original Japanese *misogi* 禊 was practised in the ocean since the Japanese are an ocean tribe that came to their island nation from across the seas. Water cleansing in the ocean still forms part of a few modern *Shinto* purification traditions (Yamakage, 2006:92). Another popular form of *misogi* 禊 is purification under a waterfall. Dougill (2011) writes about the experiential account of Hiroka Yoda who underwent such purification and wrote about it for the *Japan Today*. His teacher led him up a naturally beautiful mountain to a freezing cold waterfall. Under the waterfall, he recited the purification chant, *Haraedo no okami, Haraedo no okami*, a phrase that calls upon the purification *kami*. *Shinto* has many festivals called *matsuri* 祭 and often *misogi* 禊 forms part of the experience. One example is the *Hadaka Matsuri* 裸祭り where about 9000 men wearing nothing but loincloths step into cold fountains where they purify their bodies (Evans, 2014). Not all *misogi* 禊 is as extreme as this; *temizu* 手水 is another form of purification where worshippers simply run water over their hands before worship at a shrine. All these examples are rooted in the central idea of being clean, bright, right and straight (Yamakage, 2006:99). Water purification has special significance because of the elemental qualities of the *Shinto* faith. The *kami* 神 are closely

related to nature 'the *kami-world*' and the fact that *Izanagi* purified himself in a stream gives water special importance for the act of cleansing impurity. Water purification is a symbolic form of cleansing from what is unnatural and dirty.

The final purification method is *imi* 忌み or taboo. It is a form of positive purity acquired by means of abstention. Priests are especially concerned about maintaining this kind of positive purity. Norbeck (1952:270) gives a number of examples of *imi* 忌み, avoiding contact with sickness, death, mourning, and only eating certain kinds of foods that must be cooked over a pure fire. Priests must only wear garments that have been purified, and remain indoors, remote from noise, dancing and singing. Care must be given to avoid contamination in the sanctuary, the offerings and the apparatus. Norbeck (1952:270) states how the greatest ritual pollution was passed on through menstruation, childbirth and death. Steps must be taken to ensure such defilement does not spread. The pollution of death is so great that *Shinto* goes through numerous steps to ensure its containment. I have already explained how *kegare* 穢れ means defilement. This defilement is the cause of disaster, misfortune, and evil. *Kegare* 穢れ attracts evil spirits and therefore it must be avoided at all costs. Priests who mediate between *kami* 神 and man are especially concerned about ritual purity as they are responsible for administering the various rituals and rites that expel *kegare* 穢れ and to do this they must be free from all impurity. Most Japanese still consider death a powerful form of *kegare* 穢れ.

3.3 Modern Expressions of *Harai* 祓い, *Misogi* 禊, and *Imi* 忌み

We now turn our attention to how *Shinto's* priority on purity has influenced the modern Japanese mind. Although many primitive *Shinto* traditions are starting to fall away⁹, echoes of its influence remain in current Japanese culture. Ono (1962:np) writes, "Shinto is a racial religion. It is inextricably interwoven with the fabric of Japanese customs and ways of thinking. It is impossible to separate it from the communal and national life of the people". Sansom (1931:48) agrees in saying, "however buried under the layers of later culture, the old conceptions have lived and

⁹ Defilement from sexual intercourse, quarantining menstruating and pregnant women, and many drawn out funeral rituals are some of the primitive practices that are not as prominent in modern day Japan (Norbeck, 1952).

operated until the present time”. Also, Davies (2016:40), “...the Shintoist notion of purity, in both its positive and negative manifestations, is still one of the most significant elements of the Japanese psyche and worldview”. These modern expressions of ancient *Shinto* traditions are most clearly recognizable in the activities of the Japanese, rather than a specific set of doctrines. Davies (2016:36) writes that *Shinto*’s influence is much more readily seen in the social life of Japanese people; their routines, actions, and motivations. *Shinto*’s conception of purity in modern Japan is seen in numerous ways; the culture’s cleanliness, the concept of *uchi to soto* 内と外 ‘inside and outside’, opening & dedication ceremonies, shrine charms, festivals, and funerals. Each of these will be considered.

3.3.1 Japanese Cleanliness

One of the first things visitors to Japan notice is the cleanliness of the people. Hays (2013) informs that the Japanese have one word for ‘clean’ and ‘beautiful’ called *kirei* 綺麗. In other words, cleanliness and beauty are synonymous. When Japanese pray for something important they must wash their bodies and dress in a white *kimono*¹⁰. Sumo wrestlers throw salt to purify the ring and many occupations such as taxi drivers, cleaners and train attendants still wear white gloves. In addition, Japan has a multibillion-dollar cleaning industry, with over 600 antibacterial and germ-fighting products on sale. Ghitis (2012) mentions Japan’s toilets as a marvel of modern technology. Where else in the world can you find toilets with deodorizers, fans that break down odorous molecules, along with automatic spray guns and music that drowns out embarrassing sounds. Chavez (2016) writing for Japan Today explains how all private homes and businesses are expected to keep their areas clean. Families are responsible for doing their own recycling. Immaculate public transportation is the norm. Neighbourhoods frequently schedule community cleanups that include clearing drains, cutting back trees and tidying up parks and public toilets. Chavez makes the following summarizing statement, “It’s just part of the clean and tidy culture and also helps neighbours bond together as a community” (2016).

Davies (2016:43) writes of Japanese students who commonly gargle and wash their hands several times a day. Children are taught the importance of cleanliness from a

¹⁰ Traditional Japanese garment.

young age; they are expected to wash their hands as soon as they come home, and some schools even march their kids to the sink for a group gargle. Adults are also very concerned about personal cleanliness. One way this is seen is through their well-known indulgence in hot baths or *onsen*. There are more than 3000 hot springs and these public baths are enjoyed in an almost ritualistic manner (Davies, 2016:37). Bathers must first shower and remove all dirt from their bodies before they are allowed to soak in the main baths. Kasulis (2004:53) writes, “In Japan bathing is not just to cleanse, but also to purify”. In the home, the Japanese always remove their shoes before entering their house and also put on new clothes so that they do not bring the dirt from outside into their homes. At shrines, worshippers are required to first rinse their hands and mouth as a form of ritual purification. Solomon (2015) writes,

This preoccupation with cleanliness isn't superficial. It goes to the very core of Japanese beliefs. The Shinto religion is a beautiful expression of harmony and celebration. One of its core principles is purification. Being immaculate is synonymous with purity, with reverence and beauty.

One final cleanliness marker is found when considering a Japanese new years' ritual called *ōsōji* 大掃除, 'big cleaning' that is still observed today. Masumizu (2016) writes, “In order to start off the new year with a fresh mind, families and kids come together to clean up the entire house”. A Japanese company called Macromill conducted a survey to see how Japanese people spend new years'. Out of 7500 responses, 6070 people said that they plan to do *ōsōji* 大掃除. *Ōsōji* 大掃除 finds its origin in Ancient Edo where there was a general housecleaning day at the end of the year called 'soot-sweeping'. Dunn (1969:134) writes, “It is typical of the society of the time that this 'spring-cleaning' was not to be for aesthetic or hygienic reasons, but for a semi-religious one, so that the New Year could be embarked upon with a home that had been swept clear of the defilement of dirt”. Ono (1962:np) writes how the house cleaning ritual is also a development from the Great Purification ceremony of Ancient Shinto. This Great Purification *Ōharai* 大祓 is still observed today in order to remove the pollution from a large group of people. As we have already observed, pollution interrupts the process of *musubi* 産霊 and hinders harmony with *kami* 神. *Ōsōji* 大掃除 in its original form was a form of ritual preparation to invite good *kami*

神 into one's home in order to bring prosperity. Japanese who take part in *ōsōji* 大掃除 do so in order to start the New Year with a fresh and revitalized mind. Not too far removed from the *Shinto* idea of purity as a state of being, characterized by *seimei* 清明, meaning, - 'clean' or 'happy' and *seichoku* 正直, meaning, 'right action'.

It is not difficult to see *Shinto's* notion of purity interwoven with the everyday lives of the Japanese as it relates to their emphasis on cleanliness. The Japanese clearly value cleanliness, but there is a possible spiritual underpinning, a desire for inward purity.

3.3.2 *Uchi to Soto* 内と外

Uchi to Soto 内と外 is an important cultural aspect of Japanese life that has connections with *Shinto's* notion of purity. The word *Uchi* 内 means house, inside or the group that I belong to. In contrast; *Soto* 外 means outside, outdoors or other groups (Davies, 2002:217). The Japanese people hold respect and harmony in high regard. This goes back to *Shinto's* notion of purity as that which is clean, bright, right and straight (Yamakage, 2006:99). *Uchi to Soto* 内と外 is a relational mechanism that helps to maintain this *wa* 和, meaning 'harmony'. One of *Shinto's* aims is to promote, "...harmonious living in which humans co-operate with each other and work with instead of against the rest of nature. That is the way of Kami because co-operating with nature is obedience to divine power" (Rankin, 2011:13). Based on this principle of *wa* 和, the Japanese will first consider whether someone is an insider or an outsider and then interact accordingly. Stockwin (2003:243) writes, "Relations with the *uchi* 内 are close, warm, informal, affective, whereas relations with the *soto* 外 are more distant, cool, polite, businesslike and, in some circumstances, hostile". According to Nakane (1970:240) it is important for the Japanese to remain loyal to their group and not change groups too often. Additionally, these groups carry certain responsibilities for the individual to fulfil. This presents a challenge when Japanese consider Christianity. Lee (2014:np) writes, "Devoting themselves to Christianity will mean that they disturb or even break the *wa* of their own group". We gather from this that dedication and pure commitment to one's *uchi* 内 is of great importance in Japan because of the high priority the Japanese place on group harmony. This group

harmony is a practical necessity in a country with high population density, especially in the cities. From a religious point of view, the *Shinto* concept of *musubi* 産霊 has influenced the Japanese understanding of group loyalty because unity helps promote creative development and participation with the *kami* 神.

Another area where the idea of *uchi to soto* 内と外 is clearly seen is in the practice of taking off one's shoes before entering one's house, office, school, or public building. Within the arrangement of a Japanese home, a conceptual distinction is made between the outside and the inside. There is an area in every Japanese home called a *genkan* 玄関 'porch' and this marks the transition from outside to inside. Stockwin (2003:243) writes,

The outside is by definition impure, dirty, germ-ridden. The inside is, by contrast, a place of purity, which must be kept clean, both physically and symbolically, and may not be polluted by shoes that have been in contact with external impurities. We should remember that the Shinto religion is centrally concerned with purity and purification.

In the *genkan* 玄関 practice, we can see another example of everyday *Shinto* in Japanese life. Purity and cleanliness are inseparable *Shinto* concepts that have physical, mental and spiritual significance. The *genkan* 玄関 manages the purity of a person's home, the inner sanctum of the family where community is enjoyed and where rituals at the *kamidana* 神棚 'household shrine' are performed. As for *Shinto* shrines, the area that manages inside and outside is the *torii* 鳥居 gate. Ono (1962:np) writes that the *torii* 鳥居 gate is the gateway that symbolically marks off the mundane world from the world of *kami* 神, the secular from the spiritual. Like the *genkan* 玄関, the *torii* 鳥居 gate allows a Japanese person to have a feeling of transition from the outside to the inside. They exist as an opportunity for mental preparation before worship at the shrine. The Japanese home, along with the *Shinto* shrine is a place that is seen as clean and undefiled. This purity must be protected and great care must be given not to bring any pollution into these holy areas. The *temizu* 手水 'hand water' at a shrine provides the means for cleansing before worship and the *genkan* 玄関 protects a home from external impurity. Both *temizu* 手

水 and *genkan* 玄関 practices are widely observed by modern day Japanese people. *Taiken Japan* is a popular Japanese tourist website and in one post the author, Huntley (2016), writes how the shoe removing custom in Japan is one clear example of how inconspicuous *Shinto* rituals have assimilated into daily practice.

3.3.3 Opening and Dedication Ceremonies

Picken (2002:18) explains a common *Shinto* practice in modern Japan called *jichinsai* 地鎮祭 ‘groundbreaking ceremony’. *Jichinsai* 地鎮祭 is closely linked to the ceremonies used for the purification of a new car, business, or plane. The central objective is to invoke the *kami* 神 for the success and prosperity of the building, vehicle, or business. This purification process is still widely practised in Japan today. The first stage in this process is *shubatsu* 修祓. The officiating priest first purifies himself. Afterwards, the *kami* 神 are invoked to rest upon the *sakaki* branch. The offerings are then uncovered and the ceremony commences. During the ceremony, the *norito* 祝詞 ‘ritual prayer’ is performed and then immediately after this the ground is broken, or the vehicle or business is purified. When this is over the participants will give an offering as an act of reverence. The entire practice is steeped in *Shinto* tradition and belief, relating to both harmony and purity. (i) It relates to *Shinto*’s desire to live in harmony with *kami* 神. “Whenever new plants are installed or buildings set up at the factory, a *jichinsai* 地鎮祭 ‘ground-breaking’ ceremony is performed to appease the local deity” (Lewis, 1986:6). The local *kami* 神 are seen as guardians and they are invited to offer their blessings and benefits with those who have purified themselves. (ii) It also relates to the *Shinto* notion of purity, which is a state of mind and heart that enables *musubi* 産靈. The *kami* 神 only impart their blessing to the pure, and so Japanese will participate in purification rituals in order to enjoy the blessing and prosperity that the *kami* 神 brings. Soichiro (1984:25) writes,

In the case of airline companies, new airplanes, when introduced into the fleet, are prayed over for safety and prosperity. Pilots of jet planes pay a visit to a shrine and obtain a charm to put in the cockpit. In a corresponding way, passenger ships belonging to ferryboat companies and oil tankers, too, contain *kamidana* where prayers are said for safety on the sea.

All this highlights the fact that *Shinto* has no concept of sin as breaking the law of a Holy God. Purity is required to commune with *kami* 神 and ensure prosperous and harmonious living today. Sakamaki (1967:26) writes, “Concepts of moral wrongdoing or sin were barely [acknowledged], so that prayers were not for forgiveness of sins or spiritual blessedness, but for physical well-being and temporal prosperity”. Opening and dedication ceremonies are widespread practices in modern Japan, set in *Shinto* tradition, for the purpose of purification that enables *musubi* 産霊.

3.3.4 Shrine Charms

Another widespread practice in Japan is the use of *Shinto* Charms called *omamori* お守り. The word means to ‘protect’ or ‘defend’. They are used to ward off pollution from evil spirits. This is another indication that impurity is that which comes from the outside in and ‘fences’ like *omamori* お守り must be erected to repel it. Sosnoski (2013:np) writes about these protection charms, “They are intended to offer protection against a wide range of life’s problems and uncertainties: sickness, shipwrecks, fires, painful childbirth, bankruptcy, and other vicissitudes”. The charms are blessed by *Shinto* priests and these talismans contain the power of a protective *kami* 神. Danny Choo is a Tokyo resident and world-renowned expert on Japanese pop culture. He wrote an article on *omamori* お守り, stating its popularity in modern Japan (2012). Commonly *omamori* お守り come in the form of a pouch, but there are other types too, such as an arrow called *hamaya*. Directly translated it means, ‘An arrow that destroys demons’. Opening an *omamori* お守り is considered taboo, an offence to the *kami* 神 it represents. An *omamori* お守り also needs to be renewed every year. It is believed that it can only absorb impurity for a year, after which it must be presented to the priest working at the same shrine where it was purchased. The priest then destroys the old *omamori* お守り through a fire ritual and issues a new one that will last another year (Choo, 2012). The popularity of *omamori* お守り is another way Ancient *Shinto* has endured in modern day Japan. *Shinto* teaches that *kami* 神 can inhabit special objects that are clean and pure. These objects include mirrors, rocks, dolls, and swords among others. The *Kojiki* 古事記 speaks of *kami* 神 inhabiting a *sakaki* tree decorated with strips of blue and white cloth, a mirror and strings of *magatama* beads (Swanger, 1981:238). It is believed that the *kami* 神

can be persuaded through a ritual to occupy physical items. This has developed into the popular practice of purchasing *omamori* お守り. Although many Japanese classify themselves as non-religious, *Shinto* ritual and its cultural expressions are still widely practised in modern Japan.

3.3.5 Festivals

The Japanese call festivals *matsuri* 祭 and they are very popular all over the country. *Matsuri* 祭 is another indication of *Shinto* being practised through ritual, as opposed to faith in established doctrines. These rituals are primarily concerned with purification and harmony. Hara (2003:14-18) writes about the spiritual significance of *matsuri* 祭. They are divided into three categories.

(i) *Life cycle matsuri* 祭. These include prayers for a good harvest, still celebrated in modern Japan during spring and fall.

(ii) *Human life phases matsuri* 祭. Children are taken to their local family shrine at set intervals in order for the *kami* 神 to grant protection and happiness. The age for a Japanese person coming of age is 20 and this is celebrated with *seijinshiki* 'Coming of age day'. After this, the adult *matsuri* 祭 intervals begin and they are set at specific ages for when *harai* 祓い 'purification' is required. For men, the ages are 25, 42 and 60. For women, they are 19, 33, and 49 (Hara 2003:94).

(iii) *Community matsuri* 祭. These are the many community festivals that celebrate the *kami* 神 and each one is unique, celebrating a shrine deity or commemorating a historical event. Some of the activities at a community *matsuri* 祭 include; sacred processions, dances, prayers, formal rituals and entertainment. These festival activities are determined by the respective traditions of the shrine.

Kami 神 *matsuri* 祭 is the most sacred communication with *kami* 神. It begins with the priest going through a process of *imi* 忌み 'abstinence'. The priest lives in seclusion for several days and when he is thoroughly purified he will open the doors of the shrine and present offerings to the *kami* 神. If the priest sustains an injury,

violates regulations or if some disaster happens, the priest will be disqualified from participating in the festival and sometimes the festival itself will be postponed (Ono 1962:np). The shrine also goes through a process of purification in order to prepare for the approaching interaction with the *kami* 神. Ono (1962:np) writes that in purifying a shrine, the buildings are cleaned, the area is swept and symbols of purification are hung in appropriate places. This process highlights *Shinto's* understanding of purity needing to precede contact with the *kami* 神.

Hara (2003:95-96) explains the meaning and function of *matsuri* 祭 in a Japanese community, that it is a time of refreshment from daily life. Structured rules of relationships are set free, mingled and purified in order to bring a sense of harmony between everyone in the community. The Japanese are encouraged to release their inhibitions and replenish their soul energy. Their soul energy gets depleted during daily life and *kegare* 穢れ sets in when the bright and happy energy is used up. *Kegare* 穢れ is *Shinto's* understanding of sin and is associated with troubles such as death, misfortune and evil. In order to prevent *kegare* 穢れ their soul energy is replenished at festivals through the energetic festival activities, through eating a meal with *kami* 神 called '*shinjin kyoushoku*', and by carrying the *mikoshi* 'portable shrine'. The parade of carrying *mikoshi* is understood to bring unity with the *kami* 神, and it enables the intense energy of life called *musubi* 産靈.

Japanese festivals are in abundance, taking many different forms. But they share a common principle of invoking the spirit of *kami* 神 and dispelling any forms of *kegare* 穢れ. This produces a feeling of warm harmony between people in the community and between the people and *kami* 神. We see again that sin is an external problem and can be dealt with through external rituals. These rituals are made popular through festivals that many Japanese participate in.

3.3.6 Funerals

Norbeck (1952:274) writes that in *Shinto*, death is a serious form of pollution and all people coming into contact with a dead body or those closely related to the deceased will become defiled. The high sensitivity towards impurity is visible in the

way funerals are conducted. Yamakage (2006:160) testifies that *Shinto* shrines are never used as a location for funerals. This is because shrines are clean and pure places where the *kami* 神 resides. A dead body is a powerful uncleanness, making it a taboo, *imi* 忌み. Yamakage explains that Buddhism has taken over the duty of conducting funerals. Buddhist temples are also asked to take care of the ashes of the dead.

As to the reasons why death is such a powerful impurity, Yamakage (2006:161-162) explains that negative energy is released during the disintegration of the physical body. Here we see the idea of sin as *kegare* 穢れ featuring strongly. Yamakage (2006) and Hara (2003) writes about the etymology of *kegare* 穢れ. *Ke* means energy and *gare* has to do with disintegration or the idea of something withering away. We can understand it as the loss of vital life force and this is mysteriously linked to disaster, evil and misfortune, things which are to be cast off as *sinful*. This malignant energy that is present at death cannot be turned into good, so, therefore, it is *imi* 忌み. It must be avoided at all costs. Yamakage (2006:163) believes that the real reason why *Shinto* priests were so willing to let Buddhist monks take care of the dead was that they did not wish to come into contact with the impurity.

The way contemporary Japanese deal with death today is set out by Kim (2012). Over time the process of dealing with the deceased has become more commercialized and simplified, yet many key ideas remain intact. Kim (2012:226) writes, “The most important of these aspects is the ‘traditional’ idea that the pollution of death is extremely dangerous, powerful, and contagious...”. Kim witnessed during his fieldwork that many kinds of purification rituals are still vividly performed for the sake of removing the pollution of death. A detailed number of formal purification rites need to be performed in order to remove the impurity from the family. For example, it is believed that if the seventh-day memorial service is not performed then the spirit of the deceased will be condemned to ceaseless wandering and pose a threat to the living (Kim, 2012:246). Two noteworthy traditions at a Japanese funeral include *harai* 祓い ‘purification’ and *kichubarai* ‘getting out of the period of pollution’. When mourners return from the grave site to the funeral hall, they undergo a short purification ritual where they wash their hands with saltwater. This repels pollution

and any evil spirits that might have followed from the gravesite. After this cleansing, the deceased's family will hold a banquet. They eat and enjoy each other's company in order to replenish their own soul energy. We remember how *kegare* 穢れ means a depreciation of life force. The banquet tradition is thus an opportunity for the family to diminish their own death pollution by ingesting food and drink.

Anthropologist Suzuki (2000) rejects the idea of pollution and its association with death in modern Japan. Her reason is that through the rise of a commercialized funeral industry and the fact of proceedings being greatly simplified; Japanese people seem to have lost that superstitious notion. Kim (2012) rejects that argument, based on his own fieldwork and research, he concludes,

Contemporary Japanese do not have enough time to hold and attend the lengthy series of formal rituals because many of them have to return to work immediately after the funeral. Although contemporary Japanese death rituals are dramatically compressed in comparison with the past, it cannot be simply suggested that the notion of death pollution has disappeared.

Of course, not all Japanese have the same degree of superstitious thoughts regarding death, but that does not mean there are no traces of death pollution within their culture. The author of *Greenshinto* (Dougill, 2015), tells of modern Japanese and their attitude toward crematoriums and hearses. 69% of 1220 College students polled that they would oppose a crematorium being built near their house. Neighbourhoods mount organized protests against the construction of crematoriums or funeral halls. Hearses in Japan are elaborate vehicles but they are not welcome in everyday life. K.R. Company bought a large plot of land and planned to use it as a parking lot for their hearses. The neighbourhood opposition was so strong that the company was unable to use the land. These are but two examples of death being understood as impurity and taboo, even in modern day Japan.

From the above examples, it can be argued that modern Japanese have not completely forsaken their *Shinto* beliefs. Although many Japanese will confess to not being religious there is still a strong affiliation with the cultural features listed above. It is also easy to recognize how *Shinto's* emphasis on purity is still a dominant,

widespread phenomenon in modern-day Japan. As Yamakage (2006:34-50) reveals, *Shinto* has no founder, doctrines, commandments or organization. However, we can see the beliefs, values, and characteristics of *Shinto* displayed in the spiritual rituals and daily activities of the Japanese. Missionaries in Japan do not simply minister amongst a people with a different set of doctrinal propositions; they minister in the context of Japanese behaviour that has been shaped by centuries of *Shinto* influence. In chapter 5 I will set out possible ways in which a biblical, Japanese theology of purification can redeem the things that are dear to modern Japanese in a way that brings glory to God. Contextualization means taking the unchanging Gospel into ever-changing cultures. Before we do that, more groundwork must be laid. Namely, how *Shinto*'s understanding of sin is different from the Western view, and then in chapter 4; how *Shinto* is similar 'and different' to Ancient Israel's understanding of sin as impurity. This will demonstrate one potential connection between *Shinto* and the people of the Old Testament. In chapter 5 I will show how Jesus, God's agent of true purity, completely satisfies man's inner longing for purity. Jesus' words in Mark 7:14-23 not only had significance for 1st century Jews, but it is also relevant to the people of Contemporary Japan.

3.4 Differences Between Japanese and Western Views on Sin

The differences in the *Shinto* Japanese understanding of sin are vastly different from that of Western Christianity. I will briefly outline these differences as they present themselves through the findings of this chapter.

Western Christianity understands sin as that which is primarily against a personal, Holy God who will hold all people to account. The Westminster Confession reads, "Every sin, both original and actual, transgresses the righteous law of God and brings guilt on the sinner. Every sinner is consequently subjected to the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and death..." (1996:13). *Shinto*, however, has no concept of such a God. They worship the *kami* 神. These *Shinto* gods are numerous, impersonal beings who are diverse in character, sacred, but not all-powerful. Yamakage (2006:168) writes that even human beings have the potential to become *kami* 神. Since *Shinto* does not believe in any absolute creator God, they do not see the need for submitting to this God's particular law.

Western Christianity sees the entire world as a fallen place and God's rescue through Christ presents people with an opportunity to escape from the corruption of the world. Genesis 1-3 records the creation account; God created a world that was very good (Gen 1:31) but this world was cursed following Adam's sin (Gen 3:17). The Apostle Peter wrote about the solution, a way to be freed from the corruption of a fallen world, "by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Pt 1:4). Peter teaches that the corruption in the world is caused by sinful human desires. According to this understanding sin originates in the heart of men, it has corrupted the entire world, and therefore a form of rescue and redemption is necessary. Augustine's (1887) classic *The City of God* contrasts the sacred with the secular. Those who live in God's city will enjoy eternal happiness whereas those living in the city of earth will be delivered up to everlasting punishment. Augustine presents the struggle between the physical and spiritual realms. The evil realm of man will be destroyed, but Christians are looking forward in faith to that new celestial city. The idea of a fallen physical kingdom being evil, and a heavenly kingdom being good is a common teaching that does not agree with *Shinto* at all. The *kami-world* and its inhabitants are good, and man has no need to be rescued from it. Ono (1962:np) explains,

The world of kami does not transcend that of man, and man does not need to seek to enter a divine, transcendental world to attain salvation. He seeks salvation by bringing the kami into the human world, into the daily life of the home, the marketplace, and the cooperation of the people. Man experiences the kami in this world and salvation is attained in the harmonious development of the world.

In Western Evangelical Christianity the common understanding is that sin has corrupted the entire earth and it stands in need of redemption and healing. In Japanese *Shinto*, this world is good, and human beings do not need to be rescued from its fallen corruption, but instead, seek the *kami* 神 to ensure the harmonious progress of the *kami-world* (Ono:1962).

Another area of incompatibility is how the Japanese understand sin as *kegare* 穢れ. We have already understood that the meaning is depletion of positive life energy. *Kegare* 穢れ is a form of spiritual pollution or dirt that poses an obstacle to *musubi* 産霊. We remember Ono (1962) putting the blame on evil spirits or *bending kami* 神 for this spiritual pollution. This does not mean that there is no sense of personal transgression at all, but personal transgression is simply an error or a lapse in judgment. Yamakage (2006:123) writes, "...in the theory of Shinto, error and fault are mistakes committed by immature souls, not 'sins' in the Western sense of the word". In a Western understanding, sin is breaking the law of a moral God and incurring His wrath. In a Japanese *Shinto*, understanding sin can be a lapse of judgment, the negative influence of *bending kami* 神 or losing life force through ritual or spiritual pollution.

Kegare 穢れ is primarily an external problem and can, therefore, be dealt with through external means. *Shinto* provides purification rituals in the form of *harai* 祓い and *misogi* 禊. This stands in sharp contrast to the Western, Augustinian teaching of total depravity. How humanity is broken and fallen in every faculty of their being. This inward depravity is indeed alluded to in Mark 7:15-23. Jesus traces the origin of sin to the heart of man. This heart requires total regeneration whereas in *Shinto* it only requires a *sweep*. We have also observed the notion of *sin* as an external problem through some of the modern expressions in Japan like; cleanliness and shrine charms that absorb *kegare* 穢れ entering from the outside in. One last example of how purity must be protected from external defilement comes from a *Shinto Norito* 祝詞 prayer,

The eye may see all sorts of impure actions, but let not these sights defile the heart. The ear may hear all sorts of impure sounds, but let not the heart be made impure. The nose may smell all sorts of impure odors, but let not the heart be touched by these impurities. Mouths may say all sorts of impurities, but let not these sayings defile the heart. Although the body may be assaulted by all sorts of impure energy, let not these impurities enter the heart (Evans, 2001).

I believe Jesus' words in Mark 7:15-23 send a strong message to the Japanese because according to Jesus impurity grows out of the heart and that is what defiles a

person. Defilement and evil do not come from the outside in, but rather from the inside out. This defilement from the heart then spreads out and it results in both destructive practices and estrangement from God. The destructive practices that disrupt social harmony include evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. This is the list Jesus gives in Mark 7:21-22. But even more frightening is how defilement from the heart distances people from a Holy God by virtue of their impurity. This highlights the need for a powerful form of purification that is able to cleanse and transform a person's heart. I believe that Jesus' finished work on the cross provides that powerful form of purification and it far surpasses any other offered solution. It is my belief that missionaries can communicate the Gospel in Japanese terms when using the narrative of purity and impurity but presenting it through the teaching of Jesus.

One final area of difference between a Western and Japanese *Shinto* notion of sin can be found in the Japanese expression *wa* 和 'harmony'. The Japanese prioritize group harmony over individual needs, this is a cultural distinctive but it has spiritual undertones related to the notion of purity in the *Shinto* tradition. Purity of mind and heart is developed through harmony with *kami* 神, nature and relationships. Lee (2014:np) writes, "Sin, for instance, is considered to be disturbance of the harmony between gods and a given group of people". Purity is conforming to that which is clean, bright, right and straight. This state of purity requires living in harmony; this could explain why the Japanese are such a group conscious people and why festivals are so widely practised to this day. In contrast to Japanese collectivism, in the West, individualism is stressed over group harmony. Richards (2012:np) makes this point when he tells the story of a veteran missionary, Father Valente,

The Japanese never live their lives as individuals. We European missionaries were not aware of that. Suppose we have a single Japanese here. We try to convert him. But there was never a single individual we could call 'him' in Japan. He has a village behind him. A family. And more. There are also his dead parents and ancestors. That village, that family, those parents and ancestors are bound to him tightly, as though they were living beings. That is why he is not an isolated human

Many Japanese will struggle to accept Christianity because they will need to forsake the *purity* of their group harmony, for the *impurity* of self-decision. In an individualist society, such decisions can be made fairly easily, but in Japan, it is a different case entirely.

Up to this point, I have tried to demonstrate that (i) Jesus speaks about sin as defilement that does not come from the outside in but from the inside out. (ii) He spoke these words to Jews whom He accused of focusing too much on external purity maps. However, these principles also apply to those in Japan as they live in a milieu where *Shinto* purification rites are practised. Jesus' words can be used to meaningfully present the Gospel in a contextualized way by focusing on a superior internal purification of the heart. (iii) One of the main features of *Shinto* is its priority on purity. (iv) This feature is not only an irrelevant, primitive idea but the priority of purity is seen in the everyday lives of the Japanese. (v) The Western view of sin is in many ways incompatible with that of the Japanese. A biblical theology of purification pertinent to Japanese people is therefore necessary.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the key elements of *Shinto* and how these elements relate to the notion of sin as impurity. I believe that I have shown how the desire for purity is a prominent idea, noticeable in many *Shinto* beliefs, practices and customs. I have also sought to demonstrate where and how these elements relating to purity and impurity are still observable in modern day Japan. This does not mean impurity is the only available theme for explaining sin in Japan, yet I believe that this chapter proves that the concept of impurity is one leading narrative for sin in Japan. Although primitive religious ideas are fading, *Shinto* still influences modern Japan, evident in the many contemporary beliefs and practices that I have outlined. All this is evidence that a contextualized theology of purification is necessary and appropriate for a people that place such a high priority on cleanliness and purity.

The next chapter will develop one final thought before all the research is applied towards a biblical theology of purification relevant to the Japanese. Ways in which Jewish purity laws are similar or different to that of Japanese *Shinto*.

Chapter 4

A Comparative Study of Impurity in Ancient Near Eastern Religion and Modern *Shinto* Tradition

4.1 Introduction

The outcome of this chapter is to identify key similarities and differences in the Ancient Near Eastern and *Shinto* understanding of impurity and how it is dealt with. This could lead to discovering the presence of purity maintenance, evident in two very different cultures. The purpose is to give theological weight to Jesus' declaration in Mark 7:15-22. This declaration highlights that all peoples need an internal purification of the heart; and in the teachings of Jesus, external rituals will never truly cleanse sin. I am aware that this might seem like another jump, however, the goal is to trace the concept of sin as impurity within Scripture and Japanese *Shinto* in order to discover a biblical, contextualized theology of purification in and for the people of Japan. Impurity is by no means the only theme for sin in the entire Ancient Near East, but for the purpose of identifying one possible connecting point between Scripture and *Shinto*, this comparative study is reasonable. It will help to demonstrate that the words of Jesus in Mark 7:14-23 do not only have theological significance for the Jewish notion of sin as impurity, but also has significance for the Japanese who have a similar notion.

The study will begin by investigating some of the primary or foundational elements of purity, defilement and ritual. Through this, I will demonstrate common themes that highlight ritual purity and impurity as a regulating principle in religious experience, controlled through ritual practices. Next, I will consider the different causes of pollution in Hebrew and *Shinto* religious tradition. All similarities and differences will be recorded. In the following section, I will mark out specific Hebrew and *Shinto* purity maps, detecting how purity relates to people, places and times. Lastly, the

theological significance will be outlined by observing the relationship between purity and order, holiness, morality and community. The section will conclude with the fundamental differences between modern *Shinto* and the Hebrew people.

4.2 Foundational Elements of Purity, Defilement and Ritual

Genesis 1 describes the state of the world before God creates, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep” (Gen 1:2). The description of this pre-created state is one of formlessness and nothingness. God then moves to create, speaking light into darkness, and there is a sense of a cosmic order being established; day and night, dry land and water, sky and earth, plants and creatures, all according to its kind. God creates Adam and Eve, places them in the garden to maintain this established order and to pro-create, filling the earth with people who will, in turn, maintain order through exercising loving dominion over the world. This picture of Adam and Eve who are instructed to maintain God’s cosmic order is a good start towards understanding the meaning of purity, defilement, and ritual. Neyrey (1986:94) writes that the ultimate act of ordering and classifying the world is seen in God’s creation; holiness involves keeping the purity of that created order. Purity is synonymous with wholeness, order and holiness. Impurity is polluting, chaotic and unholy. Therefore, a system must be put in place that can separate and regulate these two states. The Hebrew purity code found in Leviticus is the result of God’s holy order and the ideal example of such a purity system. The Jews were expressly told in Leviticus 20:26 to be holy because God is holy. This divine decree regulated all Jewish experience, both individually and socially (deSilva, 2000:269).

Coming to *Shinto*, the story of the sun goddess named *Amaterasu* 天照 provides an example of the Japanese understanding of the idea of restoring pure order through ritual. In the *Kojiki* 古事記 (1981) we read that *Susano* 須佐之男, the brother of *Amaterasu* 天照 insults her and performs evil acts, breaking down her divisions of the rice fields, filling up the ditches, throwing excrement in the place where she ate her food and dropping a backwards flayed horse into her weaving-hall. She is so upset at the sight that she shuts herself up in a cave, throwing the land into complete darkness. The other *kami* 神 fail to persuade her out until a female deity performs a sexual dance before the cave, causing the other *kami* 神 to burst out in laughter.

Inquisitive *Amaterasu* 天照 opens the cave slightly and at once she is seized by the other *kami* 神 and returns to her rightful place in the world, having order restored. This myth is the reason behind the ritual dances performed at festivals in Japan; it is believed to be one of the many ways in which harmony with the *kami* 神 and balance with the cosmic order is restored. “Through rituals many of the main tenants of Shinto, such as the emphasis on purity and the importance of venerating and maintaining harmony with the *kami* 神, are expressed, as are many key elements in Shinto’s underlying mythology” (Reader, 2007:104). This demonstrates the importance of ritual for restoring order to an otherwise chaotic experience.

Mary Douglas’s ground-breaking work *Purity & Danger* (1966) offers further insights; explaining how rituals of purity and impurity create a unity of experience (1996:2). Her focus is on primitive religion and what we might learn from them, “I believe that ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience” (1996:4). The author also stresses how this ritual ordering is not only restricted to primitive religion as it is still found in day to day experience. This information provides us with a general understanding of how purity, defilement, and ritual operate in any society. Purity is to be in a state of acceptability and cleanliness, defilement has to do with being out of place with the standards of a generally accepted purity code and in order to pass from a state of impurity to a state of purity, an appropriate purifying ritual is required.

4.2.1 Purity and Danger

In most religious belief, the potent, orderly, and at times, destructive aspects of nature points to a powerful personality or personalities who control it. In Ancient Near Eastern cultures, the concept of a powerful god or gods was clearly evident. According to *A Hymn to Amon-Re 1:5*, Ancient Egyptians praised the god Amon whom they believed created the world. Recorded Sumerian and Akkadian prayers beg the gods to listen to the plight of the people, “I am kneeling; I tarry (thus); I seek after thee” (*Prayer to the moon god, 21.*). Phrases like “How long?” and “be appeased” are regularly seen in the *Psalm to Marduk* (Hardin, 2016). Smith (1952:65) writes of fertility cults in the Ancient Near East who developed sexualized

religious beliefs based on what they saw in nature, such as the life-giving properties of water and fertile soil. For the Hebrew people, God revealed His own name to their prophet Moses in Exodus 3:14 and in this way established a personal relationship with them, keeping in step with the covenant He made with Abraham (Walton, 2006:93). In Psalm 8:3-4 the psalmist recognizes the awesome power of creation as an act of God. The Hebrew people had a clear understanding of Yahweh's power and their unique relationship with him.

Shinto is not any different to other religions in terms of recognizing an awesome power behind the creative order. Hirai (1960:40) writes,

In the gradual progress of the seasons, in the motion of the sun and moon, in human happiness and unhappiness, fortune and misfortune – in all these ways of the world our ancestors apprehended the workings of some mystic, awesome, invisible power. Realizing their own indivisible relationship with this power, they sought naturally to discover a way of life.

The Hebrew people had a monotheistic view of God which sets them apart from the *Shinto* concept of *kami* 神. Any object or natural phenomena such as wind, fertility, growth, thunder etc. are given a *kami* 神 status. There is no absolute creator deity in *Shinto*; the creative function of the world is accomplished through the harmonious cooperation of the *kami* 神 (Ono, 1962:np). Although there is variation in each religion's concept of deity, both *Shinto* and Judaism agree on the idea of a supernatural power controlling and advancing the natural order.

The idea of purity and danger is revealed in a particular community's understanding of the divine and the potential risk of offending a deity. The danger in offending the divine would be suffering some form of punishment or curse as a result of the deity's displeasure. Reader (2007:36) gives the *Shinto* perspective on this,

Besides being considered to be the source of good and beneficial events, such as good harvests and abundant fishing catches, the native deities were also seen as potentially dangerous, for it was believed that they could cause illness and spread pestilence if offended or improperly treated.

For this reason, careful consideration should be given to purity so as to not offend the *kami* 神 and to ensure the life-giving benefits they provide. The maintenance of harmony between gods and people can be accomplished through ritual purification and appeasement. Hirai (1960:47) writes that before the *kami* 神 can be approached it is necessary to rid yourself of bodily and spiritual pollution and this is where *Shinto's* high regard for purity comes into action. There is a mystical and supernatural power that is associated with the *kami* 神 and to disregard the rules of purity would be careless and foolish.

In the same way, the Hebrew people had a very clear understanding of the dangerous consequences for offending Yahweh with either ritual impurity, or sinful disobedience. There were certain dangerous taboos which, if contracted, disqualified an Israelite from approaching God's sanctuary, "...the sanctity of Yahweh reacted against the thing taboo and destroyed it" (Smith, 1911:531). Deuteronomy 11:26-28 describes the danger in offending Yahweh most clearly. Obedience to the commands of God "purity through keeping to His divine order" will result in the blessing of God. But disobedience "impurity through violating God's divine order" results in cursing. The maintaining of purity and removal of impurity through ritual and repentance was one crucial aspect in the life of every Israelite.

Although there are significant differences between *Shinto* and the Hebrew faith, there is agreement on the potential danger that both believe with regards to offending the divine. This leads to the desire for purity, a state where order is restored and the blessing of deity is enjoyed.

4.2.2 The Need for Purification

Harmony is enjoyed when life is lived within its proper order and parameters. However, if a purity boundary is breached, purification is necessary to prevent danger. Purification is the necessary and appropriate action that can cleanse an offender or group of offenders from a defiling and offensive condition. Purification has benefit in three areas, (i) Psychological, (ii) Spiritual, and (iii) Social. In terms of the psychological, purification releases someone from feelings of fear, guilt or shame. O'Doherty (1960:133) writes, "Taboo incurred is cleansed by ritual, anxiety is

allayed and security re-achieved. Thus, taboo and ritual are complementary, for whereas the function of taboo is to generate anxiety, that of ritual is to produce a feeling of security". This is clearly seen in Japanese carrying an appropriate *omamori* お守り 'Shinto amulet that wards off evil spirits' in contemporary Japan. They provide the Japanese with the assurance needed to withstand moral and psychological uncertainties in life (Swanger, 1981:249). Yamakage (2006:94-99) makes the point that *Shinto* purification has a conceptual level to it. Purification affects the mind in that it restores brightness, rightness and cleanness; thus, purification has an internal, psychological effect. Purity is much more than mere physical cleanliness, it has a soothing psychological effect.

In the Ancient Near East, Israel had views that were both similar and different from its neighbouring nations who believed the sanctuary stood in need of constant purification or else its resident god would leave. Pagans believed demons were the source of this impurity whereas Israel believed the impurity was from the sins of the people (Milgrom, 2004:np). People are the ones who bring pollution through defilement or disobedience, resulting in guilt and shame. An example of this guilt and shame is found in David's confession in Psalm 51. It is teeming with ritual language as well as restoration on the conceptual and heart level. Verse 2, "Wash me from my iniquity", verse 7, "Purge me with hyssop". These are external purification methods but they have an internal mission as we see in verse 10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me". We can see how purification, whatever form it might take, is desired for its psychological benefits, alleviating feelings of fear, anxiety, guilt, separation, or shame. Debilitating, internal emotions must be dealt with and purification rituals such as sacrifice, repentance, or washing could produce this needed cleansing.

Closely linked are the spiritual benefits, also acquired through ritual. Religion in Mesopotamia was dominated by the fear of malevolent powers. Evil beings could cause trouble and therefore the correct purification ritual was required to effect the spiritual cure. In order to secure the aid of benevolent beings, temples were erected for the worship of protective deities and where rites could be performed to ensure their help (Lambert 1959:194 as cited by Milgrom). This is very similar to *Shinto's*

notion of *musubi* 産霊 where *kami* 神 energy is harnessed in order to produce *Great Life* (Hirai, 1960:43). This participation with the *kami* 神 can only be achieved if the person has committed to purification (Norbeck, 1952:270). In addition, *Shinto* believes in evil spirits who bring chaos, impurity and disorder to the world. A person needs purification to ensure that these spiritual defilements do not affect him. Reader (2007:46) writes that *Shinto* expresses concern with the avoidance of taboos and pollutions. Polluting incidents cause unsettling imbalances and ritual action is required to restore balance and purity.

For the Hebrew people, purity was spiritual in the sense that it assured them of God's pleasant presence. Milgrom (2004:np) writes how impurity and holiness are antonyms; he identifies impurity with death and holiness with life. In Deuteronomy 30:15-20 God commands Israel to choose life over death; this could also mean that they ought to choose holiness over impurity. Purity is thus an ordered and happy spiritual condition before God, conditioned by love for Yahweh and obedience to His laws. Purification from impurity was not only for psychological reasons, but it was to remain in that spiritual state of acceptance where an Israelite would enjoy the favour of God. Holiness resides with God and therefore Israel had to be absolutely committed to absolving any impurity through the appropriate means. They could not allow impurity to breach God's realm of holiness and by effect, drive them from His presence. Purification was the means to restore spiritual order and harmony between Yahweh and His people.

The last benefit for purification is for a social reason. The Ancient Mesopotamians believed in impurity as a living force; able to reach out to you from a distance, it was seen as a demonic influence (Milgrom, 2004:np). *Shinto* has a similar view; evil is defined as disaster, pollution and abnormalities that are caused by evil spirits (Ono, 1962:np). What makes this all the more dangerous is that this type of defilement is contagious. Japanese mortuary rituals, for example, are performed because the pollution caused by death can be contagious in some situations (Kim, 2012:225). Purification is therefore not only necessary for the individual, but also to protect the group from becoming polluted. Neusner (1975:16-17) speaks of Israel's own need for collective purity, "The land is holy, therefore must be kept clean. It may be

profaned by becoming unclean". Yahweh warned Israel about this, "Lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you" (Lev 18:28). Another example from the Old Testament is the sin of Achan in Joshua 6-7. Achan's sin not only affected him, but it defiled other members of his community and threatened the entire Israelite mission. God demanded holiness from the people as a community; this gives purity a unique collective purpose.

Douglas (1996:115) urges us to see social order mirrored in the physical body and her ideas had a profound impact on biblical scholars such as Jerome H Neyrey and Jacob Neusner.¹¹ She writes about how the body is a model that represents a bounded social system and its corresponding boundaries that are threatened or precarious. We see this in Israel's many purity boundaries relating to the body, for example, leprosy (Lev 13), discharges (Lev 15) and food that is consumed through the mouth (Lev 11). The physical body and its boundaries was a cause for concern as to its surface and orifices, thus, the body represented in microcosm, the Israelite society's concern for purity in the macrocosm. By labelling things or people as 'pure' or 'polluted' the group's purity could be maintained, reinforcing their moral project. deSilva (2000:272) argues that purification maintained the honourable identity of the Israelite people; he continues, "The purity code articulated in Torah thus creates a distinctive social ethos and identity for Israel, by which it may distinguish itself, and keep itself distinct from, its neighbours". I will elaborate further on this aspect of purity as community building in section 4.5.4.

This concludes a brief outline of the benefits of purification for the Ancient Hebrews and modern *Shinto* Tradition; the benefits of which provide psychological relief, spiritual blessing, and positive social identity. I will now consider some of the methods used for attaining this kind of purity.

¹¹ (i) Neyrey's (1986), *The Idea of Purity in Mark's Gospel* where he outlines social purity maps as a system, relying heavily on Douglas' findings. (ii) Neusner's, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* where he interprets purity in ancient Judaism from Douglas' perspective on purity as a symbol that expresses the, "...larger conceptions of reality of the communities that held them" (1975:15).

4.2.3 Purification Methods

Different religions propose different methods for the disposing of defilement. In the Ancient Near East, divination, spells, prayers, washing and substitution were used in ritual to bring purification and order. Akkadian texts (RANE #35; ANET 355-56) reveal a ritual of the substitute king. A substitute king is ritually enthroned in order to draw away the danger of evil warned about through a bad omen. A second example is where religious images have their mouths ceremoniously washed so that they can be clean vessels through which the gods can speak their oracles. Namburi incantations (RANE #37; COS 1.123) are found in 140 texts. These are rites that were employed to ward off evil. Hittite texts (RANE #36; COS 1.83; ANET 207) reveal orders for priests who had to adhere to purification rituals in order to serve the gods (Walton: 2006:56-59). Sacrifice was another very important method of purification, “As the food of the gods, it is arguably the most important provision to sustain their presence, favor, and the smooth operation of the cosmos” (Walton, 2006:130). The preparation and presentation of the sacrifice by the worshippers was their act of devotion (Clendenen, 2003:1429). Sacrifice was also used as a means to send away impurity; we find this example in a Babylonian sacrifice where a slaughtered ram carrying transferred impurity is thrown into the river (Walton, 2006:131).

Shinto has its own set of rituals for its defence against impurity. We must be reminded how *Shinto* is a religion of ritual activity. It is not a religion of teaching as is the case for Buddhism. *Shinto* purification activities include washing, substitution, divination, symbolic activities and prayer. *Misogi* 禊 ‘water purification’ and *harai* 祓い ‘exorcism’ are the most common means of purification (Yamakage, 2006:86, 106). *Ōharai* 大祓 ‘big purification’ is where the impurities of the entire nation are dealt with. The general idea is that various offences must have been committed over time. The accumulation of these offences is dangerous and must, therefore, be expelled through the appropriate ritual to avoid disaster (Nobutaka, 1998:59). During the purification ritual, pieces of bamboo, sprigs of *sakaki* ‘sacred tree’, or rice-straw rope are used as symbols (Ono, 1962:np). The priest is responsible for reciting the *norito* 祝詞 ‘sacred prayers’.

Other rituals are unique to specific shrines but they all relate to the banishment of pollution and restoration of purity. The *Iwashimizu* 石清水 festival, for example, is a *Shinto* purification ritual where small paper dolls are rubbed over the bodies of worshippers then blow upon to transfer impurity (Melton, 2011:445). Nelson (1996) recorded more than 50 rituals at the *Suwa* Shrine in Nagasaki, one of these is a similar ritual where impurity is transferred to paper dolls and then sent down the river to be claimed by the purification gods. In Kyoto, a popular ceremony called *Oni Yarai Shinji* 'Ogre Banishing Ritual' is celebrated to this day. This ceremony has three parts, (i) priests perform purification rituals including the symbolic firing of an arrow from a peach branch bow. (ii) Men dressed as ogres representing evil or unlucky spirits enter the shrine and try to attack the members. These ogres are driven back by throwing *fukumame* 福豆 'lucky beans' at them and shouting *oni yaro!* 'drive out the ogres!'. (iii) Finally, lucky beans are distributed and arrows blessed by priestesses can be purchased and taken home. These are a few examples that demonstrate how *Shinto* is a religion of ritual activities, prioritizing the banishment of pollution and the maintenance of purity.

Israel had her own means of dealing with impurity as instructed by Yahweh. Manser (2009:7416) gives a list of impurities cleansed through washing. Bathing with water and washing clothes was required on three different occasions. (i) For priests who served at the altar, (Ex 30:18-21, Levi 16:24-28). Before they could perform their duties, they had to purify themselves through washing. (ii) Washing was also necessary if there had been contact with someone or something deemed unclean; like a carcass (Lev 11:39-40), someone with a discharge (Lev 15:1-12), a menstruating woman (Lev 15:19-23) or a corpse (Num 19:10-20). (iii) Finally, washing was required after a disease had been cured (Lev 15:13-15, 14:1-32).

Separation or eviction was another means of purification, specifically to protect the camp and the temple from any spreading impurities. Numbers 5:2-3 makes this point clear. The people were commanded to put out of the camp anyone who was leprous, anyone suffering from a discharge and anyone who was unclean through contact with a corpse. The reason for this eviction was so that the unclean would not defile the camp where Yahweh was present. A second example is from Leviticus 18:24-30

where moral impurity such as sexual sin is specifically addressed. Klawans (1998:394) writes, "...sexual sins defile the sinners and the land upon which their sins have been committed, leading to exile". Both ritual defilement and moral disobedience is an offence to Yahweh who is holy. Eviction from His holy presence is a consequence for any Israelite persisting in impurity.

Sacrifice was also commanded by Yahweh to deal with the impurities of people. Leviticus 1-7 includes a detailed description of various offerings that were to be presented to Yahweh; namely, the burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering and the trespass offering. (i) The burnt offering included sacrificing a whole animal, only the skin portion remained. It was done to atone for sin. (ii) The grain offering was the only kind that required no bloodshed. A portion of this offering was burned on the altar and the remaining parts went to the priests. It did not have an atoning function but was simply an act of worship and recognition of God's provision in the harvest. (iii) The peace offering, similar to the burnt offering, required an animal without blemish to be sacrificed and the blood was sprinkled on the altar by a priest. Only parts of the internal organs were burnt, while the remaining meat was distributed to the priest and the person who presented the offering. This kind of offering was not for the forgiveness of sin but was brought as a response to an unexpected blessing, answer to prayer, or general thankfulness (Clendenen, 2009:1430). (iv) A sin offering was used to cleanse the sanctuary from sin that was committed by the people unintentionally; the details of this offering varied according to who committed the sin.

Another means of purification is for sins that fell outside of the Jewish purity map, sins that were so heinous, no physical ritual could remedy them (Klawans, 1998:393-394). These severe moral defilements included; child sacrifice (Lev 20:1), cursing a parent (Lev 20:9), sexual sin (Lev 20:10-16), necromancy or divination (Lev 20:27), blasphemy (Lev 24:16), murder (Lev 24:17) and idolatry (Deut 13:6-10). deSilva (2000:268) writes that only death could expunge the pollution of the land by such acts. There was no appropriate purification method within the Jewish purity system that could deal with such severe moral impurity. Smith (1911:540) argues that repentance is never found in connection with Jewish purity rituals. "The priest-code was taken at its face value, as showing the way of purification for those who made

mistakes or were uninstructed. But forgiveness for sin in the proper sense of the term was looked for on quite other than ritual grounds” (1911:538). deSilva (2000:269) points to Psalm 51 as a conceptualization of ethical sin within the framework of purity laws and pollution taboo. David transgressed the moral law on two counts, adultery and murder. According to Levitical law capital punishment was the required method of purification in order to cleanse the land from defilement. However, David was spared, and this introduces us to the final and most significant method of purification in Jewish belief: repentance, and the inward cleansing through grace administered by Yahweh. deSilva (2000:269) writes,

It is a purification that is entirely God’s to grant, however, unlike the ritual ablutions for most pollutions that an individual can perform on himself, or herself. There is no ‘purification offering’ prescribed for adultery, and so David offers the only sacrifice he can - a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart.

David’s forgiveness does not trivialize his sin; it makes God’s forgiveness and cleansing all the more generous and surprising. Smith (1911:538) writes that the Jews had to look for forgiveness for sins in places besides ritual practice. This is because ritual practice could only produce external observance, providing a society with order. Ritual was not able to cleanse inward sin, only the grace of Yahweh could accomplish this, something the prophets regularly pointed to. The prophecy in Ezekiel 36:25-26 pointed forward to the Messiah who would come to fulfil the ultimate act of purification for sinners and inaugurate the kingdom of God. This understanding was very different from that of other Near Eastern cultures because their prophets pointed back to ritual accountability and made predictions about the future. Maccoby (1999:252-253) writes that Israelite prophecy gave a vision for the plan of God as one faithful to the covenant. Prophecy was linked to the coming of the Messiah who would bring complete restorative purity. This demanded repentance and trust in the purity that Yahweh would provide. The idea of repentance and trust in the salvific and gracious act of God is something foreign to many religions, including Japanese *Shinto* which emphasizes that salvation is attained through correct ritual observance. Salvation according to *Shinto* is thus not an act of grace alone, but a matter of human achievement (Lee, 2014:np).

I have briefly considered the various purification methods within the Hebrew and *Shinto* context. I now move towards looking at the causes of pollution that necessitate the purification.

4.3 Causes of Pollution in Hebrew and *Shinto* Religion

4.3.1 Death

Many cultures associate death with a dangerous, mysterious power, dissolved only through the appropriate ritual (Bender, 1984:np). Because of the potential danger, death and all that represents it¹² becomes a powerful impurity. The fact that death is a highly potent source of impurity in both Hebrew and *Shinto* belief is well established. There is a widespread idea that the occurrence of death promotes general uncleanness and Jews, even at the turn of the 21st century would still wash their hands and recite scripture after a visit to the graveyard (Bender, 1894:109-110). With regards to Israel, the taboo of corpse impurity was not sourced in superstition but in the instruction given by Yahweh. Out of all the purity laws given by Yahweh, Maccoby (1999:np) believes that the human corpse is by far the greatest source of impurity in that system; he grounds his view on a number of factors. (i) The impurity from contact with a corpse lasts for seven days and requires a special ritual of purification namely, the sprinkling of the ashes of a red cow (Num 19:12). (ii) The corpse imparts impurity to all people or vessels under the same roof (Num 19:14-15). (iii) A person who has contracted corpse impurity can pass it on to others through contact (Num 19:22). (iv) Not just the corpse but the grave or even a bone is a source of impurity, equal to the corpse itself (Num 19:18). Maccoby (1999:np) goes on to say that corpse impurity was not a great concern for most Jews, except when they entered the temple during festival times. Morrow (2017:165) gives the reason for this when he relates corpse impurity to boundary maintenance, “As the location of the lord of life, YHWH’s precincts were not to be touched by the effects of human mortality”. The Hebrew people’s most holy place was the temple that symbolized the presence of the living God. Corpse impurity was understandably not to defile its vitality and holiness.

¹² For example, corpse, bones, graves, sickness, and blood.

Death is also a powerful impurity in *Shinto*. The death of *Izanami* in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (1981:np) illustrates that death is a disruptive event that breaks apart the natural order and results in chaos and misery. Her appearance in the underworld depicts how terrifying death is from the perspective of *Shinto*. This story provides a narrative for the idea of death as impurity in the *Shinto* tradition. Ono (1962:np) argues that *Shinto* regards death as evil but does not want to call it pollution; he prefers to use the words ‘abnormality’, or ‘misfortune’. However, the response is the same: death is a kind of taboo that must be avoided, and any contact requires a purifying ritual. Both Ono (1962) and Yamakage (2006) admit that Buddhism has largely taken over funeral rites from *Shinto*. Ono believes this is because *Shinto* priests have dedicated themselves to the service of *kami* 神 but Yamakage is more open to confess that it is because *Shinto* priests did not wish to come into contact with the uncleanness (2000:163). Yamakage (2006:161-163) gives reasons for the dangerous corpse impurity in *Shinto* thinking. (i) Negative energy, *kegare* 穢れ is released during the disintegration of the corpse. This *kegare* 穢れ has a semi-material power and therefore it can be purified through water or fire¹³. (ii) *Kegare* 穢れ is dangerous and this malignant energy is best to be avoided; any exposure to this negative energy needs to be purified. (iii) Evil spirits try to get into the corpse and they must be driven away through purification. These three reasons highlight the perceived danger associated with death; it is a kind of malignant force, able to reach out and grab hold of an ill-prepared society.

It is important to note that all the danger related to death centres around the corpse. Funeral rites are mainly done for guiding the spirit of the deceased towards the world of *kami* 神. These rites are practised away from the place where the corpse is buried or cremated. Yamakage (2006:160) believes that a corpse contains a dangerous impurity and should be avoided. He writes: “Not only is it meaningless but it is also positively dangerous to go to the unclean *kegare* place of the corpse or ashes”. For this reason, and similar to Hebrew thinking, “...the shrine is a clean place where the

¹³ Yamakage (2000:162) criticizes the view that unclean energy *kegare* 穢れ can be transformed into clean energy through a purification process called *harai* 祓い. He calls this view abstract and not academic. He proposes his own view that the *kegare* 穢れ is semi-material and can simply be washed away through physical purification with water or fire. I don't see how his view is any less abstract than the first. Claiming that spiritual uncleanness has a semi-material power seems equally abstract.

spirit of Kami descends. It is therefore not the place to bring a powerful uncleanness such as that of a dead body” (Yamakage, 2006:160). Both holy places, Jewish temple and *Shinto* shrine, are seen as places of purity and vitality, and death should never be allowed to defile it. We can clearly identify the defiling nature of death in both Hebrew and *Shinto* tradition.

4.3.2 Disease

Death is closely linked to the impurity of disease, not as dangerous, but nevertheless deserving of its own study as a separate cause of impurity. The Levitical system regarded skin disease or leprosy as unclean and a source of impurity. Those who interpret the ritual purity system in medical terms can build a strong case for their view on this form of impurity since it is a legitimate disease which runs the risk of spreading across a community (Maccoby, 1999:np). One point of evidence is how those infected had to be sent outside the Israelite camp (Lev 13:45-46). This could be a practical concern to stop the spread of disease. Milgrom (2004:np) does not agree with such a view; he believes the laws of skin impurity are ritual, not pathological. He claims that rabbis presume that skin impurity in Leviticus 13 was not a disease because the same rules were not applicable to non-Jews. The fact that Naaman, the Syrian officer, was able to lead an army and interact with others without restriction suggests that leprosy was not believed to be a contagious disease in the Near East. According to the biblical teaching, forced exile was clearly not for medical reasons alone. Numbers 5:1-3 records the words that Yahweh spoke to Moses regarding the banishment of unclean people from the camp. The reason given for their exile was not medical but spiritual. “You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, *that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell*” (Num 5:3, emphasis added). In this, we find that skin disease is another form of boundary protection; keeping defilement and impurity away from Yahweh’s holy presence. Another interesting observation is how closely skin disease relates to death impurity. deSilva (2000), Milgrom (2004) and Maccoby (1999) highlight the connection between death and skin disease. In both cases, the physical body is in a state of wasting away. The person with skin disease has the appearance of a living corpse and is treated as such. Furthermore, Milgrom (2004:np) detects how similar the purification process is for corpse and skin impurity. Both require aspersion with animal blood that has made contact with cedar, hyssop and scarlet

thread, washed in fresh water (Lev 14:4-7, Num 19:1-13). In summary, we see three theories with regards to skin disease, (i) It was simply a medical condition that required quarantine. (ii) It was a ritual condition of physical defilement. (iii) A ritual condition of defilement related to corpse impurity. The one important unifying idea that does not contradict any of the above views is that of boundary marking. Purity laws about skin disease 'however they are interpreted' has this as its main focus: to underline the holiness and purity of Yahweh's precincts.

Lee (2014:np) writes that in *Shinto*, diseases, wounds and all signs of external sickness were held to be defilements. Norbeck (1952:270) agrees and adds that priests in Japan are careful to avoid any contact with sickness so as not to offend the *kami* 神 with their impurity. Priests also go through a period of preparation before officiating at a festival. If any injury befalls the priest during this time they are disqualified and sometimes the festival will be postponed (Ono, 1962:np). The shrine is the centre of *kami* 神 worship in the *Shinto* faith and therefore disease is a dangerous taboo which can bring defilement to the sacred space. In addition, since the priest is the one who mediates between the *kami* 神 and man, it is essential for him to be in a state of absolute purity when performing the rituals. Again, the idea of purity as boundary maintenance can be applied to both Jewish and *Shinto* practice.

Although disease is a form of impurity evident in both Hebrew and *Shinto* belief, there is a unique difference when we consider its motivation. For Hebrew people, the motivation was to be holy as Yahweh is holy (Lev 11:45). In *Shinto*, the motivation is the advancement of *musubi* 産霊 'The mystical power of progress or becoming'. Yamakage (2006:26) states that to intensify the process of *musubi* 産霊 in your personal life, a person must engage in health management, growth of mind and purification of spirituality. He goes on to say that everything that helps this process is good; anything that obstructs it, 'like disease', is bad. Sin as impurity is thus understood as anything that hinders the *kami* 神 mission of *musubi* 産霊 in this world; it is the distortion of positive and harmonious *kami* 神 progression. This is why

disease is believed to be a form of impurity and is the motivating factor behind so many of Japan's purity customs¹⁴.

4.3.3 Discharge

Leviticus 15 contains Jewish laws regarding bodily discharges which rendered a man or woman unclean until the discharge ended. A discharge threatened the community's holiness (Echols, 2016:np). Holiness means *wholeness* and any discharge presents a display of *unwholeness* (Douglas, 1996:52). Emission of semen and female menstruation was included as defiling issues. This uncleanness could also be passed on through contact with the defiled person or contact with any furniture touched by them. Purification methods like separation, washing and sacrifice were given for controlling the spread of this impurity.

An interesting theory is observed when trying to answer why genital discharge was defiling and faeces¹⁵ not. Maccoby (1999:np) states, "The elimination of waste has nothing to do with death; on the contrary, it is essential to life". He engages with Milgrom (2004:np) who developed a view that genital discharge was linked to death. "Vaginal blood and semen is a necessary part of the human cycle, it's symbolic value, representing the loss of life, is a process unalterably opposed by Israel's God, the source of its life...". Here we start to see Milgrom's theory of using death as a common theme that unifies Israel's purity laws. Together with Douglas' theory of purity as system, a sensible understanding of biblical purity can be developed. Discharge, similar to disease, represents the loss of life for which Jewish purity boundaries are set to ensure this impurity does not defile the camp where Yahweh resides. A potential problem with Milgrom's view is found when considering how childbirth seems to be a greater source of pollution than discharge. If death and decay is the unifying theme in Hebrew purity laws, then how can birth be a cause of defilement? Morrow (2017:168) gives a plausible solution. In antiquity, the most common cause of mortality for adult women was childbirth; delivery was, therefore, a dangerous time. Because birthing women were drifting dangerously close to the realm of death, ritual intervention was required. With this answer, Milgrom's theory

¹⁴ A few examples include the widespread wearing of face masks, the Japanese *onsen* bath enjoyed in almost ritual fashion and the meticulous concern for cleanliness in public places.

¹⁵ Indians (Manu 5.138ff), Persians (Vend. 17.11ff) and Essenes (Jos. War 2.8,9; cf 11QT35:15) labelled faeces as impure (Maccoby, 1999:np)

remains intact. Whether one agrees with Milgrom or not, and whether for hygiene purposes or not, Hebrew purity laws do function as boundary maintenance – separating what is holy ‘living, healthy’ from what is defiled ‘deathly, sick’.

Milgrom’s view regarding discharge being symbolic for loss of life is surprisingly compatible with the idea of *musubi* 産霊 in the *Shinto* faith. As I explained, *musubi* 産霊 means progress of creative energy and whatever hinders this is considered impure. Death, disease, and discharge through wounds or genitals are all polluting factors that threaten *musubi* 産霊, therefore, boundaries must be set up for its protection. Norbeck (1952:280) admits that there is little available data regarding *Shinto* pollution beliefs caused by intercourse or wounds. I will, however, comment on a few available examples. In the earliest myths, there is mention of ‘parturition huts’, to which pregnant women withdrew so their homes would not be defiled by childbirth (Sansom, 1943:52-53). Segawa (1949:353-355) writes of newlywed males prohibited from joining fishing operations during the first three days of marriage because of defilement through consummation. Terry (1910:43-44) provides details over the general purification celebrated bi-annually. This *Shinto* ritual is to purify the sins of the entire country. Earthly offences purified in this ritual include, “...cutting the skin of the living or the dead body so as to become defiled by blood, being affected with corns, bunions, boils, or proud-flesh; sins of adultery, the offence of using incantations and various kinds of personal calamity”. Some of these listed impurities are disease-related and had to be cleansed through the *ōharai* 大祓 ‘big purification’ ceremony.

The Levitical code provides far more detail regarding purity laws related to discharge than that of *Shinto*. This goes back to *Shinto* not having any formal set of laws or doctrines. In addition, Yamakage (2006:101) states that the attitude of considering menstrual blood, faeces, or urine as *kegare* 穢れ comes from the Buddhist faith and not *Shinto*. It must be stated that *Shinto* does not have a sophisticated teaching about discharges similar to Israel and their idea of discharge impurity also diminished over time. Ono (1962:np) writes, “No one with illness, open wound, flowing blood, or in mourning should worship at shrines, *but sometimes this taboo is not observed today*” (Emphasis Added). In early *Shinto*, death, disease and blood

were likely understood as an ominous power which threatened the concept of creative progress, *musubi* 産靈. Over time, and without any written doctrinal support, these taboos have diminished, but some elements assimilated into cultural aspects of present-day Japan. Davies (2016:37) writes that menstruating women are sometimes still considered *kegare* 穢れ and barred from certain practices. They are not permitted to enter the *dohyō* in Sumo, some mountain shrines prohibit women from attending the mountain opening ceremony and there is still a belief that pregnant women should not attend funerals. Another trace of discharge taboo is recognizable in Japan's national sport, sumo wrestling. If any blood is shed in a fight, the ring is immediately purified with salt (Reader, 2007:105). These are a few examples of discharge being a form of impurity similar to Judaism.

4.3.4 Diet

The dietary laws in Leviticus 11 are very detailed and specific, distinguishing between clean and unclean animals. An Israelite was only permitted to eat what Yahweh declared clean; birds, land animals and fish that were declared unclean were not to be consumed. Animal blood was not declared unclean but was also a forbidden food because the blood contained the life of an animal (Lev 17:10-12), it was only to be used in sacrificial rituals, never for consumption. Furthermore, Leviticus 22:4 teaches that priests were prohibited from eating the holy things if they were in a state of defilement. deSilva (2000:264) makes an observation that although provision was made for purification from corpse impurity and discharge impurity, no purification method existed for an Israelite who ate unclean food. In that sense, food taboos could have been the most dangerous of all Jewish purity laws because no provision was made for its cleansing.

Dietary pollution also struck in a number of indirect ways. Clay plates, jars and other utensils could be defiled through contact with unclean animals like rodents. Open containers with food were also susceptible to defilement from corpse impurity or carcasses. Israelites had to be especially observant regarding food that was sent to the priests, lest they send defilement to the temple and its personnel (deSilva, 2000:264). Considering the complexities of all Israel's dietary regulations, a great deal has been written to try and identify the underlying logic (Morrow, 2017:164).

Epstein (1959) as quoted by Douglas (1996:45) believes, "Its real object is to train the Israelite in self-control as the indispensable first step for the attainment of holiness". Milgrom (2004:np) adds that man has a craving for meat and will kill to satisfy it. Therefore, the biblical purity system restricts savage human behaviour by limiting the choices and procedures for acquiring meat. He also elaborates on the ethical system produced through the food laws. The holiness of Yahweh makes this necessary. deSilva (2000:261) believes that dietary laws reinforced Jewish identity and separated them from neighbouring Gentiles. Other nations were well aware of Israel's strict dietary regulations and this made them unique as a nation. Douglas (1996:55) believes the concept of boundary or system is replicated in the classification of clean and unclean animals. The world is composed of sea, land and air, and any creature that is not equipped for the right kind of locomotion violates the classification system. It is out of place, marginal, and therefore unclean. As demonstrated, a number of theories have been developed in order to find a unifying theme in the Jewish dietary laws. The biblical reason for these laws is plainly stated in Leviticus 11:44-45: Yahweh's particular and unique relationship with Israel was made visible through their food laws. This gave the Israelite's diet a deeply spiritual significance, since violating these laws was an affront to Yahweh.

Shinto does not have a dietary system as we see in Leviticus 11; however, a few dietary distinctions are worth mentioning. Watanabe (2004:4) reveals how the contemporary Japanese meat-eating culture began with the influence of early Christianity in 1549 and with the beginning of westernization. For many years prior, eating meat was considered taboo, and rice and fish was the staple Japanese diet. Aston (1905:np) writes,

A prohibition of the eating of the flesh of the ox, the horse, the dog, the monkey, and the fowl in A.D. 647 was certainly due to Buddhist influences. The first hint that it was offensive to the Shinto god's to eat flesh is found in the *Kogo-jiui*, where it is stated that when the son of Mitoshi no Kami saw that Ohotokonushi no Kami had given beef to his field labourers he spat upon their offerings and reported the matter to his father, who was angry and sent a blight upon the rice.

We find that in both Japan's early religions, *Shinto* and Buddhism, eating meat was frowned upon. Naomichi (2006) writes that in the 7th and 8th centuries, every new emperor would issue an edict, banning meat consumption and by the 10th century almost everyone stopped eating it. He believes the ban was mainly for religious reasons. Buddhism did not allow for eating any meat because human beings could reincarnate as animals and killing a living being could mean killing a reincarnated relative (Watanabe, 2004:3). Naomichi (2006) writes that according to Ancient *Shinto* it was unclean to eat animal flesh. Additionally, chickens and roosters were believed to be messengers for the *Shinto* gods so their meat and eggs were not eaten until the 15th century. Two more particular food practices are worthy of mentioning. The *Mikado* 'Japanese Emperor' was revered as a descendant of the *kami* 神 and therefore holy and pure. People with impurity were not allowed to have any involvement in the preparation of his food. This demonstrates how impurity can transfer to food and make its consumer unclean. Secondly, impurity also transferred to the fire used to cook unclean food. Persons who cooked over the same unclean fire were considered unclean for seven days (Aston, 1905).

Most of these traditional food laws have disappeared in modern Japan and they now only apply to priests and shrine attendants who must remain pure when performing their duties (Ono, 1962. Reader, 2007:105). There are, however, a few food taboos that are visible to this day. The proper use of chopsticks is one example. Chopsticks must never be stuck upright in food because this is only done at a funeral altar. Food must also never be passed on chopstick-to-chopstick because this is done during a funeral ceremony where bone fragments from cremated remains are placed in an urn. Violating these rules is seen as disrespectful and careless.

Food still plays an important part in modern *Shinto* but it does not have the same classification or defiling effects as with Judaism. Food is an important part of modern Japanese festivals and is used in offerings and ritual feasts. *Naorai* 直会, for example, is a celebration that completes a *Shinto* ritual. Here, *sake*, 'Japanese alcohol' and food is enjoyed by a group of people and it is believed that the *kami* 神 are symbolically present during the meal (Boyd, 2005:47). Kim (2012:244-245) says that a banquet called *kichūbarai*, 'getting out of the period of pollution' is held after a

funeral. Participants eat and drink in order to remember the deceased, but another purpose is suggested by Kim, “it allows the deceased’s family to diminish their death pollution by distributing food and drink, and it also allows the participants to supplement their own vitality by ingesting food and drink”. I would conclude that modern *Shinto* is much more positive about food and its life-giving quality. Where Leviticus 11 focuses on classifying food, *Shinto* focuses on the enjoyment and communal aspect of food and how sharing food in the ritual sense has a spiritual significance to enhance the purpose of *musubi* 産霊. It has no concept of food as defilement except for priests who undergo a special dietary purification process before performing a ritual.

4.3.5 Depravity

At this point, it is necessary to distinguish between ritual transgression and depravity. Impurity caused by death, disease, discharge, and eating unclean food can hardly be described as universally deprave. Many Jewish purity laws were only binding on Jews and as observed in chapter 2, Jesus *transgressed* many of these same purity lines, yet He never sinned. In this final cause of impurity, I want to compare Israel’s view of sin as moral depravity with that of Japanese *Shinto*.

A good starting point for moral sins in Israel’s law is to look at transgressions that demanded the death penalty or a permanent banishment ‘to be cut off’. Morrow (2017:149) calls these “High-handed sins”, infractions against moral regulations, committed deliberately and in full knowledge. No purification method was available for these sins and if the offending parties were not eliminated their sin would defile the land. Defiant sins not only brought guilt upon the Jew, but Gentiles were equally guilty under these transgressions, “But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people” (Num 15:30). Morrow (2017:150-152) gives a complete list¹⁶ of high handed sins punishable by death. He also states that the

¹⁶ The list includes the following: Murder, Striking parents, Kidnapping, Cursing parents, Manslaughter, Bestiality, Violating the Sabbath, Adultery, Incest, Unauthorized priestly practice, Preaching apostasy, Eating the forbidden fruit, Refusing to enter the land, false prophecy, Idolatry, Child sacrifice, Violating sacred space, Cursing God, The goring ox, Chronic disobedience of parents, Rape, Prostitution, Sorcery, Refusing to be circumcised, Eating leavened bread during festival of unleavened bread, Unauthorized use of oil or incense, Violating food taboos, Eating blood,

death penalty laws were an ideology and did not always have a practical value, “In some situations, death penalty language points to banishment or exile instead of the administration of the extreme penalty”. Some of the transgressions on Morrow’s list are very closely linked with practices unique to Israel and therefore do not help clarify the essence of universal depravity.

Idolatry or covenant unfaithfulness could be used as a means for explaining depravity (Smith, 1911:529). Yahweh’s covenant with Israel gave Him the exclusive right to their worship and defection provoked His jealousy. Jeremiah preached against the widespread idolatry of Israel, and Chapter 44 is a damning rebuke for their unfaithfulness,

Because of the evil that they committed, provoking me to anger, in that they went to make offerings and serve other gods that they knew not, either they, nor you, nor your fathers. Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, ‘Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!’ But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods” (Jer 44:3-5).

In Jeremiah 17:9 the prophet emphasizes that such idolatry and depravity come from a fallen internal condition; the heart of man is deceitful and sick. Hosea gave a similar reprove, comparing Israel’s idolatry to that of an unfaithful wife. The prophets not only reprimanded Israel for forsaking Yahweh, but they also pointed out how their unfaithfulness led to violating the command of loving your neighbour (Mic 7:2). Israel had become inconsiderate of the covenant and her duty towards others. Yahweh’s ideal for true purity is explained in Micah 6:8, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God”. Amos 5:21-24 sheds further light on God’s desire for justice and righteousness from the heart. God despised the feasts, burnt offerings and worship from the people, simply because their hearts were evil. Although there was an external observance of purity laws, their internal hearts were defiled. True human depravity according to Scripture is not a matter of ritual uncleanness, nor is

Necromancy, Priestly service while unclean, Refusing to fast on Yom Kippur, Refusal to keep Passover, Intentional violation of ritual purity, Refusal of ritual purification.

true purity ultimately attained through ritual observance, it is a matter of the heart, just as Jesus described in Mark 7:23.

The closest that *Shinto* comes to 'High handed sins' is what the *Kojiki* 古事記 calls *amatsu tsumi* 天罪 'heavenly sins' (Yamakage, 2006:46). These are offences destructive of agriculture, demonstrated by the *kami* 神 *Susanoo* 須佐之男 in his offensive attack of his sister *Amaterasu* 天照. Similar to wilful disobedience, we infer from *Susanoo's* 須佐之男 example that heavenly sins are selfish acts that harm the progress of life in a community. Agriculture is essential to life and anyone who destroys a field has lost all concern for others. These sins are the ultimate example of inconsiderateness but not even such acts are always considered objectively wrong, nor are they caused by a corrupt heart. Jeremiah's message of humans having an idolatrous heart is not taught in Japanese *Shinto*. There are two main reasons for this; firstly, *Shinto* does not have any concept of a personal, all-powerful creator God who gives precepts to be obeyed. Followers of *Shinto* worship the *kami* 神 who are noble spirits. These noble spirits have no fixed hierarchy, gave humans no laws and did not enter into a special covenant with them. The Japanese are not accountable to the *kami* 神 as Israel was accountable to Yahweh. We understand this based on the nature of *Shinto kami* 神; they can be a natural force, a spiritual place or object, divinities who influence life, even the spirits of humans can be transformed into *kami* 神 (Reader, 2007:42). The *Shinto kami* 神 do not hold the Japanese to any moral standard, "These nature spirits are thought to sanction human beings for neglect of ritual or breaking taboos, but not usually with regard to moral codes" (Davies, 2016:28). Because there is no ultimate creator and lawgiver, idolatry is not an issue for believers of *Shinto*.

A second reason why Jeremiah's teaching of human depravity is not compatible with *Shinto* is that of *Shinto's* teaching on the nature of man. Divine reality in the universe is called *kami* 神; when it dwells in nature it is called *spirit*, and in man, it is *heart*. Divine reality is therefore believed to be present in the human heart, therefore, it cannot be inherently evil (Hirai, 1960:45-56). Yamakage (2006:122) states emphatically, "Shinto does not preach the idea of absolute sin ... Shinto expresses

the concept of no sin, or to put it more positively, the inherent goodness of nature”. Ono (1962:np) teaches that evil cannot originate in man or in nature because both are good, while evil is an external intruder. According to *Shinto*, depravity does not come from within; the heart can only be stained by external impurity, similar to dust that gathers on a mirror¹⁷.

This external impurity is caused by a hindrance of *musubi* 産霊 (Hirai, 1960:46), a disturbance of harmony (Lee, 2014:np), or external pollution, *kegare* 穢れ (Yamakage, 2006:122). In *Shinto* teaching, goodness represents development and growth, evil is the opposite and purity rituals are required to evoke the *kami* 神 to assist someone back onto the path of growth. Ritual is therefore not primarily performed to atone for any sin, but rather for returning to an inherently pure state of being. Because sin does not originate in the internal being, an external ritual is enough to expunge it.

Purity and ritual as a spiritual boundary marking system are evident in both Ancient Hebrew and modern *Shinto*. For the Hebrew people, the primary motivation was the holiness of Yahweh. For modern *Shinto*, *musubi* 産霊 is the motivating factor. We also saw how death, disease, discharge, and diet are all potentially dangerous sources of defilement in both Israel’s Ancient Near Eastern context and *Shinto*. Depravity is the major point of difference between the two religions. The Hebrew prophets preached Israel’s depravity of heart, while *Shinto* teaches man’s innate goodness.

The next section will outline the Hebrew and *Shinto* purity maps. A purity map explains how and where purity lines are drawn within a given society. This will further demonstrate Hebrew and *Shinto* similarities.

¹⁷ This *Shinto* view of *sin* has been demonstrated in the popular Japanese anime, ‘Spirited Away’. The movie includes many *Shinto* perspectives regarding human nature of which Nishimura (2004:4) writes, “...a river can become dirty and foul smelling, so also the interior conditions of the human heart and mind can lack a sense of freshness and vitality. When so polluted, we do things poorly and sloppily; our *kokoro* hardens...”.

4.4 Hebrew and Shinto Purity Maps

Mary Douglas understood purity as a way of dealing with the values, maps and structures of a given social group. These maps diagram a group's cultural system and help to differentiate between what is in place 'pure' and out of place 'impure' (1996:34-35). Her idea of purity as an organized system has been effectively used by Neyrey 1986 and deSilva 2000 in order to map out the Hebrew purity lines. These purity maps will now be compared with that of *Shinto* to see if there are any more observable similarities.

4.4.1 Purity and People

Israel understood that they were a people distinguished from other nations. The surrounding Gentiles by and large worshipped idols, as demonstrated by the Canaanites whom God removed from the land (deSilva, 2000:256). Their evil practices and idolatry were an offence to God, therefore, Gentiles were completely off the purity map unless they repented and accepted circumcision, the outward sign of being part of God's holy covenant people. One way this boundary was regulated was through marriage. It was considered taboo for an Israelite to marry an outsider. Deuteronomy 7:1-5 is instruction given for Israel to thoroughly vanquish the idolatrous nations in the land. They were not to marry them lest their children be tempted into idolatry. Additionally, Ezra 9:11-14 was a reminder to Israel for her failure in purity, that she polluted herself with the neighbouring nations through intermarriage. Israel was called to be a holy nation, separated from her neighbours.

Not only was Israel as a nation classified as holy but within the society itself, one found a classification of purity. Neyrey (1986:95-96) referring to the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta*, gives a list that ranks people within the Israelite purity system¹⁸. The ranking is primarily structured according to wholeness and one's proximity to the temple. Damaged people were always on the far perimeter, proselytes could be closer, Israelites even closer, and Priests or Levites had the most privileged position in terms of proximity to the holy places. A further classification is observed in 1st-century Jewish society (Neyrey, 1986:95-99) where a distinction was made between

¹⁸ From most pure to least pure: Priests, Levites, Israelites, Converts, Freed slaves, Disqualified priests (illegitimate children of priests), Netins (temple slaves), Mamzers (Bastards), Eunuchs, Those with damaged testicles, those without a penis.

observant and non-observant Jews. One example is how the elite Jews classified Peter and John as uneducated and common (Acts 4:13). Another is from John 7:47-48 where the chief priests and Pharisees distinguish themselves from the crowds. The purity map of people gets even more technical than this; within both observant and non-observant Jews, we find further classification. Regarding observant Jews, the Qumran sect considered the temple priesthood invalid and therefore their sense of purity was stricter. Pharisees and scribes also regarded themselves as a higher-ranking purity class. In terms of non-observant Jews, public sinners like prostitutes and tax collectors were less pure than the general Israelite society. Physically unclean Israelites such as lepers, menstruating women, the blind and the lame were all on the margins of the purity map. Neyrey (1986:99) summarizes the classification system well, "It is safe to say that Israel was both intensely concerned with purity and the appropriate lines and boundaries which classifies everything in its proper place".

Shinto is not a religion with universalizing tendencies (Reader, 2007:25). For that reason, it is a religion closely associated with the Japanese people who share an intimate bond with the *kami* 神. The *Kojiki* 古事記 (1981) gives the creation account of Japan and its rulers. It does not speak to the creation of the universe; its only concern is that of the Japanese people. For *Shinto*, the universal is centred on Japan and the Japanese, creating a very ethnocentric culture. This could explain Japan's long period of isolation and *Shinto's* nationalist tendencies. Between 1887 and 1907 state *Shinto* was established in Japan with the deification of the emperor. Lee (2014:np) believes *Shinto* was institutionalized in order to halt the growing presence of Western Christianity. In this way the Japanese aspired to protect the purity of their religious beliefs; Christianity became for the Japanese a form of *idolatry* to be avoided, similar to the 1st century Romans who persecuted the early church.

Institutionalized *Shinto* came to the fore again during World War II where the clergy was instructed to glorify the emperor and the state (Toyoda 2002:276). This *Shinto* nationalist ideology fueled Japan's military aspirations and this has given *Shinto* a negative stigma that persists to this day (Beyers, 2015:151). In the 1990's, a new nationalistic and religious resurgence has been growing within the *Liberal Democratic Party* 'The current political power in Japan'. The party draws from *Shinto*

concepts such as racial purity and divine origins (Beyers, 2015:151). The sheer fact of the party's political power is a sign of the lingering nationalism found among some of the right-wing Japanese. *Shinto* is one of the main historical influences for this sense of racial purity. It is recorded in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (1981) that the grandson of the sun goddess named *Jimmu*, became the first emperor of Japan. His reign is fixed from 660 BC and created a divine sovereign who is still worshipped as a descendant of the gods. It would be misleading to assume that most contemporary Japanese hold to this view, even though many outside Japan have this perception (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1991:211). However, the imperial system still functions to this day and it has an important spiritual purpose for the *Shinto* religion in Japan.

After considering *Shinto's* historical influence, a purity map related to people can be constructed. At the very top of the purity map is the emperor, a direct descendant of the gods. Historically he was the spiritual unifier and lawgiver of Japan (Rankin, 2011:7). When *Shinto* was a state religion the emperor was believed to be eternal, pure, inviolable and sacred, the channel of divine blessing to the Japanese (Lee, 2014:np). To this day the emperor is responsible for some of the most important rituals in Japan. The Imperial Household Agency lists 24 important ritual ceremonies of the Imperial Palace. The ritual of *ōharai* 大祓 is performed on 30 June and 31 December. This is an important *Shinto* ritual where the defilements of the entire nation are purified. The emperor is a key figure who represents the nation to the *kami* 神 and therefore requires his own purification ceremony. This is one way that the purity of the emperor is still demonstrated.

After the emperor, priests and shrine attendants are ranked high on the purity map. As the mediators between *kami* 神 and people, they are required to have an exceptional level of purity. Because impurity is considered offensive to the *kami* 神 it is the duty of the priests to avoid ritual taboos (Norbeck, 1952:270). It is also necessary for priests to undergo all the necessary purification before officiating at a ritual or festival (Ono, 1962:np). Without this purification, contact with the spirit of *kami* 神 is impossible (Yamakage, 2006:80).

Lastly, we can use the Japanese concept of *uchi to soto* 内と外, 'inside and outside' as a purity marker. *Uchi* 内 is defined as (i) my house, (ii) the group I belong to, (iii) my spouse; contrasted with *soto* 外, (i) outside the home, (ii) other groups, and (iii) other families (Koguko Jiten, 1991:99 & 706). Those outside one's group are not considered impure but rather as an outsider. Through this, a sense of order is being maintained in the *ie* 'household system'. This social order is a means of boundary creation which is an essential element of purity. For most Japanese, maintaining the harmony of one's one group is essential and by effect they are not good at associating with those who are of another group like *gaijin* 'foreigners'. The sad result is that there is still psychological exclusivism and discrimination shown against minority groups such as the *Ainu* and ethnic Koreans who live in Japan. Minority groups face discrimination in terms of education, jobs and marriage prospects (Davies, 2002:219). A simple purity map for Japanese in *Shinto* tradition is thus; (i) The Emperor, (ii) The Priests and shrine attendants, (iii) One's own group, (iv) An outside group.

4.4.2 Purity and Places

At the centre of the Jewish purity map relating to space stood Jerusalem and the temple (deSilva, 2000:258). Solomon's dedication prayer in 1 Kings 8:27-53 expresses his hopes for what the temple will accomplish in the midst of the city and what God's presence there will mean for His people¹⁹ (Walton, 2006:129). Walton (2006:130) writes about the primary functions for temples in the Near East; he says, (i) It was the control centre for the order which had to be maintained. (ii) Rituals provided the means through which humans could play a role in maintaining that order. (iii) Creation was renewed and maintained through ritual and ceremony. (iv) These rituals were transferred to society. Temples were thus places where the divine presence overlapped with humanity.

For Israel, the temple indicated God's desire to dwell amongst His people (Lev 26:11-12) yet along with that was the understanding that God's presence cannot be

¹⁹ Based on 1 Kings 8:27-53, Walton (2006:129) lists the requests for God to hear from the temple, (i) Judging the innocent and the guilty in response to oaths. (ii) Delivering from invading enemies in response to confession. (iii) Ending draught, famine, or plague in response to confession, (iv) Responding to the foreigner, (v) Bringing victory or deliverance in warfare, (vi) Deliverance from captivity and exile in response to confession.

fully contained in a temple built by human hands (1 Ki 8:27, Isa 66:1). Therefore, the Jewish temple did not exist to care for the needs of Yahweh, as was the case with other Near Eastern temples (Walton, 2006:130-132). Rather, it existed to symbolically demonstrate God's holy presence, a sacred place where Israel could engage with God and God with them. This engagement required strict access control to protect the sanctity of Yahweh's sacred space. Only qualifying priests who followed strict purity codes were allowed to enter and minister in the holy places. Furthermore, Israelites had to take care to not sin in a way that would actually defile God's sanctuary (Lev 15:31, Num 19:20, Deut 12:5-6). Any impurity threatening the sanctity of Yahweh's space had to be dispelled. Milgrom (2004:np) writes, "The sanctuary symbolized the presence of God; impurity represented the wrongdoing of persons. If persons unremittently polluted the sanctuary, they forced God out of his sanctuary and out of their lives". This is another example of purity creating a boundary that separates the sacred from the profane.

Purity of space is also included in *Shinto's* purity map. For them, the holiest places are shrines because they indicate the presence of *kami* 神. Different to Israel who had one temple marking the presence of Yahweh, *Shinto* has a great number of Shrines²⁰. Yamakage (2006:66-79) writes about the nature of *Shinto* shrines. Ancient sacred spaces where Japanese ancestors held festivals to honour the *kami* 神 are called *kannabi*. Normally these places were beautifully shaped mountains or other places of natural beauty. Natural places that emanate a particular sense of beauty and awe are usually considered places with strong spiritual vibrations; these places are where the *kami* 神 descend. Ono (1962:np) says that as a general rule, shrines are erected at "...some special tree, grove, rock, cave, mountain, river, or seashore...or because of a close relationship with an ancient family". This, however, is not always the case since some shrines are erected in the city. Ginza is one of Tokyo's upscale business districts and many shrines can be found on the rooftops of large companies, a testimony to the presence of *Shinto* gods at the heart of Japan's commercial power (Reader, 2007:20). After the spirit of *kami* 神 descends upon a place it is considered *jinja* 'shrine'. *Jinja* is considered sacred ground; careful consideration must be given to ensure the purity of that area. A qualified priest has

²⁰ Yamakage (2006:64) records around 80 000 shrines that exist in Japan.

the important task of maintaining the purity of the sacred space, ensuring the positive presence of *kami* 神 energy. Yamakage (2006:83) writes about the consequences for a failure in maintaining a shrine's purity: it can become the domain for evil spirits if people no longer offer prayers and take the time to keep it clean.

A strong sense of *uchi to soto* 内と外 is visible at shrines. The inside of the shrine compound is considered pure and holy. Ono (1962:np) writes about *shintai* 神体. These are sacred symbolic objects housed at the innermost chamber of a shrine. Similar to the Hebrew Ark of the Covenant, the *shintai* represents the presence of the *kami* 神 and gives the shrine precinct and its objects religious meaning. "It is the presence of the symbol that makes a building a sanctuary. If the symbol is removed, the religious meaning of the area ceases to exist" (Ono 1962:np). Because of the Shrine's holy nature, its purity must be protected from external, *soto* pollution. Priests clean the temple compounds, perform purification rituals and maintain personal purity. A *torii* 鳥居 marks the entrance to the shrine, separating the holy from the common. Statues of guardian spirits are placed at the entrance to ward off evil spirits. Worshippers who draw near are expected to wash their hands and mouths at the water basin standing at the entrance. For these reasons we can see a clear purity boundary drawn around a *Shinto* shrine and access is regulated through various purification rituals.

4.4.3 Purity and Times

Finally, we consider specific times as purity markers on a social map. For Israel, the Sabbath was considered a holy day. Jews had to observe the Sabbath by not treating it as common and by not doing any work on it. Keeping the Sabbath is one of the 10 commandments (Ex 20:8) and the penalty for transgressing this law was nothing short of death (Ex 31:15). deSilva (2000:260) explains the twofold rationale behind Yahweh giving this command. (i) It echoes God's own creation activity (Gen 2:1-3, Ex 31:12-17). Keeping the Sabbath was a form of witness to the world that Yahweh is the one who created all things. (ii) Keeping the Sabbath also created a holy identity for Israel. Along with circumcision and abstaining from pork, keeping the Sabbath was a way of separating Israel from the surrounding pagan nations.

Neyrey (1986:99) lists all the sacred times in the Jewish calendar.²¹ He also observes how the *Mishnah* gives specific rules that govern these times; when they begin, what Israelites must do during those times and what they must not do. It is clear that certain days were marked as more holy than others, requiring specific rituals and actions. Not observing these days would be seen as being out of place and in violation of God's orders.

When studying Jewish feasts, we find that these were community events that "...recognized God's work and presence with His people" (Swann, 2016:np), they were a common component of ancient religious practice. Feasts were usually joyous times filled with celebration, food and thanksgiving (Neh 8:10). An interesting observation is how many of the Jewish festivals were about remembering historical events and giving thanks for agricultural success. I will soon demonstrate that this is very similar to Japanese *Shinto*. The Jewish Passover was celebrated to remember God delivering Israel out from Egypt. Purim was a feast celebrating Israel's deliverance from Haman's plot to massacre them. The feast of tabernacles had a double significance. It commemorated the period of wilderness wanderings (Lev 23:42-43), as well as giving thanks after the harvest season (Ex 34:22). The feast of Pentecost celebrated the grain harvest and renewal of the covenant (Swann, 2016:np). In these examples, we can see how Jewish festivals related to 3 main ideas. (i) God's deliverance of His people. (ii) God's provision for his people. (iii) The people's response to God through thanksgiving, offerings, and repentance. All these ideas still fall into a similar category of purity regulation, ensuring that the purity of God's order and character is observed and demonstrated.

We now turn our attention to festivals and sacred days in Japanese *Shinto*. Firstly, there is no weekly Sabbath in *Shinto* as is the case for the Jews. Tanaka (1983) believes that Jewish belief about the Sabbath has influenced Christianity so that most Western peoples celebrate a weekly service. In the orient however, "...religions have preserved the original concept of the monthly ceremony through the centuries".

²¹ The Jewish calendar included the following: Shabbath and Erubin 'Sabbath', Pesahim 'Feast of Passover', Yoma 'Day of atonement', Sukkoth 'Feast of Tabernacles', Yom Tob 'Festival Days', Rosh ha-Shana 'Feast of New Years', Taanith 'Day of Fasting', Megillah 'Feast of Purim', Moed Katan 'Mid-Festival Days'.

This monthly, as opposed to weekly ceremony, is closely connected with agriculture. Tanaka (1983) writes,

When people began to express their gratitude for a bountiful harvest or pray for healthy crops, the necessity of setting up a cycle of the seasons arose. Moon and stars provided appropriate yardsticks. All tribes and races on earth worshipped Nature in accord with the phases of the moon which furnished the basic rhythm for such ceremonies.

The cycle of time is an important aspect for understanding *Shinto* festivals. According to *Jinja Honcho* 'Association of Shinto shrines' (2011) large festivals are held between seasons,

In the spring festival, people pray for rich and bountiful harvest. In the autumn, villagers thank the deity for providing the season's crops. In the humid season of summer festivals, community prayers go towards driving away disasters and misfortune. At the winter festivals, they pray for the revival of life and rich harvest for the coming spring.

The *Jinja Honcho* (2011) informs that these festivals are joyful times, filled with music, dancing, celebration and offering. The Imperial Household Agency publishes a calendar of days on which the Japanese emperor performs rituals. Some of them include seasonal or harvest rituals where the emperor offers some of his own crops to the gods in thanksgiving. Other *Shinto matsuri* 祭 involves remembering an event or person from history. *Kanda Matsuri* 神田祭 started as a commemoration for *Tokugawa Ieyasu's* victory at the battle of *Sekigahara* (Choo, 2015). *Aoi Matsuri* 葵祭 started in the time of the *Kinmei* emperor. The grain was not ripening and this was believed to be a curse from the gods. A horse with bells attached was made to run and it resulted in an abundant harvest (Kyoto City Web, 2004). Festivals such as these are intentionally exciting since another important function of a festival is to restore a person's life energy. Hara (2003:95) writes, "Through *matsuri* festival, people activate their life energy which has been decreased in their daily life". This makes *matsuri* 祭 essential for the preservation of spiritual and communal vitality in a Japanese society.

Another way that *purity and times* can be observed in *Shinto* is in what they believe about a person's phase of life. *Hatsumiyamairi* 'first shrine visit' is where babies are taken to the shrine to be blessed. *Shichigosan* '7-5-3 festival' celebrates the process of a child bonding with the *kami* 神. *Yakudoshi* 'unlucky years' are certain ages that are believed to be fraught with danger. Shrine visits and rituals are required to ward off the danger (Reader, 2007:98). Another important time for the Japanese is New Years and although it is a time of intense celebration²², it also contains numerous motifs for the elimination of past misfortunes (Reader, 2007:97). January 1 is believed to be an auspicious day, therefore, it must be spent free from stress and anger. Everything must be clean and no work must be done (Japan Guide, 2018). The cycle of time and the progression of *musubi* 産霊 are two ideas that come out strongly in the *Shinto matsuri* 祭.

Finally, it is rather interesting to note that both *Shinto* and Judaism included specific days for national purification. The Day of Atonement was a special, once a year occasion where the High Priest entered the holy of holies to pour blood on the mercy seat. This was to make atonement for the entire covenant community. A similar ritual is found in *Shinto* in the practice of *Ōharai* 大祓. At this ritual, the sins of the entire nation of Japan are purified through prayer and ritual action (Ono, 1962:np). According to the Imperial Household Agency (2018), *Ōharai* 大祓 is practised on two days of the year, 30 June and 31 December.

These are a few examples showing how purity lines are marked around certain times in both Jewish and *Shinto* tradition. The idea of purity as system demonstrates a number of similarities between the two religions. Both have boundaries that separate the sacred from the profane. Both include rituals that allow a certain measure of participation between humanity and the divine. Both place a high priority on eliminating impurity and maintaining purity, and both include a purity map which influences belief and behaviour.

²² In excess of 80 million Japanese people attend a shrine over New Years (Reader, 2007:23).

4.5 Theological Significance

This chapter concludes with an outline of its theological significance. Firstly, a few theological ideas will be developed namely, (i) Purity and order, (ii) Purity and holiness, (iii) Purity and morality, and (iv) Purity and community. This will help in coming to a better understanding of how purity influences a wide area of belief and practice. After this, two fundamental differences between Judaism and Shinto will be discussed namely, (i) Their value system, and (ii) Revelation. This information will provide the necessary details for developing a contextualized and biblical theology of purification in and for the people of Japan.

4.5.1 Purity and Order

Throughout the chapter, it was demonstrated how purity does indeed create a system of orderliness. Food laws, special days, rituals, and uncleanness might all seem strange to the 21st-century reader but we must appreciate how this is the experience of every culture in every time. All peoples seek to live meaningfully and therefore require a system which regulates that notion of meaning in an orderly way. Any *dirt*²³ that is out of place, 'impurity', must be expelled and what is in place 'pure' must be maintained. This maintenance and expulsion are regulated through various rituals that create a meaningful and orderly experience for its people. Douglas (1996:2) writes, "Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment". Purification is thus a very positive achievement; it restores the correct order of things. Having this understanding of purity will go a long way in helping readers of the Old Testament gain an important insider's perspective (deSilva, 2000:242). It will also assist as a potential contextual tool for understanding a particular culture better and to teach the Gospel in a more meaningful way.

It has also been demonstrated that this idea of creating order out of chaos is the experience for both Jewish and *Shinto* people. Although different in form and motive, both religions have advanced purity maps which seek to maintain their notion of purity and dispel defilement. It was demonstrated how similar these two religions are with regards to that which is deemed *dirt* and that which is considered pure. Death,

²³ The word Douglas (1966) used for impurity.

disease, discharge and unclean food were at some point in time seen as *dirt* in both religions and as demonstrated in chapter 3, this idea of *dirt* still persists in modern Japan. Purity should, therefore, be understood as one of the themes that function as the mechanism for attaining meaning and order within a given society.

4.5.2 Purity and Holiness

Purity is essential when it comes to proximity to that which is considered holy. In both Judaism and *Shinto* this is an observable fact. The Jews understood God to be the ultimate figure of holiness whereas in *Shinto* it is the *kami* 神 who are considered holy. In both religions, the deity is charged with an awesome power, used for either blessing or destruction. Because of this, only people who are considered pure are able to interact with the divine in a friendly and benevolent way. Whatever is unholy in the person becomes potentially dangerous when it draws near to the divine. deSilva (2000:248) writes,

Defilement means that a line inscribed in God's ordering of the cosmos has been transgressed, and such disruption of God's order contains within it the potential for provoking unseen power that may react in a hostile and destructive way.

In order to approach the divine and experience blessing, a form of purification becomes necessary to wash away anything that is out of place and conflicts with the divine (deSilva, 2000:247). In *Shinto*, the means of purification is primarily through external washing, *misogi* 禊. This is because evil originates outside man's heart, man comes from *kami* 神 and therefore the heart is already holy and only needs to be swept clean from *kegare* 穢れ (Ono, 1962). The Hebrew people were taught something very different. The Scriptures teach that evil is from the heart (Gen 6:5, Ps 51:5, Jer 17:9). Because God is holy and man is evil, there is a great need for some form of ritual achievement that can purify men's hearts inwardly, enabling one to enjoy God's favourable presence. Although *Shinto* values holiness, for them, there is no need to attain it but only to maintain the holiness that is already present. This is one of the theological hurdles in bringing the Gospel to the Japanese (Lee, 2014:np).

4.5.3 Purity and Morality

Two questions will be considered in this section, (i) The difference between ritual and moral purity, and (ii) The notion of absolute morality.

The Bible teaches that ritual purity and moral purity are two very different concepts. Israel's dietary laws and purity laws formed part of the priestly code laid out in the Torah for the Israelites as a priest-nation. None of the purity laws are found in the 10 commandments and none of them were regarded as obligatory for non-Israelites (Maccoby, 1999:np). Maccoby continues, "To be in a state of ritual impurity is never a sin, but the sufferer of ritual impurity has to be careful not to contact sacred areas or objects until he has rid himself of his impurity by the prescribed method of purification". It was never considered universally sinful to be in a state of ritual uncleanness. The purity laws were a system of boundary creation unique to Israel which gave them a strong impression of Yahweh's holiness. The book of Hebrews also teaches how many of these ritual purity laws were installed as foreshadows of the coming Messiah. The New Testament teaches that the Old Testament purity laws have given way to the new law of Christ (Matt 22:36-40). In these words, Jesus summarizes the entire law: love God, love people. If one obeys that, one fulfils the entire law.

We can observe some level of distinction between *tsumi* 罪 'breaking a law' and *kegare* 穢れ 'pollution' in *Shinto* belief. Evans (2001:17) writes that *tsumi* 罪 is understood as a kind of impurity that exists between two persons or groups. *Kegare* 穢れ implies being in an unclean condition as a result of some external pollution like sickness or contact with a corpse. We would be tempted to classify *tsumi* 罪 as moral impurity and *kegare* 穢れ as ritual impurity but, unfortunately, it's not so easy. *Shinto* holds the assumption that human beings are already moral and good and therefore a list of moral failures are not clearly spelt out. Both *tsumi* 罪 and *kegare* 穢れ are forms of impurities that can simply be swept away in order to return to one's natural state of purity. A sense of absolute right and wrong is not visible in the *Shinto* world-view.

The Christian teaching of absolute morality is embedded in the belief in God as the absolute moral lawgiver. Christianity teaches a universal reality based on the character of God revealed in the Bible. The Ten Commandments as an expression of God's character has some implications as explained by Ryken (2003:17-18). (i) To break the law of God is to make a direct assault on God Himself. (ii) The law of God is perpetually binding; because it expresses God's eternal attributes, it has an eternal validity. Ryken represents the majority Christian view that sees God's righteous and eternal standard summarized in the Ten Commandments. The Christian understanding of morality is found in the universally binding law of God as an expression of His own holy character.

Shinto, on the other hand, has no objective views regarding good and evil and an attempt to spell out specific moral sins in a reasoned system would be impossible (Wargo, 1990:505). Although Yamakage (2006:46) teaches that *Shinto* has no clear definition of sin, there is still a high standard of morality, and Japan is known as a country with the most polite people in the world (Powell, 2016). Moral relativity does not mean there is no working morality at all. The Japanese idea of morality is found in sincerity or purity of heart which eradicates selfish behaviour (Wargo 1990:505). Such a sincere heart will automatically do what is right and promote harmony in the group. This Japanese moral reasoning has not faded over time. Because the Japanese have no concept of absolute morality, I doubt whether a Gospel presentation starting with the Ten Commandments or the law of God would be successful in Japan.

4.5.4 Purity and Community

Purity as a regulative system has a great influence on a society because it maintains social relationships. Douglas (1996:160) writes, "Purity thinking, therefore, is vitally concerned with controlling boundaries, preserving hierarchies, and promoting social cohesion in a word, community making". We observe this idea of community making in the clean and unclean conditions that temporarily or permanently disabled participation in the Jewish society. Boundaries were also created around Israel as a holy people, separated from other nations. Laws about diet, Sabbath and circumcision gave Israel a distinct identity and any Israelite who deviated from these laws would find himself outside the purity map, bringing a sense of shame and

defilement. The community thus reinforced these pre-established purity laws through determining who may or may not be accepted in the group. In this way, purity is identified as a community project that creates a strong sense of ethnic identity.

In similar fashion, *Shinto* uses purity as a tool for community building. I have already demonstrated the strong Japanese social concept of *uchi to soto* 内と外. The purity of one's own group must be maintained and any deviation is considered out of place and shameful. Here one can observe the close relationship between purity and shame²⁴. It is considered shameful to act in a way that defies one's own group. The harmony of a group is maintained through the individual's fear of shame and exclusion. The concept of collective harmony is further strengthened through festivals and community events. This is how a strong sense of group solidarity is preserved. Group solidarity is an important function of purity in both the Ancient Hebrew and modern Japanese *Shinto* worlds; one must not miss the theological significance of this. Often key biblical concepts are lost because of an individualistic world-view. Wu (2012:55) writes, "Western politics, philosophies, and values emphasize individual autonomy and self-sufficiency. From that perspective, it is easy to disregard or minimize group identity and loyalty". Western missionaries to Japan should take special notice of the concept of group harmony because the Japanese people are indeed a group-oriented culture. Fukuda (1993:np) writes, "The Japanese are taught to see the people primarily as a group. In Japan, it is important that control of the individual's feelings be subjugated to the group". The Japanese cultural value of group harmony should not be regarded as opposed to the biblical teaching since the same value is present in Israel as the people of God. The question should rather be how this value can be embraced and developed in the Japanese local church.

4.5.5 Fundamental Differences between Modern Shinto and Ancient Hebrew

I have aspired to demonstrate the similarities between Judaism and *Shinto* in relation to purity. The aim is to develop a contextualized theology of purification that can be helpful for Christianity in Japan. Although there is an opportunity for establishing

²⁴ Many studies have been done towards presenting a contextualized Gospel for honour/shame cultures. Cf. Wu's 2012, *Saving God's Face*, Georges' 2016, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, Mischke's 2015, *The Global Gospel*, and Tennent's 2007, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*.

common ground, there are at least two fundamental differences which must be addressed, namely (i) The value system, and (ii) Revelation. We will now consider both in further detail.

The strangeness of Hebrew purity laws only makes sense when considering what motivated their desire for purity. At the very core of the Jewish value system was the character of Yahweh and His relationship with Israel. Everything they did came from that belief because values determine practice. A repeated phrase “I am the Lord” occurs 49 times in the book of Leviticus. This highlights the special relationship between Yahweh and His people. This special relationship comes with specific terms, “You shall be holy to me for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine” (Lev 20:26). Israel believed they were called to be holy because Yahweh Himself is holy. Morrow (2017:110-111) writes,

YHWH manifests a kind of moral perfection and power that distinguishes him from the created order because he is not subject to the contingencies of death, disease, or sin. Holiness is also a desirable condition; for it is associated with justice, health, and peace – all characteristics of the divine. When people live in harmony with the holy, life prospers and flourishes.

Israel believed that Yahweh was the one true creator God who called them as His very own people. They were therefore accountable to Him and knew that a failure in purity would result in their destruction.

Although Japanese *Shinto* does value the *kami* 神, this is not the central idea that completely captures their value system and motivation for purity. In contrast to Judaism, *Shinto* does not have any concept of one supreme God who is separate from all else. Rather, humanity, *kami* 神 and nature all exist in a continuum (Wargo, 1990:503). I would argue that the core of *Shinto*'s value system lies in the concept of *musubi* 産靈. Other writers would support this view, Hara (2003:91) writes, “...the essential characteristic of Shinto is to produce life energy based on the concept of *musubi* 産靈, under the divine providence deities such as *kami* 神, nature, and the souls of ancestors”. Soichiro (1984:24) writes, “A distinctive belief in the power which enables things to be produced, reproduced, and united, which in Japanese is known

as *musubi* 産靈, lies deep in the heart of the Japanese psychology". The key motivating factor for purity in the Japanese religious mind is for the harmonious development of man, *kami* 神, and nature. Purification rituals are necessary to gain assistance from the *kami* 神 rather than obtaining forgiveness. The Jewish people believed they were subject to Yahweh and this influenced all their activities. *Shinto* people believe they can participate with the *kami* 神, and this likewise influences all their actions.

The concept of divine revelation marks the second fundamental difference between Judaism and *Shinto*. Israel's moral law has come through direct revelation given by Yahweh. In Exodus 19, God meets with Moses on Mount Sinai in order to declare His law. Morrow (2017:47) writes,

...the divine will is accompanied by the natural phenomena that biblical tradition recognized as signs of a theophany, of the manifestation of YHWH in the created order. Storm and earthquake, thunder and lightning underscore the significance of Israel's encounter with God on the holy mountain and emphasize the importance of the divine law that Moses and the people receive.

Israel has a recorded history of hearing from God which has been put into written text. The Law, the Writings, the Prophets and the Psalms are mostly stories about God's intimate interaction with His people. Manser (2009:np) writes, "The OT bears witness to God's revelation in the history of Israel and in the inspired testimony of the prophets and other writers of this period. This knowledge of God prepares the way for the full disclosure of God in Jesus Christ in the NT". The methods of Old Testament revelation included (i) Direct communication (Ex 4:12, Jer 1:9), (ii) Visions and dreams (Gen 15:1, Num 12:6), (iii) Theophanies (Gen 18:1, Ex 3:1-6), and (iv) Scripture (Deut 31:9, Isa 30:8; Manser, 2009:np). Another important aspect of revelation is on its necessity. Because Yahweh is infinite, and man is finite, it is impossible to fully know God without revelation. This was a fundamentally important belief in Judaism and equally important for contemporary Evangelical Christianity. One of the main reasons for the coming of the Messiah was to reveal the will of God to man (Heb 1:2).

Unlike Judaism, Japanese *Shinto* beliefs do not find its origin in a divinely inspired revelation; like many other primitive religions, they are practices that have developed from early days as an attempt to create order out of chaos. This *Shinto* faith has been passed on from generation to generation, not by doctrinal or written expressions of faith, but through the sensory appeal of rituals and festivals. Ono (1962:np) writes, “It has been caught not taught”. *Shinto* does not contain any recorded teaching of absolute truth revealed by an absolute God. The *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihonshoki* 日本書紀 do contain *Shinto* themes but in these literary works, myth and history are blended. It is not a sacred text like the Bible (Yamakage, 2006: 39). *Shinto* does not believe that words can fully capture the world of great nature or the world of *kami* 神, for that reason *Shinto* is more about participation in ritual and festivals than reasoned belief in a written form of revelation. Yamakage (2006:41-42) writes, “The wonderful teachings and views about life embedded in each of these ritual gestures and actions have been handed down throughout recorded history. Participants feel these and can have mystical experiences through their practices”.

I have highlighted these two differences because it would be a great error to assume the Christian message of salvation can simply be attached to the Japanese *Shinto* world-view. A great change in thinking is necessary before any Japanese person can come to faith in Christ. However, it is the task of every missionary to find as many connections as possible between the Christian message and the target culture, as Paul did in Acts 17:16-34. Missionaries should endeavour to build bridges between Christianity and the Japanese world-view, using analogies, stories, themes and ideas that are already known to the Japanese. The concept of purity is one such example and in the last chapter, I will develop a contextualized theology of purification in and for the people of Japan.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have compared the concept of sin as impurity in Ancient Israel with that of modern *Shinto*. It is by no means the only concept of sin in the Ancient Near East but I have chosen this specific theme for my systematic approach in demonstrating how an understanding of sin as impurity provides one possible connection between Scripture and *Shinto*.

I began by describing the foundational elements for this study namely, purity and danger, the need for purification and the purification methods. This was followed by research into the leading causes of impurity that is present within these two cultures, many similarities were noted. The idea of purity as system was then mapped out, demonstrating how both cultures adhere to a system of purity relating to people, places and times. Finally, the theological significance was explained and what we may learn from purity as it relates to order, holiness, morality, and community. I ended by outlining two of the fundamental differences between Judaism and *Shinto*. It is true that both these cultures see the value of purity and the need to dispel any impurity. I will now channel all of the findings from the previous chapters into a contextualized, biblical theology of purification in and for the people of Japan.

Chapter 5

A Theology of Purification and its Spiritual Significance for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christianity

5.1 Introduction

Jesus the Son of man did not come to destroy Japanese culture; He came to redeem it. I believe the deep-seated values and motivations of the Japanese people are in fact ready to hear and absorb the good news of Jesus Christ. As I have already explained in the previous chapters, there are some similarities that exist between the Jewish culture of the Bible, and the culture of the Japanese people. There are of course many significant differences, but my aim has been to develop one connection in the form of sin as impurity. Biblical teaching does have something to say to the Japanese value system in light of purification. In this chapter, I will attempt to build a bridge that connects the purifying work of Christ to the culture of the Japanese people. Since the Japanese already value purity, a theology of purification could help strengthen the Evangelical Japanese Church and provide another contextualized tool for communicating the Gospel. I believe that expressing the salvation story in purity language is not only biblically possible but is also culturally important, demonstrating to the Japanese that the Gospel can be wrapped with Japanese garments instead of Western ones, so to speak. This kind of contextualization is an ongoing need for Christianity in Japan as Mullins (1998:55) observes, “Many Japanese critics of transplanted mission churches expressed a longing for the ‘pure’ or ‘spiritual’ religion of Jesus without Western institutions, rites, and dogmas”. This criticism has led to a number of indigenous movements that will be commented on through this chapter. Many of these movements went beyond Evangelical parameters in their efforts to contextualize. The church in Japan should be

encouraged to keep contextualizing but to do so within the boundaries of Scripture. I will attempt to demonstrate how this might be done.

The process for the development of this theology of purification will include, (i) Stating the problem in explaining the general need for continuing contextualization in Japan and then the need to contextualize specific doctrines, namely, sin and the atonement. (ii) Analysing the different methods of contextualization and revealing what I believe to be the best method for Japan. (iii) Outlining central ideas for the doctrine of purification, namely, sin as internal defilement, Jesus as agent of God's purity and the cross in purity language. (iv) Finally, the study will conclude with an application of the main ideas, including a biblical narrative on purity and a list of contextualized catechisms.

5.2 The Need for Ongoing Contextualization in Japan

Japan has met Christianity three times in its history. (i) When Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in the 16th century. (ii) After Japan came out of isolation in the 19th century. (iii) After Japan's WWII defeat in the 20th century. Fujiwara (2012) explains that during each of these interactions, Japan has met Christianity with initial acceptance, yet eventually declined it. Even after centuries of Christian outreach, Japan is still considered one of the largest unreached nations in the world. Miyake (2011:1) shows how only 0.8% of Japan's 127 million people follow Christianity. The reason for such slow Christian growth is not because of a lack of missionary effort in spreading the Christian message around the country. Lewis (2013:253) writes,

At least a third of the Japanese population in some areas have visited a Christian church at some time in their lives, if only to attend a wedding or a funeral. Between a quarter and a third of the population possess Christian literature in their homes, and in some time in their lives have read it either regularly or occasionally.

Lewis (2013:np) also rightly observes that although church growth has been hampered by political constraints in the past, Japan now enjoys complete religious freedom, yet still, church growth remains slow. Lee (2014:np) provides a detailed list of factors in an effort to explain the slow growth of Christianity in Japan. World-view, theology, missionary approach, society and politics are all reasons he explores. I will

touch on some of these as the chapter unfolds, especially world-view and theology. Broadly speaking, Lee's list acknowledges the clash between Western Christian thought and the Japanese, Eastern way of thinking. Mullins (1998) documents a number of indigenous Japanese Christian movements that grew independently from the transplanted missionary churches in Japan. Many of these indigenous movements were started by Japanese ministers out of sheer frustration with Western denominationalism and its disrespect for Japanese culture. I will quote two Japanese theologians who voiced these frustrations.

More often than not, European and American missionaries attempted to Westernize as well as Christianize the Japanese people and culture. Japanese converts were made to feel, consciously or unconsciously, that to decide for Christ also implied the total surrender of their souls to the missionaries. The task of evangelism was interpreted by most missionaries as transplanting in *toto* the church in the West on Japanese soil, including the ugly features of denominationalism – an unhappy assumption indeed (Kitagawa, 1961:40-41).

Uchimura Kanzo, founder of the Nonchurch movement wrote,

I am blamed by missionaries for upholding Japanese Christianity. They say that Christianity is a universal religion, and to uphold Japanese Christianity is to make a universal religion a national religion. Very true. But do not these very missionaries uphold sectional or denominational forms of Christianity which are not very different from national Christianity? ... Is not Episcopalianism essentially an English Christianity, Presbyterianism a Scotch Christianity, Lutheranism a German Christianity, and so forth? (1886)

The frustration over a form of Christianity with Western wrappings led to many indigenous movements which sought to retain Japanese values. "The founders of Japanese movements have maintained that truth and goodness are found not only in the Bible and Christian tradition but also in the religions of Asia and that new insights could be drawn from spiritual experience or additional revelation from God" (Mullins, 1998:40). Mullins explains how different Japanese religious values, clashing with Western values, led to the start of many of the indigenous movements. I will outline a few examples of the main points of contention.

5.2.1 Japanese Dō 道 versus Western Teaching

Dō 道 is a very important concept in Japanese culture, meaning way or path. It is found in many disciplines like *Bushidō* 武士道 ‘way of the warrior’, *Judō* 柔道 ‘gentle way’, *Kendō* 剣道 ‘way of the sword’ as well as the two most dominant religions, *Butsudō* 仏道 ‘Buddha way’ and *Shinto* 神道 ‘Kami way’. The origin of *dō* 道 goes back to Confucian ethics and Zen Buddhism (Davies, 2002:41-47). This Japanese value for discipline, character, loyalty and purity made an indelible impression on Japanese theologian Uchimura Kanzo (Mullins, 1998:62). He wanted to graft Japanese Christianity to *bushidō* and Confucian principles. In a similar way Kawai, founder of Christ Heart Church, wanted to develop a form of Christianity that also emphasized *doing*. He wrote, “One cannot be saved by a faith-based on doctrinal knowledge alone. There is no transformation without practice and no salvation without transformation” (Mullins, 1998:87). Kawai observed that many Christians were falling into a kind of Christianity that was void of training and discipline. He even accused Martin Luther of only grasping one half of the Gospel because of Luther’s misunderstanding of the epistle of James with respect to ‘works of faith’ (Kawai, 1961:68-69). This was a very different view from that of the transplanted churches in Japan who emphasized a conceptual Christianity. Mullins (1998:37) writes that a common criticism of Western churches in Japan had to do with their “...doctrinal rigidity and intellectualism and their failure to give adequate attention to the experiential dimension of faith”. He also adds stronger criticism from the Japanese, “...others suggest it is a lifeless, hardened, or frozen form of Christianity”. The emphasis on Christian teaching has also influenced the idea of church in Japan. Church has been translated as *kyōkai* 教会 which literally means, teaching association. Any kind of overemphasis on dogmatic teaching is foreign to the religious values in Japan with its emphasis on doing. Ono (1962:np), who writes as a follower of *Shinto*, gives more insight into this particular Japanese religious value, “The strength of Shrine Shinto is in its emphasis on sensory experience derived from mystic rites and natural phenomena rather than on theological discourses”. Also, “The kami-faith is caught not taught...”. For this reason, continual contextualization that will help the Gospel to be ‘caught’ rather than simply ‘taught’ is crucial for the ongoing work of Christian ministry in Japan. I don’t believe that Christianity should be

left to sensory experience and religious practices only, yet there is biblical warrant for an equal emphasis on teaching and doing.

5.2.2 Japanese Spiritual Experience versus Western Creedalism

Mullins (1998) observes how many indigenous Japanese Christian movements were started after its leaders claimed to receive special revelation from God and began practising the charismatic sign gifts. Most of the missionary churches reacted strongly against this. Murai Jun, for example, founder of the Spirit of Jesus Church was labelled a servant of Satan because he spoke in tongues (Mullins, 1998:98). Murai insisted that his church was restoring an authentic form of New Testament Christianity, arguing that Western Christians were only presenting an empty shell of Christianity. His church focused strongly on spiritual warfare and although it condemned any involvement with native Japanese spiritual practices, it provided Christian alternatives, filling the spiritual need amongst its followers. It is noteworthy that the Spirit of Jesus Church established more churches across Japan than any other indigenous movement. I believe it is because they addressed spiritual concerns relevant to the Japanese more than any other group.

Another notable leader is Teshima Ikuro, founder of the Original Gospel Movement. One of his ambitions was to connect ancient Japanese spirituality with the Christian message. According to Teshima, ancient Japanese religious works such as the *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihonshoki* 日本書紀 provided valuable insight into early Japanese spirituality. He also interpreted these writings as a record of communication between the ancient Japanese and the heavenly spirits or angels as the Bible describes (Mullins, 1998:124). Additionally, in his effort to connect Japanese spirituality with Christianity he started to adopt ancient rituals such as *misogi* 禊 'water purification' and *hiwatari* 火渡 'fire walking'. He reasoned that spiritual purification and bodily training were essential to Christian discipleship.

These practices stood in complete opposition to the conservative church's creedal approach that required complete surrender to a set of absolute truths. Historically Japan has accommodated every religion and transformed each to conform to its own syncretistic vision, focusing on the experience, not absolutes. The missionary

church's insistence on one exclusive way of salvation is thus very difficult for the Japanese to accept. The trend for missionary theology and practice has been to emphasize a complete disconnect between Christianity and Japanese traditions. The trend has been to view Japanese culture in a negative light. Their traditions had to be replaced with objective *truth*. Indigenous traditions had to be completely removed to make room for the Christian message (Mullins, 1998:34).

There is a clear tension between Conservative Christian values and Japanese values as they relate to religious thought. Japanese tradition stresses the need for spiritual forms and practices whereas Western Christian tradition tends to emphasize a set of established doctrines that must be believed. This also highlights the need for creative and ongoing contextualization in Japan.

5.2.3 Japanese Ancestor Veneration versus Western Views of the Afterlife

Views regarding ancestors and the afterlife introduce another major point of conflict between Japanese religion and Protestant Christianity. The Japanese have a cosmology that recognizes interdependence between the world of the living and that of the dead. Hayashi (1988:182) explains that the first domain is the material world, *busshitsukai* 物質界. The second domain is the spiritual, *seishinkai* 精神界. Humans enter into the second domain when their spirit departs their body at death. This is the domain of ancestors, spirits, gods and ghosts. Fukuda (1993:np) further explains that a divine-human continuum exists and therefore the boundary between the human world and the spirit world can be crossed, making it possible for ancestral spirits to freely visit the world of the living. This means that ancestors must be honoured and taken care of through various rituals or else they might become restless and vengeful. After observing a number of ancestor rituals and grave rites practised by a Japanese company's official, Lewis, (2013:4-5) identifies key themes regarding Japanese religious thinking. (i) The dead must be remembered and somebody must be responsible for performing rituals. (ii) There must be respect for one's seniors, as later these seniors become ancestors who must be honoured through appropriate rituals. (iii) Restless or wandering spirits carry the risk of becoming dangerous. There is a fear of what could be out of place 'impure'. Similar to Douglas's definition of *dirt* as "matter out of place" (1996:36), spirits out of place are treated in the same way,

like *dirt*. Appropriate rituals are necessary to guarantee these spirits remain in a pure state, ensuring their benevolent help for the living. (iv) Certain disasters might occur through the neglect of religious rites. It is safer to observe the rituals rather than to run the risk of danger. To avoid this risk, the Japanese will seek security from charms and other religious practices.

It should be noted that ancestor veneration is observed even in modern day Japan. The *Bon Festival* 盆踊り celebrated yearly is one example. During this festival, it is believed that the souls of the dead return to their homes. Before the festival, the family altar and grave is cleaned, and the deceased person's favourite food is prepared. Fires are lit at the gate of the house to welcome the spirits' arrival and to send them off on the next day (Davies, 2002:213-214). Mullins (1998:135) adds, "In spite of the process of modernization and urbanization, beliefs and practices related to the ancestors and the spirit world are still relatively strong in contemporary Japan". This poses a problem for Protestant Christianity in Japan. Yagi (1995:52) writes,

Protestants see ultimate human destiny as the either-or choice between heaven and hell immediately after death. The first result of the Protestant view is that prayer for the dead is useless, coming too late as it were, because their eternal destiny has already been determined at death. The second result is the unbearable estrangement of heaven-bound Japanese Christians from their non-Christian ancestors, all of whom are bound for hell.

The Protestant Christian view of the afterlife is not so easily accepted by the Japanese. One might be quick to pass judgement on the Japanese for their seemingly unbiblical practice but perhaps there are also certain Western cultural values which add to the problem. Kubo (2018) who is a supporter of the *Second Chance Theory*²⁵ believes that because Westerners are far more individualistic by nature, they may have no problem becoming Christian even if knowing their ancestors are in hell. For the Japanese person, this is utterly unreasonable and Kubo believes that many Japanese have been turned away from Christ because of

²⁵ Second Chance Theory is an ongoing discussion point in Japanese Christianity. It affirms that those who have never heard the Gospel do not go directly to hell, but instead go to Hades, which is not the same thing. At the end of time, they will have a second chance to hear the Gospel and make a choice to believe in Christ (Lee, 2014:np).

this. Reid (1991:108-109) writes that Protestant missionaries "...came from a culture that gave primacy to the nuclear family and to short-term separation rites for the dead. The Japanese receivers of the New Religion came from a culture that gave primacy to the *ie* 'household' system and to long-term luminal rites for the household dead". Westerners do not pay much attention to their ancestors and this is concerning to the Japanese. Mariana Nesbitt, a retired missionary to Japan, has developed a contextualized theology of the afterlife that is both biblical and relatable to the Japanese person. In her contextualized tool on the after-life she mentions 'amongst other things' the importance of genealogies in the Bible, the importance of remembering and thanking God for one's ancestors, that the spirits of the deceased cannot harm the believer and that the church enriches one's relationship with one's family and does not seek to destroy it (2017:204-208). Her work is helpful and represents an approach to the problem that stays within the confines of Evangelical Christianity. Other less than orthodox answers to the problem have also been developed over time. Examples include the Second Chance Theory, vicarious baptism for the dead²⁶ and other practices by some indigenous movements²⁷. Conflicting views on the nature of the afterlife presents another layer to the complexity of contextualizing the Christian message in Japan and demonstrates the need for the church's continuing efforts in this.

5.2.4 Theological Obstacles for Understanding Sin and the Atonement

In this section, I will consider the challenges involved with Japanese people understanding the Christian idea of sin and the atonement. Later, I will endeavour to develop a theology of purification that can be used as a contextualized tool in Japan. The nature of sin and how it can be dealt with will be important elements but first, we must discover why the traditional Protestant teaching on sin and the atonement is troublesome for the Japanese.

Christianity in Japan is considered a new or an outsider's religion because it arrived centuries after *Shinto*, Buddhism, and Confucianism. It is important to remember that

²⁶ An indigenous movement called The Spirit of Jesus Church contends that 1 Corinthians 15:29 teaches that through the ritual of baptism the blessings of individual salvation can be extended to past generations (Mullins, 1998:150).

²⁷ Both indigenous movements, Christ Heart Church and the Original Gospel do not see any conflict between Christianity and participating in death rituals and ancestral rites related to Buddhism.

early Christianity grew from the soil of Greco-Roman culture and then later another European layer was added after the Protestant Reformation. Biblical teaching regarding sin and atonement was thus understood through the lens of Western philosophical values. Japan, on the other hand, has no such history. Japanese religious values have grown out of *Shinto*, Buddhist and Confucian soil, resulting in a theological clash when confronted with Christianity. This clash exists because of linguistic and internalized world-view differences. The word for sin in Japanese is *tsumi* 罪 meaning crime. It means to be found guilty of committing a criminal offence (Chow, 2013:127). Nesbitt (2017:55) rightly argues that for the law-abiding citizens of Japan this makes no sense at all. In the West it still makes sense because of the legal narrative traditionally used in explaining the Gospel; not so in Japan. The notion of guilt as a result of sin is preferred in Western theology but in Japan, *kegare* 穢れ or defilement is more readily understood. It is important to use contextual and clearly understood words to explain sin instead of insisting on preferred Western words. I have demonstrated in chapter 1 that Paul does not use one word or one analogy to explain sin but uses a variety of words and ideas to explain all the different aspects of sin.

Not only is there a linguistic barrier, but also a world-view barrier makes it harder for the Japanese to accept the Evangelical teaching on sin. Martin Luther spoke about humanity as utterly ruined, completely fallen and unable to produce any real good. His teaching on original sin is completely out of sync with Japanese *Shinto* thinking which believes in the original goodness of man. I repeat the emphatic statement by Yamakage (2006:122) “Shinto does not preach the idea of absolute sin”. Sin in Japanese thinking is simply a form of external pollution that obstructs the bright and happy pursuit of *musubi* 産靈. Because it is external and obstructive rather than internal and destructive, *sin* can easily be dealt with through the right cleansing ritual.

It must also be noted that someone’s understanding of sin fundamentally impacts their view of what must be done to be saved from it. If sin is understood as external, then external solutions will suffice. The atonement is a central Christian doctrine which Evangelicals define as Christ coming to die on the cross as a substitute for sinners, a sacrifice which satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God. This is a

very foreign concept for the Japanese for a number of reasons. Firstly, in *Shinto* understanding, the Japanese word for salvation is *harai* 祓い which means purity, attainment or enlightenment. This is the ideal life, the goal of *musubi* 産霊. Practically it means to have a bright and clean *kokoro* 心 'heart', free from any pollution, living healthy and prosperously (Lee, 2014:np). For this reason, a message of salvation that is presented simply as rescue from transgressing a divine law will not seem like good news to the Japanese.

Secondly, the doctrine of atonement only makes sense when linked with the belief in an all-powerful and holy God to whom all humans are accountable. Unfortunately, the Japanese have no concept of such a supreme God with whom reconciliation is needed. The Japanese only know about mysterious spiritual beings called *kami* 神. But these are impersonal beings and only need to be given the proper rituals to avoid pollution. Because of this, in order to help Japanese understand the atonement, there must first be careful and patient teaching concerning God as creator who is deserving of honour and praise.

Thirdly, because sin is not directed towards a supreme, singular being, the definition changes from that of Protestant Christianity. Instead of sin being defined as the transgression of a divine being's laws, it is instead understood as the breaking of *wa* 和 'harmony'. Social conformity and living in harmony with nature, people and *kami* 神 is another form of *harai* 祓い. Lee (2014:np) writes, "Mutual benefits are sought between the group and individual and harmony is regarded as a crucial element of life". It is through participation in this continuum where joy and meaning are found²⁸. The Christian teaching on the atonement is a kind of agreement between the individual and God, for a Japanese to place his/her faith in the atonement might mean a break from harmony with their own community.

In light of these theological barriers, compounded by the complexities present in Japanese culture, it takes little convincing to see that contextualization should be an

²⁸ This could explain why Japanese men remain faithful to a single company for their entire lives, why participating in community festivals is so widespread, why Japanese ancestor veneration is so common, and why there is such a strong social emphasis on *uchi to soto* 内と外 'insider and outsider'.

ongoing concern. The important question to ask at this point is whether there are any ways to present the atoning work of Jesus in a way that best speaks to the core values of the Japanese people. And, equally important, can this be done in a way that is faithful to the authority of Scripture. There is a fine line between faithful contextualization and syncretism; a sound model is required that will guide the theologian's work in navigating the complex relationship between Christianity and Japanese culture. Before I present my biblical theology of purification, this must be addressed.

5.3 Contextualization Methods

In Fujiwara's (2012) *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context*, an attempt was made to find appropriate ways for Christianity to engage with culture. Japan provides a challenging context for such engagement because of its complex spiritual matrix. Mullins (1998) reveals many indigenous Christian movements in Japan that started out of frustration over Christianity's Western garments. It is unfortunate that these Western missionaries imposed their Western ways and distanced many Japanese from the essence of the Gospel. But equally unfortunate is how many of these indigenous movements drifted away from Evangelical parameters. Furuya (1997:57) reveals that Christianity in Japan's *Shōwa* period (1926-1989) advocated the following doctrines: (i) The kingdom of God and kingdom of the emperor was pronounced the same way, 'mikuni' 御国, therefore, serving the emperor and cooperating in the military advance into China was to advance God's kingdom. (ii) The emperor and Christ are identical. (iii) *Shinto* ancient writings, *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihonshoki* 日本書紀 were the Japanese Old Testament. (iv) Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament and *Amenominakanushinokami*, the god in the *Kojiki* 古事記 are the same. (v) The mission of the Japanese was thus to restore Israel and the war against China was believed to be part of that mission. In this, we can see the damage that occurs when contextualization is not submissive to scriptural authority and the historical Jesus.

In order to prevent both under contextualizing 'Like some Western missionaries' and over contextualizing 'like some Japanese indigenous leaders' a healthy model is

required. Fujiwara (2012) borrows from Richard Niebuhr to present a variety of approaches to the problem of Christ and culture.

5.3.1 Christ Against Culture

Here we have an exclusivist approach that sees every culture outside the church as fallen and sinful. Because every culture is considered evil, culture must be completely rejected. If this view is applied, the Japanese Christian must believe in a Jesus who is opposed to every aspect of his/her traditional culture. The merit in this view is that it places a high value on the Lordship of Christ and focuses on the uniqueness of the Christian message. However, there are also some problems with this approach as Niebuhr (1951:65-78) identifies. (i) Because it withdraws from culture by rejection it, the result is that it is not very effective in changing culture. (ii) Although it rejects culture, it still makes use of its benefits. This would be like somebody rejecting Japanese culture but enjoying the cleanliness of a city or the pleasure of soaking in a hot spring. The reality is that nobody can fully escape culture and it would be hypocritical to think otherwise. (iii) This view undermines the problem of sin. The assumption is that sin lies in the culture which is external to the individual and his own *holy* community. But as Jesus explained in Mark, defilement is not external as much as it is internal. All communities are tainted with sin because communities are made up of individuals with defiled hearts. (iv) Finally, this view generates the problem of dualism because it denies God's operation in the material cultures of humanity. This would mean that for the thousands of years before Christianity arrived, God had no interest and no involvement with the people of Japan. Applying this method to evangelism in Japan is not the ideal approach.

5.3.2 Christ of Culture

This is what Niebuhr (1951:83-88) calls the inclusivist approach. It seeks to harmonize Christ and culture and it should be commended for its efforts in demonstrating the universal nature of the Gospel. The danger, however, is found in the implementation of this view. In practice, the Christian message is compromised to accommodate the culture. The Jesus advocated by this view is much more affirming, but also much less historical. This is why Niebuhr has the lowest assessment of this approach. It treats sin rather superficially and depends on independent knowledge rather than divine instruction. Japanese who hold to this

view would have no problem including *Shinto* writings, beliefs and practices into their *Christian* experience. I have already identified some examples of this within the indigenous movements. Ancestor worship, attending *Shinto* festivals, performing *Shinto* rites and linking Japanese nationalism with God's kingdom are all expressions of the Christ of culture view. This approach to the problem of Christ and culture is especially dangerous in a context like Japan where syncretism is already dominant and where so many new religions and subcultures operate. The Christ of culture approach is therefore not ideal for evangelism in Japan.

5.3.3 Moderate Answers

Niebuhr's (1951:117-119) other three approaches navigate between the two previously mentioned extremes. He favours these three views because firstly, they each value Christ as creator and since nature is the basis on which culture is produced, Christ cannot simply stand against it. Secondly, all humans are responsible to God and part of human obedience is to develop culture. Thirdly, these views recognize the seriousness of sin and its universal problem. Sin is present in culture *and* within the individual. And lastly, these views recognize the need for God's grace which alone makes it possible for law in any society. I will only briefly outline these remaining three views before offering a critique and a sixth alternative.

(i) *Christ above culture*. This is a synthesis approach which regards cultural expressions as good but they must be guided towards perfection through Christian revelation. In this view, Christ is instructor rather than judge (Fujiwara, 2012). The value of this view is that it allows believers and non-believers to co-operate in creating a visible Christian culture by guiding it with Christian principles. The shortcoming is that proponents do not always consider the cultural limitations of their own theological answers to very contextual situations. Protestant missionaries to Japan were guilty of this because although they believed in the international Gospel, they chose to teach universal Christian revelation in a European way, rejecting Japanese values.

(ii) *Christ and culture in paradox*. Here we have a dualist approach that holds a tension between Christ and culture, resulting in conflicting mandates. The believer is called to be both loyal to Christ *and* perform their cultural responsibilities. The

tension is explicitly seen in concepts of law and grace, as well as wrath and mercy. All humans fall short of God's law yet grace overcomes this. All humans are under God's wrath yet mercy embraces them. The dualist chooses to live within this dynamic paradoxical tension but it is open to terrible distortion. Japanese Christians during WWII are an example of spiritual and cultural schizophrenia. On one hand, they were loyal to the emperor whilst still seeking to be loyal to Christ (Fujiwara, 2012). For this reason, the Christ and culture in paradox approach would not be good to use in Japan.

(iii) *Christ the transformer of culture*. Because God still reigns over culture, believers have the responsibility to engage with cultural affairs. Niebuhr (1951:191-196) gives three distinct characteristics of this view. Firstly, there is value in creation just as there is value in God's work of redemption. Secondly, God's good creation and man's fallen nature are both affirmed. Evil is understood as a perversion of the good. And thirdly, God is active in the here and now, so greater concern is shown for the present divine restoration than for past or future events. This view is highly optimistic about cultural transformation and is perhaps the best view in an ideal situation, but I don't believe it can work practically in Japan. Niebuhr himself was a liberal scholar who wrote in mid-20th century America. There was a far greater Christian presence recognizable at that time than what there ever has been in Japan. The fact that Japan has been under non-Christian influence for so long and the fact that Christianity has always been a tiny percentage makes it difficult to believe that such a view is workable for present-day Japan.

5.3.4 Selective Discernment

Niebuhr's view on Christ and culture has not been without criticism. Carson (2008) proposes that Niebuhr's views cannot be a one size fits all, and although the Christ and culture grid is helpful, it should never have canonical force. Carson moves the discussion back to the field of biblical theology as he works out a unifying vision for how Christians ought to live in society. I believe that Japanese Christians who live in a *Shinto* cultural-religio milieu should have a model that helps them live out biblical, Christ-centred, and Spirit-led faith as a small church community within their larger cultural context. A one size fits all model will not work since the religious and cultural field is far too complex. Fujiwara, (2012) presents another view that was proposed by

John Howard Yoder. His view is described as the selective discernment approach and I believe this is a helpful approach to the problem of Christ and culture in Japan.

Yoder (1996:690) rejects Niebuhr's five type model in its entirety. He believes that culture is far too complex for any overarching model. His alternative is summarized as follows,

Some elements of culture the church categorically rejects (pornography, tyranny, cultic idolatry). Other dimensions of culture it accepts within clear limits (economic production, commerce, the graphic arts, paying taxes for peacetime civil government). To still other dimensions of culture Christian faith gives a new motivation and coherence (agriculture, family life, literacy, conflict resolution, empowerment). Still others it strips of their claims to possess autonomous truth and value, and uses them as vehicles of communication (philosophy, language, Old Testament ritual, music). Still other forms of culture are created by the Christian churches (hospitals, service of the poor, generalized education, egalitarianism, abolitionism, feminism). Some have been created with special effectiveness by the Peace Churches (prison reform, war sufferers' relief, international conciliation).

Yoder claims that because culture is a compound substance, discernment is necessary. He also says that in order to transform culture, there must be a place to stand, 'The church', and a standard not of our own making 'Authority of Scripture'. He has a high view of the Christian church because he believes it offers the world a distinct and alternative culture: "The Christian church as a sociological unit is distinguishable from the rest of culture and thereby constitutes a new cultural option" (1996:75). In the context of Japan, selective discernment should be approached from the standpoint of the Japanese church. Obviously, biblical revelation must be the primary resource for practising such selective discernment. In this way, both Western garments and Eastern syncretism can be avoided. It should be the ongoing task of the Japanese church to contextualize all the different elements of its complex culture. Yoder wants the Christian church to realize that they should not seek a one size fits all or magic formula that works on everyone but rather employ a repertoire of different approaches that can be applied to different situations.

Yoder provides a helpful starting point for how to treat the different elements of culture: (i) categorical rejection, (ii) conditional acceptance, (iii) giving a new motivation and coherence, (iv) acceptance as vehicles of communication by subordinating to Christianity, and (v) creation of new forms of culture by churches (Fujiwara, 2012). The church is called to be discerning, rejecting whatever is unbiblical or dishonouring to God but to transform all the rest. All this must be done with the right attitude, reflecting the character of God who seeks to rescue sinners.

The selective discernment approach is the model I will employ for developing a theology of purification. It is not the only model, but in my view, it is a model that best fits the balanced and multi-angled approach that is needed in Japan. The aspect I seek to explore is how the Japanese notion of purity can be used as a medium for explaining sin and the atonement. This will hopefully provide a helpful narrative which can transform one element of Japanese culture, 'their value of purity'. It is not supposed to be used as a complete or holistic solution to Japan's theological problems. With that said, I now present a contextualized theology of purification in and for the people of Japan.

5.4 A Contextualized Theology of Purification

It has already been shown that one of the main reasons why the Japanese reject Christianity is because it is foreign to them. This is why Christians must keep contextualizing the Gospel and remove as much of the foreignness in the message as possible. A theology of purification is an attempt to present the Christian salvation message in purity language instead of forensic language. The key elements of this theology include, (i) Sin as internal defilement, (ii) Jesus as agent of purity, and (iii) the cross in Japanese purity language. Lastly, I will present spiritual applications that can be used as contextualized tools for explaining the Gospel with Japanese garments.

5.4.1 Sin as Internal Defilement

The Japanese idea of holiness is ritual purity, spotlessness and clarity (Nesbitt, 2017:55). Yamakage (2006:88) uses the words *seimei* 清明 and *seichoku* 正直. These words convey ideas of clean, happy, bright, clear, honesty and right

behaviour. Regular rituals are required to ensure a person stays in this pure state. Through these rituals, any spiritual *dirt* can be removed just as one would remove *dirt* from the bottom of one's shoe. Sin is therefore understood as pollution or defilement that stands in the way of being *seimei* 清明 and *seichoku* 正直. This is also the state of being that is needed to commune with the *kami* 神. This *Shinto* teaching about humanity being free from absolute sin and that sin can be dealt with through an external ritual cannot be made to agree with the Bible. However, this does not mean that one cannot use the Japanese notion of sin as defilement as a starting point in Gospel conversations and in communicating doctrine. Although Luther focused on original sin, the Bible does actually speak about original goodness (Gen 1:31). After God created human beings, he declared them to be good, not evil. Sin, therefore, can be explained as a form of self-induced spiritual *dirt* which corrupted our original goodness, resulting in internal defilement so severe that nobody is able to cleanse it on their own. It is good to quote Aquinas again on this matter, "The stain is neither something positive in the soul nor does it denote a pure privation: it denotes a privation of the soul's brightness in relation to its cause, which is sin..." (1947, [Q86, A1]). Aquinas explained sin as a soul losing its brightness or glory before God, and this idea is much more applicable to the Japanese in *Shinto* tradition. It is also not off course with biblical teaching.

The greatest felt need of the Japanese is not guilt over breaking a law, but insecurity over being unclean and thus out of place. Mischke (2015) argues that if a great majority of unreached people have purity codes and practices, and if it is also true the Bible has ample material about purity, then it follows that it is strategic to use purity concepts and language from the Bible's stories, principles, parables and other material.

An explanation of sin in Western theology tends to start with the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20 or Paul's teaching of the law in Romans, focusing on humanity's failure to uphold the law of God. The imagery is that of a convicted criminal found guilty before God as the judge. Perhaps in the Japanese context, it is better to start with passages that address the issue of sin as uncleanness. Nesbitt (2017:72) suggests that Leviticus should be the starting point for explaining sin as ritual defilement and

then to move to Mark 7:20-23 where Jesus speaks of defilement coming from the heart. It is important for Japanese people to understand that ritual defilement is not the essence of sin, rather as Jesus explains, sin's essence is an internal defilement of heart, the complete opposite of a bright and clean heart. The language and narrative that is used are very important because the goal should always be to prick the heart of the Japanese with a needle that is felt. Some biblical stories that can be considered include: (i) The story of the prodigal son who defiled himself by dishonouring his father and ended up eating with pigs (Lk 15:11-32). (ii) The defiled attitude of Israel which caused God to view her as a prostitute (Hos 6:10), (iii) The betrayal of Judas and other biblical stories that depict disgraceful behaviour (Matt 26:14-16). Scriptures that depict sin as impurity should be used instead of scriptures that focus on lawbreaking. Some examples include, "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isa 64:6). "Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves" (Rom 1:24). "For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness" (1 Ths 4:7). Of course, Mark 7:20-23 is another key passage for explaining sin as defilement. Contrary to Japanese *Shinto* teaching, Jesus explains that defilement comes from the heart; this is an extremely important concept for the Japanese to understand. If sin was an external problem then it could be solved through external solutions, however, since Jesus said that sin is internal, an external solution will not suffice. In the Jewish context, hand washing was not enough to make a person clean. In the Japanese context, it must be understood that external rituals such as *temizu* 手水, *misogi* 禊 and *harai* 祓い, are equally unable to truly cleanse the heart.

Keeping in step to the concept of *dirt* as something out of place, a creative way of explaining sin as defilement can be developed. Part of contextualizing the Gospel is to use new vocabulary and changing our controlling metaphors. Nesbitt (2017:72) gives an example of an ordinary Japanese situation to illustrate the concept of defilement as *dirt* out of place. Talk about a foreign guest who tries to enter a Japanese home with muddy shoes. The owner of the house will not accept such behaviour; the dirt must be cleansed or else the entire house will become defiled.

The image of God as judge in a courtroom can be replaced with the image of God as owner of a clean environment. God cannot allow defilement such as, "...evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness" (Mk 7:21-22) into His clean, holy presence. The heart of man is like the shoes of the foreigner, it is unacceptable for such dirty hearts to enter God's clean space unless something can be done to cleanse our hearts from the impurity. Here is one alternative to the traditional Western law narrative.

Another factor to consider is how defilement is seen as something disgraceful, which results in shame, as opposed to guilt. Shame is another felt need among many Japanese and this is not foreign to the stories in the Bible. In Genesis 3:7-8 Adam and Eve felt shame after their disgraceful behaviour in the garden. Numbers 5:1-3 speaks of the shame of being put outside the camp because of uncleanness. In Matthew 27:5, Judas hung himself, likely out of a sense of shame for his betrayal of Christ. Mann (2015:95) agrees that the reason Judas committed suicide was because of his chronic sense of shame. He chose to isolate himself and take his own life because he feared the exposure of his true self. The Japanese concept of *honne* 本音, *tatemae* 建前 relates closely to this idea. *Honne* 本音 means true self and *tatemae* 建前 is public self. In Japan, the true self is often suppressed in order to maintain social harmony. This could lead to a feeling of inconsistency or dysfunction within one's personal narrative (Mann, 2015:94). The end result is either hiding one's true self or pulling the dark veil over the soul (Mann, 2015:95). Japan has many examples of such behaviour. In 2016 a politician publicly apologized and quit his job after he was found having an affair (The Guardian, 2016). Japan has one of the highest suicide rates in the world. In 2016, 21897 lives in Japan were lost to suicide (Luck, 2017). There is also a social phenomenon called *hikikomori* 'social isolation'. A condition where Japanese people isolate themselves from all social activity, shutting themselves up in their rooms for months and even years. The Japan Times (2016) records that according to a recent survey, an estimated 541 000 Japanese people between the ages of 15-39 are living in a state of *hikikomori*. This behaviour comes from a sense of shame produced either by disgraced behaviour or failing to live up to one's true self, a failure to live up to the ideals of brightness and purity.

Lewis' (2013:205-206) research indicates that the Japanese people have a high standard of morality. He outlined what kind of behaviour produced shame among the Japanese. The following percentages were given for people who answered yes to feelings of shame. Stealing 99.1%, Lying 94.7%, Adultery 92.9%, Disloyalty 76.5%, Betrayal of your group 93.5%, Not paying a debt 93.5%, Speeding in a vehicle 55.1%, Neglecting one's parents 87.6%, Illegal parking 56%, Having an abortion 77.9%, Forcing one's wife to have an abortion 75%, Not helping a friend in need 83.9%, Not helping a stranger in need 74.5%. Many of the behaviours on this list agree with Jesus' own list in Mark 7:21-23. They indicate a failure to live up to the bright and pure ideal. There is thus an opportunity to align these feelings of impurity with the prophetic voice of Scripture.

It is also worth considering Sadler's (2014:26-33) metaphorical parable in explaining the Gospel in a Japanese way²⁹. He introduces his parable with the image of a *kotatsu* 炬燵, a low table with an electric heater at the bottom. This is a cosy means of fellowship for a Japanese family. Life can be so emotionally cold in Japanese culture, so the *kotatsu* 炬燵 is a symbol of warmth, family and security, values that the Japanese long for and which the Bible speaks of. The story continues of a boy who betrays the warm fellowship of his grandfather by acting selfishly. This produced a sense of shame which results in isolation. The grandfather is the one who acts honourably to restore the rebellious young man to a place of close and warm

²⁹ Here is Sadler's complete Gospel parable as quoted by Georges (2016), "The metaphor of the kotatsu can be used to show that it is a prior and more fundamental lack of security before God that makes people so vulnerable to the threat of shame from people...When sharing the gospel using the metaphor of the kotatsu, I start by telling a story of a young boy who would gather with other neighborhood children after school around a large warm kotatsu and talk about the day's events with his grandfather. I paint the scene of a welcoming grandfather who serves fresh mandarin oranges and barley tea and laughs and plays card games with the children. Crisis comes one day when the boy, trying to make his friends laugh, makes fun of his grandfather, only to realize that he is standing right behind him. Seeing his grandfather's obvious sadness at the insult, he rushes from his home in embarrassment. After school the next day, he walks home as usual, but as he approaches his grandfather's house and hears the sound of laughter, he crosses over to the other side of the road, not wanting to be reminded of what he had done. His avoidance continues, and over time he thinks less and less of his grandfather. He looks for new ways to spend time after school and convinces himself that he really isn't missing anything. But inside he is disappointed with himself and tries to make up for it by excelling in school and in sports. But he can't help but feel a sense of shame, inner loneliness, and anxiety. His grandfather sees the changes taking place in his grandson's heart and refuses to give up on him. If he doesn't act, he knows his grandson will be lost to him forever. So, together with his son, he devises a plan to cover his grandson's shame, and restore him to a place of honor and acceptance at his kotatsu".

fellowship around the *kotatsu* 炬燵. This could be a powerful Gospel parable in Japan and it successfully ties in with the idea of sin as defilement because the behaviour of the boy is not as much breaking a law, as it is acting impurely or disgracefully. Defilement always produces a sense of gloomy shame that in turn produces a break in bright fellowship. This explanation of sin offers an alternative to the traditional law narrative while still remaining faithful to the Bible. Again, it does not present a complete or holistic explanation of sin 'nor does the Western guilt model'. It also does not try to compete with the Augustinian teaching of sin. It is but one way to express the problem of sin in a Japanese context.

5.4.2 Jesus, God's Agent of True Purity

Throughout Mark's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as God's agent of purity. This was good news for the people of Israel, and it is equally good news for the people of Japan who live in a cultural-religio milieu similar to 1st century Jews who held so strongly to the traditions of the elders (Mk 7:3). Purity and purification is thus a primary concern for both 1st century Jews and Modern *Shinto* followers. Introducing Jesus to the people of Japan must include teaching on Jesus' superior personal purity and how his contact with polluted people resulted in their cleansing and renewal. In this section, I will endeavour to present the life of Jesus in a way that will penetrate the purity conscious heart of the Japanese.

Japanese novelist, Shusaku Endo (1973) also sought to present Jesus in a way that will make sense to his Japanese compatriots. According to Endo, the Japanese seek a god like Buddha, one who is benevolent, warm-hearted, kind and motherly. Yet, according to Endo, the Old Testament presents God as a stern father who is strict and to be feared. In Endo's book, *The Life of Jesus*, he seeks to demonstrate how the dominant theme in the life of Jesus was to show forth the incredible love of God. Endo's writing is filled with the passionate effort to present Jesus as a man of incredible compassion,

Around the lake, where nature was so beautiful and the lives of the people so wretched, the towns were full of sick and crippled ones neglected by their neighbours and even by their own families. There were others, men and women like the tax collectors and the prostitutes, who were condemned by the priests. Reading the New

Testament provides a picture of Jesus with his loving predilection for drawing close to men and women who were otherwise forsaken or held in contempt. In the villages around the lake were victims of malaria, whom healthy people despised for being possessed by an evil spirit, yet Jesus tended to their needs. The lepers, forbidden to approach any village or town, were considered under the Law to be unclean and to be the recipients of punishment from God (Leviticus 13:13), yet Jesus ignored the part of the Law and tried to help them. He enlisted into his group of close disciples one of the tax collectors who were always objects of derision. Nor did he turn up his nose at the prostitutes, always the object of public disdain. The Gospels have many stories about Jesus and these abandoned souls (1973:48).

Although I appreciate Endo's effort to maximise the visibility of God's love in the life of Jesus, I do believe one must remember that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament is one and the same. Careful attention must be given not to pit the New Testament Jesus against Yahweh in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, as Endo suggests, the Japanese can find much comfort in the loving and compassionate nature of Jesus.

In addition to the loving nature of Jesus, Japanese people can also find hope and comfort in the purity of the Lord Jesus. This biblical understanding of Jesus can go a long way in helping the Japanese understand that Jesus knows about their purity concerns and can offer real help in their desire for purity. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is repeatedly described as a man of purity. I have already alluded to this in chapter 2. But the good news for the Japanese is that not only was Jesus pure, He was also in fact God's agent of purity. Throughout His life, Jesus had contact with unclean people. Ordinarily, contact with the unclean would make a person unclean too, but not so with Jesus. Instead of Jesus becoming unclean, the polluted person Jesus contacts become clean. Neyrey (1986:111-112) gives a number of helpful comments about Jesus as agent of purity. I present my own contributions based on his findings.

(i) *Leprosy*. In touching the leper, Jesus is not made unclean but instead proclaims "Be clean" and the leper was cleansed (Mk 1:41). The significance is that in the Old Testament, leprosy demanded separation and isolation (Lev 13:46). It was a form of impurity that threatened the holiness of Yahweh's precincts. In touching the leper

Jesus demonstrates His power to overcome this impurity and restore the leper to wholeness.

(ii) *Physical deformity.* Jesus made the paralytic both physically and spiritually whole (Mk 2:5,11). This was not only done as a sign of Jesus' authority but also a demonstration of His purifying power. In Leviticus 21:16-23 it was commanded that nobody with physical defects was allowed to approach God's altar. This was to protect God's purity from any impurity symbolized by physical defects. But in Mark's Gospel, we see a radical change. Jesus, God's agent of true purity comes to interact with a paralytic and He brings healing and restoration to this man.

(iii) *Fellowship with sinners and tax collectors.* By calling Levi and in eating with sinners Jesus demonstrates that he came to heal the sick, not the healthy (Mk 2:17). During Jesus' time, it was believed that associating with sinners would make someone unclean. A Rabbinical rule explains the stance of the Pharisees in Mark 2:16, "Let not man associate with the wicked, not even to bring him nigh to the Law" (Lachs, 1987:306). Jesus had a completely different approach. Unlike the Pharisees, He actively pursued sinners without compromising his own purity. His compassion and superior level of purity brought restoration to the ones who were deemed outsiders (Matt 21:31).

(iv) *Laws about Sabbath.* By *transgressing* the Sabbath laws in the eyes of the Pharisees, Jesus provided food for the hungry and healing for the man with the withered hand (Mk 2:23-28, 3:1-6). The Sabbath law is firmly established in the Old Testament (Ex 20:8-11, Lev 23:3, Deut 5:12-15). The Pharisees made this law a legalistic rule, using it as a fence to guard their own notion of righteousness. But in an attempt to guard their own sense of purity, the impurity of their hearts spilt out. When Jesus asked if it is better to do good or evil on the Sabbath their silence spoke a hundred words. It demonstrated the evil in their hearts and highlighted the superior purity of Jesus. He did not adhere to manmade notions of purity for selfish motives, He demonstrates a purity that far surpassed that of the Pharisees.

(v) *Unclean spirits.* Over the course of His ministry, Jesus liberated many people from slavery to Satan. It is significant that the evil spirits are referred to as 'unclean

spirits' (Mk 1:23-27, 3:11, 5:2-13, 6:7, 7:25, 9:25). This means that they brought a sense of impurity that set people in bondage. The fact that Jesus so effortlessly delivered so many from unclean spirits shows His power and ability in overcoming impurity. This is another mark that authenticates Jesus as God's agent of true purity.

(vi) *Discharge*. The menstruating woman who touched Jesus is healed of her irregular bleeding (Mk 5:28-29). This is a moving story of a woman who lived in a perpetual state of ritual uncleanness. According to Leviticus 15:25 a woman with irregular bleeding would be unclean for as long as the bleeding continues. In Mark 5:25 we hear about a woman who suffered from irregular bleeding for 12 years. This placed her outside the purity fence without any hope of ever being clean again. There were no doctors who could help her and she spent all she had in her efforts to find help, only for her disease to grow worse. Furthermore, her impurity was also contagious. Maccoby (1999:np) writes that discharge impurity was passed on through touch or touching furniture that was used by the unclean person. One can only imagine the shame and isolation this woman endured. Mark records the dramatic healing of this woman. We are told that she touched the hem of Jesus' garment (Mk 5:27-28). Normally, her impurity would pass on to Jesus, making Him unclean. But instead, after touching Jesus, this woman's disease and impurity are cleansed in an instant. The purifying power of Jesus restored this woman to a state of purity.

(vii) *Corpse impurity*. This was the most potent form of ritual impurity in Judaism (Maccoby, 1999:np) and also in Shinto (Yamakage, 2006:160). Corpse impurity carried a person into a state of defilement (Num 5:1-4, 9:6) and could be contracted by simply being in the same room as the deceased (Num 19:14). In Mark 5:41-42 Jesus enters the home of Jairus and touches the body of his dead daughter. This would normally mean instant defilement for Jesus but instead, we see the superior purity of Jesus that restores the girl back to life. Not even the impurity of death can defile Jesus. He is God's powerful purity agent and He demonstrates His power to purify again and again throughout Mark's Gospel.

Many of the above forms of impurity are present in modern-day *Shinto* belief, especially the impurity of death and evil spirits called, *kegare* 穢れ. Jesus demonstrates that He is not afraid of such impurity and has the ability to actually interact with and purify it, restoring someone to a state of absolute purity. This should bring a great sense of peace and security to Japanese who live in a context of many spiritual dangers and the corresponding external rituals necessary to expunge them. Jesus demonstrates his superior purity as God's agent of purity, good news for the Japanese.

A second important factor regarding Jesus as agent for purity is the fact that He redefined what constitutes impurity. Mark shows how Jesus, in the eyes of the Pharisees, was perceived to be rejecting the idea of purity. Mark seeks to demonstrate that this was not the case at all. Not only did Jesus cleanse the unclean, He also expressed a different kind of purity than that of the Pharisees. Neyrey (1986:113) writes, "...pollution comes not by a violation of washing or dietary rules (7:18–19), which deal only with surfaces, but with sin and vice which come from within, from the heart (7:21–22). 'All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man' (7:23)". The *Shinto* notion of sin as a problem external to human beings must be rejected. Jesus, the agent of God's purity, has declared that impurity lies within the heart of man. And in the same vein, real purity is not a matter of keeping the external ritual law; it is having a heart that is clean and free from all defilement. The Japanese idea of *uchi* 内 *to soto* 外 is helpful in explaining this. Jesus teaches that man needs a cleansed *uchi* 内. This cleansed *uchi* 内 is the kind of worship God desires. Jesus told the scribe, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mk 12:30). This is the kingdom living God requires, not like that which the Pharisees produced, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt 15:8). This is an important concept to teach to the Japanese.

Lee (2014:np) writes, "Uncleanliness can easily be 'washed away' by a prayer or a ceremony. Thus, in the eyes of most Japanese salvation and forgiveness of sins are not needed, as ceremonies or prayers can wash away any uncleanliness". This brings up an important theological question, how can the Japanese be made aware

of their impurity? The only solution is to show them God's ideal of a truly pure life. This is where we need to demonstrate how the purity of Jesus is God's standard, something we all fall short of. Endo (1973:68) argues how Jesus' teaching in the beatitudes shows humanity the type of purity required to live in God's Kingdom. He writes,

They had never received any instruction that touched on this sort of love from either doctors of the Law or the priests. None of the prophets, including John the Baptist, had ever delivered a discourse on love to match this one by Jesus. His principle of love was directly opposed to all casuist commentaries regarding the letter of the Law. The teaching of Jesus demanded of men and women an impossible standard of sincerity in heart and soul, of purity, honesty, and self-denial.

Jesus is God's agent for purity in the sense that He lived a pure life, brought cleansing to the defiled, taught on true purity, and is also a living demonstration of God's own standard of purity. If Jesus can be introduced to the Japanese in this way, highlighting His example of sincerity, love, and purity, the Japanese will have their conscience pricked and perhaps a door of opportunity will be opened to share about the ultimate work of Christ on the Cross.

5.4.3 The Cross in Japanese Purity Language

Falconer (2013: Chapter 3) believes that Jesus' work on the cross and His resurrection is the core teaching of sacred Scripture and the Christian faith. He writes about the drama of the atonement, indicating its rich, deep and multi-faceted beauty. He skillfully outlines the biblical narrative regarding the atonement and argues that penal substitution and *Christus Victor* must be seen as harmonious, instead of two distinct theories. I agree that a biblical theology of the atonement cannot stand without the emphasis on both. Falconer (2013) explains that it is necessary for us to appreciate all aspects of the atonement in a deep and complementary way, without emphasizing one aspect over the other. My concern in this section is how to help the Japanese by presenting aspects of the atonement that are more relatable to their way of thinking. I will start off by giving a few atonement theories developed by Japanese theologians, then attempt to develop a theology of atonement set in Japanese purity language.

5.4.3.1 Japanese Atonement Theories

Uchimura Kanzo had a keen awareness of man's sinful plight, giving a number of definitions for this problem, "Sin is a human being separated from God, standing by himself alone", "If there were a microphone picking up the voices of the trouble of the human heart and we could hear the voices, the sound of the pains would tear the sky and move the ground", "Emptiness has been produced in the human being since he lost sight of God and he cannot fill this emptiness by himself" (Hiroshi, 2013:149). I believe that this sense of personal sin before a holy God led Uchimura Kanzo to the theology of penal substitutionary atonement, "God gets angry because the essence of God is justice. The death of Jesus on the cross is necessary not only to promote repentance to people and to recall the love of God to them but also to show that God himself is righteous" (Hiroshi, 2013:168). Although Uchimura Kanzo appreciated other aspects of the atonement such as Christ restoring harmony between man and God, he did not believe any theory could be complete without the penal substitution element. His views on penal substitution are well in line with the Reformed tradition.

Kazoh Kitamori's, *Theology of the Pain of God* is known as the very first original Japanese theology. He addresses the problem of God loving the objects of his wrath, clarifying the synthesis between His love and wrath. "When we use the term 'pain of God' as the fundamental principle of the Gospel, it points to two different aspects: first, that the pain of God reflects his heart, loving those who should not be loved; second, that the pain of God reflects his heart, allowing his Son to die" (1965:90). According to Kitamori, this tragic suffering of God is something believers must enter into existentially. By loving Christ and participating in His suffering, sinners are saved from the wrath of God. "By the pain of God which overcomes his wrath, our pain, which had hitherto been the reality of the wrath of God, ends in salvation from this wrath. By serving the pain of God which is the glad news of salvation, our pain ends in sharing this salvation" (1965:53). His atonement theory is neither substitutionary nor vicarious but instead participatory. Fujiwara (2012:np) writes how Kitamori strongly affirmed indigenization and he interpreted the Gospel through Japanese concepts such as *higeki* 悲劇 'tragedy', *tsurasa* 辛さ 'pain, bitterness, or sadness', and *tsutsumu* 包む 'embracing or enfolding'. Although his efforts to indigenize the Gospel in Japan must be commended, I do not believe *the*

pain of God to be a comprehensively sound atonement theory as it minimizes the definite, purposeful act of God in redeeming sinners through His Son's death on the cross. Yoder's (1996) selective discernment approach to the Christ and culture problem calls the church to evaluate Kitamori's theology in light of Scripture and to continue the task of contextualizing the Gospel in Japan.

Next, I will attempt to build my own biblical theology of the atonement that incorporates familiar Japanese concepts of purity but still remains well within Evangelical parameters.

5.4.3.2 Restorative Purity Theory

A brief description of this fresh atonement theory is that through the death of Jesus on the cross, the offensive defilement of man has been cleansed, restoring him/her to a status of acceptable brightness and purity. A host of Scriptures can be employed to represent such a narrative; I will add my own emphasis on the appropriate words. "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit*" (Tit 3:5). "For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was *cleansed from his former sins*" (2 Pt 1:9). "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and *the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7). "And such were some of you. *But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Cor 6:11). "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, *purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God*" (Heb 9:14). "Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to *purify for himself* a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Tit 2:13-14). "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow *rivers of living water*'" (John 7:38).

Besides the use of purity terms, these verses share a common theme. It is God who does the definite act of purification, not man. The work of cleansing is done on behalf of the sinner, an act of pure grace on God's part. This cleansing act is also

transforming. It turns believers from dead works to serve the king, it makes believers clean so they can be the people of a holy God and it transforms the heart so that rivers of living water will flow through it. This Scripture in John 7:38 is of particular importance because it shows Christ's ability to reverse the problem He spoke of in Mark 7:23. The work of Christ on the cross enables man's defiled heart to be restored to a pure state.

These ideas on the atonement may very well address the problem of man's sin, but it does not speak to the justice of God or the holiness of God which are key ideas in the atonement. I believe these truths can be addressed with the many verses that speak to the idea of sinners and unclean spirits being *cast out*³⁰ from the presence of God. To cast something out means that it is undesirable, dirty, unfit, impure and out of place. Since God is pure, His nature demands that impurity be cast out. However, the good news of the Gospel is that in God's great mercy He sent His Son as an agent of purity. God performed His own one-time only ritual which enables defiled persons to become clean. Through God's purification act on the Cross, the defiled can be made pure without compromising God's own purity. John 6:37 captures this idea, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out". The Father is pleased with Jesus as His agent of purity; therefore, all who enter into this fountain of grace will never be cast out.

I have already explained that in Japanese *Shinto* belief, death is the ultimate form of *kegare* 穢れ 'impurity'. Ono (1962:np) writes, "Shinto regards death as evil, or a curse..." and, "...the word *kegare*, which is used in reference to death also means 'abnormality' or 'misfortune'". In chapter 3 I have demonstrated that this impurity of death is still a concern in modern Japan. Here lies another opportunity for pricking the heart of the Japanese with a needle that is felt. On the cross, Jesus tasted this ultimate form of impurity on behalf of the defiled. He himself was the one *cast out*, going outside the camp (Heb 13:13), He himself became forsaken by His Holy Father (Matt 27:46), and He became sin in the place of sinners, in order to make them righteous (1 Cor 5:21). Jesus willingly chose to die in a shameful and defiled way, but since He was sent as God's purity agent, instead of death destroying and

³⁰ Numbers 5:2-3, 1 Kings 21:26, Jeremiah 7:15, Matthew 8:16, Mark 1:39, John 12:31, John 15:6, Revelation 19:20, Revelation 20:14

defiling Jesus, He rose from the dead and through this act, sinners can be made whole, just like the leper (Mk 1:41), paralytic (Mk 2:5,11), sick (Mk 2:17) and demon-possessed (Mk 5:5-15). The cross is thus the ultimate fulfilment of God's act of purification. The Japanese no longer need to fear death; Jesus has tasted its defilement and has purified it through His own substitutionary death and victorious resurrection.

Next, I want to explain why Jesus is a suitable agent of purity. In Western theology, the emphasis is on Jesus being a suitable substitute because He kept the law of God. This is, of course, a biblical truth; however, it can be contextualized to fit with the restorative purity theory. Not only does the Bible speak about Jesus keeping the law, but another key biblical teaching is also on Jesus being a lamb without blemish³¹. Because Jesus had no moral flaw, always demonstrated sincerity and brightness of heart, He is a fitting purity agent for our purification. This picture of Jesus as a lamb without blemish is fitting for the Japanese for two cultural reasons: (i) In Japan, white is the colour of purity (Davies, 2016:36) and sin is understood as being stained or impure. The symbol of a white, pure, unblemished lamb is thus fitting for Jesus who lived a sinless life, and this picture would be striking to the Japanese. (ii) The Japanese word for righteous is *gi* 義. It is comprised of two parts, the upper part 羊, is the symbol for lamb. The lower part 我 is the symbol for 'I'. The entire symbol for righteousness can then be understood as "Under the lamb I am righteous" (Lewis, 2013:298). The analogy of Jesus being a pure lamb, sacrificed to cover the sin stains of the defiled is thus biblically acceptable and culturally relevant for the people of Japan.

5.4.4 Purification and *Wa* 和

Promoting harmony is a key idea in Japanese culture and observable in many areas of their social life. (i) The concept of *uchi to soto* 内と外 'inside and outside'³². (ii) *Shinto* festivals and its focus on community building. (iii) Ancestor veneration. (iv)

³¹ Cf. Deut 15:21, Levi 22:20-25, John 1:29, 1 Pet 1:19, Rev 12:11

³² Controls the way a Japanese person relates to those inside and outside their group. It is employed to produce a sense of balance and harmony.

Favouring ambiguity over making direct statements³³. (v) Japanese tea ceremony³⁴. (vi) Strong emphasis on hierarchy and family based on Confucian principles³⁵. The general understanding of harmony based on these examples is that it seeks to keep a tranquil balance and order in all things. This desire for harmony should not be despised since we can find evidence for the value of harmony in the Scripture. This theme of harmony can be traced all the way back to Genesis and be used to further develop a theology of purification.

In Genesis 1-2 we read how God established order at creation. He created cycles, seasons, day and night, animals, birds, and creeping things all according to their kind. The text gives the impression of complete order, peace and tranquillity, a mist going up from the ground (Gen 2:6), a river flowing through the garden (Gen 2:10), these natural scenes were all very good. God also created man in His own image (Gen 1:27). He made them male and female, two creatures who would complement each other in their respective functions, producing offspring by means of a unifying and intimate act. God also established a hierarchy in creation, giving human beings the responsibility to be stewards over His creation (Gen 1:28). However, God still maintained His divine authority as Lord over all that He has made. To demonstrate His loving rule, He gave His creatures only 1 command, not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). After everything was established by God it was declared very good (Gen 1:31). All creation enjoyed a pure existence where everything had an ordered place and existed in complete harmony.

Genesis 3 tells the tragic story of how this beautiful harmony was ruined. The tempter tempted Eve to step out of her place of purity, to challenge the legitimate rule of her Creator. Soon Adam followed her in this rebellion and from there the curse of sin entered their hearts to defile them. As God's appointed stewards, the consequences of their sin spread to every part of creation. It spread to their

³³ Davies (2002:11) writes that ambiguity, *aimai* is essential for Japanese social interactions. People learn to become aware of how others think and feel and ambiguity maintains harmony by working as a lubricant in communication.

³⁴ *Sen no Rikyu* 千利休 was a famous Japanese tea master who taught 4 important spiritual values for the Japanese tea ceremony, *wa* 和 'harmony', *kei* 敬 'respect', *sei* 聖 'purity' and *jaku* 寂 'tranquility' (Nesbitt, 2017:198).

³⁵ From an Asian perspective, harmony is the measure of all things. It is maintained through hierarchy where relationships are built on the inferior person's respect rather the superior's domination (Wu, 2012:82).

descendants, it corrupted their relationships, and to this day all creation groans under the weight of this curse (Rom 8:22). The harmony of life was ruined. Their bright fellowship with God was turned into a dreadful sense of fear and shame as they hid from Him in the garden (Gen 3:8). They died a spiritual (Gen 2:17) and physical (Gen 5:5) death because of their disobedience. The woman would have pain in childbearing (Gen 3:16) and the ground became cursed (Gen 3:17). The complementary relationship between husband and wife became damaged, husbands will now seek to rule their wives instead of leading them in love. Wives will now try to fight against their husband's God-given headship (Gen 3:16). They were driven out of the garden (Gen 3:24). Their descendants demonstrated jealousy that led to murder (Gen 4:8). The rest of the Bible echoes the tragic events of Genesis 3 as all the whole world was thrown into chaos.

But the Creator God did not simply stand by, allowing His good creation to be thrown into chaos forever. Genesis 3:21 gives us a tiny glimpse into the gracious provision of God. He clothes his naked and shamed creatures with the skin of an animal. The very first sacrifice recorded in the Bible. In spite of their sin, God was still gracious and although sin continues to echo throughout man's history, another story began with Genesis 3:21 which would also echo forth. The story of God's provision of a saviour. This saviour has been revealed in the person of Jesus who came to restore the purity of man and creation. He came to restore the harmony that was lost. His harmony restoring works are well described in Colossians 1:19-22,

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

The above Scripture details how Christ reconciles to himself, all things in heaven and on earth. It especially highlights the vertical reconciliation. Man was alienated from God but has been reconciled through the incarnation and death of Jesus who is the agent of God's purifying work.

Ephesians 2:14 is another important Scripture that explains the horizontal aspect of reconciliation. Jesus in His body on the cross broke down the wall of hostility that separated Jew and Gentile, making them one people. Jesus also declared, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Fukuda’s (1993) contextualized church for Japan includes helpful images that speak about the church as a purified and harmonious community. The church is an empowered people with Jesus as the head. He reigns supreme over creation and even evil spirits are subject to His authority. The church is also a living community. The Japanese long for emotional oneness with others who care for them. Fukuda (1993:np) writes, “God has graciously provided for deep-seated human needs, such as the needs for comfort, encouragement, and support”. I believe the Christian church provides a warm community where the Japanese longing for harmony can be satisfied. Fukuda (1993:np) writes, “It might be a first priority for the Japanese churches to rediscover the living realities of communion with Christ and fellowship with believers”. Another image is the Church as a family enterprise (Fukuda, 1993). Swyngedouw (1985) writes that some Japanese companies mobilize the *kami* 神 for their growth and success. Because of Japanese group consciousness, companies show strong unity towards a common goal where everyone forms part of the collective mission. A harmonious cohesion is strived for and expected. Fukuda’s description of the church as a family enterprise can be used in Japan to help promote church unity where everyone is seen as valuable and expected to contribute to the mission. This, of course, harmonizes well with Paul’s teaching on the church as the body of Christ, a living, working organism (1 Cor 12:27).

Sadly, it’s perceived that the current church in Japan is far from the harmonious ideal described in the Bible. Kitagawa (1961) and Kanzo (1886) voiced their concerns over Christianity’s competitive denominationalism and how it was distracting to Japanese who value harmony. Nesbitt (2017:288) writes that the existence of so many different denominations in contemporary Japan confuses the Japanese and is actually a stumbling block to them. My recommendation is that the church in Japan makes relational harmony a priority and look at implementing some of Fukuda’s (1993)

ideas for a contextualized church. I believe, unless the church in Japan can grow to demonstrate true biblical harmony, then the Gospel they seek to proclaim will seem less attractive to Japanese seekers.

It is not likely that all church denominations in Japan will merge into one, but Lewis' (2013:265) analogy could be of use here. A diversity of churches 'that agree on the fundamentals of the faith' should be understood not as an inchoate mess, but as a beautiful stained-glass window that refracts the light of Christ in different beautiful ways. I believe that if churches could overcome denominational barriers and work together in a harmonious way, it will send an impressive message to the Japanese.

Another key concern for Japanese people is their relationship with ancestors. It should be a priority for the church in Japan to answer these concerns in a biblically faithful way. This is something Nesbitt (2007) did in her Japanese theology of the afterlife. Of course, there is no place for ancestor worship in the Christian church. There is an established hierarchy and God as creator and divine authority is the only one deserving of worship. However, Japanese Christians can engage in appropriate ways to remember their ancestors and thank God for them. In section 5.2.3 I have commented on how many Japanese don't accept Christianity because it does not fulfil their desire for harmony with ancestors. Church leaders must be sensitive to these needs and approach the problem with great pastoral care. Nesbitt (2017:202) writes that many Japanese who convert to Christianity feel as if they cut themselves off from their spiritual heritage, bringing estrangement and loneliness. I believe that there are ways to present Christian alternatives for these feelings of estrangement.

Nesbitt (2017:202-203) writes that ancestors can be shown love and respect without being worshipped as long as there is a clear doctrine of man and God. Hebrews 12:1 speaks of a great cloud of witnesses who inspire Christians to run the race with purity and perseverance. Japanese Christians like Uchimura Kanzō, (1861-1930), Inazō Nitobe (1862-1933), and Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960) can provide the same sense of spiritual heritage to the Japanese. It is also important to remind Japanese Christians that their identity is in Christ and family must always be second after their devotion to Him (Lk 14:26). Finally, churches should also be involved in the funeral services of deceased family members, using these opportunities to teach biblical

truth. If no Christian alternatives are presented then I fear there is a strong possibility that Japanese Christians might fall back into dangerous ancestral practices.

We have seen in this section that the purification work of Jesus has a vertical emphasis, restoring harmony between a Holy God and defiled man. Secondly, His purifying work on the cross has a horizontal emphasis too. It restores broken relationships between people, demonstrated in the church. The church is an empowered community who are on mission together. Japanese Christians are called to live out their faith through worship, evangelism and acts of kindness. Sincere love and gratitude must always be shown to God for one's family, whether living or not. The purification acts of Jesus promotes an ideal sense of harmony in the created order.

5.5 Application and Spiritual Significance

In this section, I will try to tie the ideas of purity together into one biblically and contextually coherent story that can be used as a teaching tool in Japan. After this, another teaching tool by means of catechism will be offered as a summary of the theological study thus far. I believe this will have spiritual significance for Japanese Christians because it can help them appreciate that, (i) the Bible speaks meaningfully into their own cultural-religio milieu, (ii) their appreciation for purity and cleanliness does not need to be undermined, (iii) their cultural-religio milieu of *Shinto* purification rites can remind them of their own, more superior purification through Jesus, (iv) since their purification through Jesus is far superior, it gives motivation for evangelism and rejection of syncretism.

5.5.1 A Biblical and Contextualized Narrative for Restorative Purity

Mann (2015:47) writes that our atonement narrative must be persuasive and speak meaningfully and sufficiently into a specific culture. The desire must be to speak of the atonement in such a way that it becomes the person's own narrative of salvation. Narrative can be a powerful tool if it fuses with a person's conscious, creating a sensible story about the world and their place in it. Narrative is employed to explain both the joys and troubles of life in a coherent way. In this section, I want to present a narrative for the atonement in purification language that can help the Japanese appreciate the purifying work of Jesus and experience its benefits.

Zechariah 13:1-9 is a helpful start to such a narrative as it speaks of God's provision for cleansing. God revealed to His prophet that in the Messianic age a fountain would be opened for His people. All the guilty and impure could come to this fountain and find cleansing and forgiveness (Zech 13:1). At this time God will also remove the practice of idolatry from His people. The idols so popular in ancient Israel as well as in modern Japan will no longer be remembered after God's cleansing fountain brings restoration and purification. The spirit of uncleanness will be removed at the coming of God's fountain (Zech 13:2). Any spirit seeking to imprison, hurt or defile God's people will no longer have the power to do so. For this reason, the Japanese should not fear what unclean spirits can do to them. They must know that this fountain is far more potent than anything they have ever experienced. This fountain cleansed the sin of David the adulterer and murderer (Ps 51). It washed the wrongs of King Manasseh who practised idolatry and witchcraft (2 Chro 33). It cleansed the chief of sinners who called himself a violent persecutor (1 Tim 1:15). This fountain is big enough and strong enough for the Japanese.

Not only will this fountain bring cleansing, but it will also come to reveal the truth in sincerity (Zech 13:3). It will not allow itself to be contaminated with other poisonous fountains. The church in Japan must only drink from God's fountain, and not be defiled by drinking elsewhere. They must also know that only God is able to open this fountain and the way He opens it is through the death of His Shepherd Jesus (Zech 13:7, John 10:11). This is the shepherd who taught that defilement comes from the heart (Mk 7:23), but anyone who believes will experience rivers of living water flowing out from their hearts (John 7:38). God's fountain of cleansing should never be abandoned to the realm of knowledge alone. The Japanese concept of *dō* 道 is important. This virtue of right action helps to enhance the Christian understanding of salvation. Believers must not only know *about* the fountain, but they must also drink, experience and live under its cleansing power (John 6:56). The purification of Jesus is not only a notion for the mind but an experience that transforms and governs the totality of life. Finally, the suffering of God's Shepherd also acts as an example for the Japanese Christian to follow. God will purify His own through trials and tribulation (Zech 13:8). Pain is not removed when following the Saviour, but He promises, "They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I

will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God'" (Zech 13:9). Although the church in Japan may be small, they are still part of God's new covenant people and can rejoice that they have been washed by His fountain of grace.

This biblical image of Christ as a cleansing fountain and the weaving together of both biblical passages and Japanese cultural ideas demonstrate true hope for the Japanese. It shows that there are many biblical, culturally appropriate and creative ways to use narrative that captures and transforms the Japanese heart. Lewis (2013:282) gives a fitting reminder,

Thus, in order to effectively communicate the Good News of God's message to all human beings everywhere, it must be done in each culture's own thought patterns and symbols... History has shown that when presented in primarily Western thought patterns and concepts, relatively few Japanese have understood the message properly and accepted it as God's communication to them.

God has the power to cleanse and restore the Japanese, if only they would come to the fountain of everlasting life. May the words of Toyohiko Kagawa sound forth like a roaring pure river in the *kokoro* 心 'heart' of every Japanese,

O Japan! Eternal love keeps calling! Petulant Japan! Isolated Japan! Abandon your sulky mood and kneel before the God of infinite love. In your effort to rid yourself of sin and to sanctify your soul you, too, must go by the way of the cross. Christ opened a way of salvation even for Japan. Yes! Though the whole wide world forsakes her, Christ, the revealer of eternal love, will never cease to woo Japan until he wins (1934:5).

5.5.2 Contextualized Catechisms for the Japanese Church

In this discussion, I will present a concise answer to the problem of sin and the atonement in the form of a catechism, based on my theology of purification, in and for the people of Japan. This is a form of application, addressing the problem of how to understand sin and the atonement in a more contextualized way. Catechisms are short answers to key questions and I believe it can be useful for explaining the Gospel as God's purifying act for the Japanese. Such a catechism might look something as follows:

Question 1: What is sin?

Answer: Sin is thinking impure thoughts or performing impure deeds that are self-serving and contrary to the pure character of God shown in Christ.

Question 2: Where does sin originate?

Answer: Sin originates in the impure heart of the first man and from there it has spread like a spiritual sickness, making every heart impure.

Question 3: Why is sin a problem for us?

Answer: Sin is a problem for us because it separates us from God who is pure, clean and bright.

Question 4: Why is sin a problem for God?

Answer: Sin is a problem for God because although He loves humanity, His purity demands that they be banned from His presence.

Question 5: How does sin produce shame?

Answer: Sin breaks down bright, loving and happy relationships. This causes God's creatures to hide their true self before God and others, resulting in shame.

Question 6: Can sin be remedied through ritual?

Answer: No external ritual is enough to cleanse sin since it is an internal condition.

Question 7: Why is ritual not enough?

Answer: Ritual is not enough because no external form of cleansing can reach inward to expel the impurity in man's heart. An internal impurity requires an internal cleansing.

Question 8: What is the final result of sin?

Answer: All impurity must be disposed of, therefore, after death, all sinners are eternally expelled from the pure presence of God.

Question 9: Is God unkind in banishing sinners from His presence?

Answer: No, God must banish all impure beings in order to uphold and protect the purity of His own character.

Question 10: Is there any hope for the sinner?

Answer: Yes, in love God sent His Son Jesus as an agent of purity to restore man's heart to a pure and bright state.

Question 11: How did Jesus achieve this purity for us?

Answer: He absorbed our uncleanness by experiencing the defilement of sin and death in our place.

Question 12: How can we have assurance that the work of Jesus is enough?

Answer: Jesus was not defeated by defilement and death; He was raised through the resurrection, proving His victory over sin and His ability to rescue and purify.

Question 13: What does Jesus call me to do?

Answer: Firstly, confess your impurity before Him, trusting in His complete and sufficient act of purification. Secondly, submit to the life-giving Holy Spirit who will guide and empower you towards a life of complete purity and sincerity.

Question 14: Do I still need other rituals or gods for protection?

Answer: No, God's fountain of cleansing is all-sufficient for salvation and eternal protection.

Question 15: Why is this fountain of cleansing sufficient and perpetual?

Answer: It is sufficient and perpetual because the source of the fountain's purity is the sinless Son of God who imputes His own purity upon believers and as high priest who defeated death He always lives to intercede and sanctify believers.

Question 16: What is the reward for serving God in purity of heart?

Answer: Eternity with Him in His kingdom where there is no presence of sin, suffering and impurity.

Just as Western theology developed catechisms for articulating their theology, it is necessary to do the same for the Japanese context. I believe these catechisms answer questions that are more pertinent to the Japanese and help to further

develop their narrative of salvation. They can be used as a contextualized tool for the Japanese church.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to present a contextualized theology of purification and its potential spiritual significance for the Japanese church. To accomplish this, I sought to address the problem of Christ and culture within the context of Japan. A brief history of contextualization in Japan was looked at, showing the problem regarding a lack in faithful cultural contextualization by Western missionaries to Japan, and the danger of Japanese syncretism often created by the indigenous Christian movements' attempt towards contextualization. I evaluated the views of Niebuhr and Yoder and believe that the selective discernment approach is the most acceptable for Japan. This approach provided the necessary guidance towards developing my own restorative purity theory. I endeavoured to present this particular theory as both Bible-based and culturally relevant for the Japanese who think of sin in terms of defilement and salvation in terms of purity. The chapter ended with two contextualized tools that could have spiritual significance for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christians who live in a cultural-religio milieu of *Shinto* purification rites. My restorative purity theory is by no means better than other theories, nor should it be taught as the only legitimate theory. It is only a modest attempt by a Westerner interested in Japan, to present the timeless message of God's hope through Jesus in a way that the Japanese might find easier to understand. I believe the church in Japan should continue in faithful, courageous and creative contextualization, always believing that one can be 100% Japanese and 100% Christian.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Review of Research

6.1.1 Objectives

The main objective of this study has been to explore the concept of sin as impurity from a biblical and Japanese *Shinto* perspective, leading into a theology of purification in and for the people of Japan. The objective had four outcomes: (i) To exegete Mark 7:14-23 as one key passage that explains sin as internal impurity. (ii) To study modern *Shinto* tradition and why it understands sin as impurity, giving insight into *Shinto* purification rites and how they contribute to Japanese life. (iii) To compare the concept of sin as impurity in Near Eastern culture with that of modern Japanese *Shinto* tradition. (iv) To develop a contextualized theology of purification that is relevant for Evangelical Japanese Christianity.

6.1.2 Design and Methodology

The research was developed by means of a literary investigation which led to the construction of a contextualized theology. The literary investigation required a study of various literary works in 3 key areas: (i) The biblical narrative, especially Mark's Gospel. (ii) Works on Japanese culture and the *Shinto* religion. (iii) Works on Old Testament law. The findings of this literary research were conceptually applied towards a contextualised theology of purification.

The research was divided into 4 main steps: (i) An exegetical study of Mark 7:14-23. that utilized a number of tools namely, word study, background study and textual analysis which helped discover the theological meaning. This resulted in the identification of a number of findings and principles for purification. (ii) A literary

examination of the contemporary Japanese understanding of sin as impurity. This was achieved by employing works on Japanese culture and the *Shinto* religion into dialogical study. (iii) Comparing the Ancient Near Eastern religio-cultural milieu with that of contemporary *Shinto* in light of their respective purification rites. A comparative method was employed to highlight any similarities and differences between the cultural-religio milieu of the Old Testament people and that of modern *Shinto*. The focus of this comparative study was on sin as impurity. Other theological and cultural themes were not explored because the emphasis of this paper was to follow the theme of sin as impurity as one biblical narrative that can be applied to a theology of purification for the people of Japan. (iv) Critical examination was used to classify previous contextualization efforts by Western missionaries and indigenous movements. This was to demonstrate the need for ongoing contextualization in Japan and to identify the best approach for Japan. Spiritual implications of the study were recognized and conceptually developed it into a contextualized theology of purification.

6.2 Conclusions of Research Findings

6.2.1 An Exegetical Study of Mark 7:14-23

Mark 7:14-23 was studied because it demonstrates the essence of sin as internal impurity. The Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking an established purity rule 'hand washing before meals', but in Jesus' response, He corrected the common misunderstanding of impurity being an external problem. The Pharisees believed purity was achieved through protecting their hearts from external defilement. However, the study proved that according to Jesus, sin is an internal condition and nothing outside a person brings defilement. The controversy began with the issue of hand washing but ended with a universal principle, namely, the source of defilement being the heart. Not only was this teaching pertinent to 1st century Jews, but it is also relevant to the Japanese *Shinto* who likewise view sin in terms of external defilement. This makes the Mark 7:14-23 passage very important in developing a theology of purification for the Japanese who have a high regard for purity similar to the Pharisees. The discoveries made in Mark 7:14-23 have contributed to a theology of purification in and for the people of Japan.

It was also discovered that Mark's portrayal of Jesus as God's purity agent is pertinent to the Japanese and useful for developing such a theology of purification. Jesus was reforming the common misconceptions about impurity and encouraged an authentic inner experience of purification. This inner purity happens apart from external purity rituals as demonstrated in the faith of the Gentile woman who receives salvation. The reality of salvation as 'inner experience' apart from external ritual is vitally important to Japanese Christians who are constantly tempted by the many external purity rituals within their *Shinto* cultural milieu. The complete purifying work of Christ on the cross can bring a unique sense of security and peace to the Japanese. These ideas have been developed further in chapter 5.

6.2.2 Sin as Impurity in Modern *Shinto* Religious Tradition

I have carefully examined the *Shinto* understanding of sin in contemporary Japan's cultural-religio setting. A study was done on the key elements of *Shinto* and how they relate to the Japanese notion of sin as impurity. This study has demonstrated how purity is a prominent concern for *Shinto* and these ideas are still observable in many modern Japanese beliefs, practices, and customs. The reality of *Shinto's* value for purity and the Japanese concern over removing any impurity has given rise to the many external rituals still observed in modern Japan. These ideas prove the necessity for a contextualized theology of purification.

I have also demonstrated the differences between the Western view of sin and that of Japanese *Shinto*, indicating that the traditional teaching of sin as lawbreaking is not entirely incompatible with Japanese thinking. *Shinto* understands sin mainly as, *kegare* 穢れ 'external pollution' or as breaking *wa* 和 'harmony'. These differences between Western and Japanese views on sin motivate the need to develop a theology of purification that is more compatible with Japanese thought.

6.2.3 A Comparative Study of Impurity in Ancient Near Eastern Religion and Modern *Shinto* Tradition

In this chapter, I did a comparative study between Ancient Near Eastern religion and modern *Shinto* tradition. I demonstrated how purity as a regulative principle is present in both *Shinto* and Ancient Near Eastern culture and is used to distinguish

what is clean and in place from what is unclean and out of place. This is one way in which a society creates order and spiritual meaning. A close connection between Hebrew and *Shinto* notions of purity and impurity was observed. Death, disease, discharge, diet and depravity are all potential causes of pollution which have to be addressed through the appropriate ritual. I have also shown a connection between Hebrew and *Shinto* with regards to their respective purity maps – purity and people, purity and places, purity and times. Finally, I outlined the theological significance of the findings in this chapter and demonstrated how a theology of purification can be developed from Scripture.

6.2.4 Theology of Purification and its Spiritual Significance for Contemporary Evangelical Japanese Christianity

In this chapter, I began to develop a theology of purification that would be useful for Evangelical Japanese Christianity. I demonstrated the need for ongoing contextualization in Japan and showed areas where Western Christian teaching differs from Japanese thought. I recognized the obstacles for the Japanese in understanding the Christian teaching of sin and the atonement. Next, I engaged with the problem of Christ and culture, thinking through the best method to use for contextualization in Japan. Western missionaries have tended to under-contextualize whereas indigenous Japanese movements have tended to over-contextualize and in so doing diverted away from Orthodox Evangelical Christianity. Yoder's selective discernment approach was selected as the most appropriate method of contextualization.

I also presented my theology of purification through a biblical understanding of the key concepts – sin as internal defilement, Jesus as God's purity agent, the cross in purity language, ending with purification and *wa* 和. I believe these concepts can be utilized for ministry in Japan and could provide a more appropriate way for the Japanese to understand sin and the atonement. The chapter ended with 2 contextualized tools to use for the purpose of presenting the Gospel in purity language. (i) A biblical and contextualized narrative for restorative purity. (ii) Contextualized catechisms for the Japanese church. I believe that presenting the

Gospel in purity narrative as I have done, will speak more meaningfully to a culture like Japan's.

6.3 Contribution of this Research

This thesis has made a contribution in Eastern soteriology, demonstrating the value of a culturally appropriate and biblically faithful theology of purification. My studies contribute towards the overall efforts to contextualize the Gospel in Japan. My work on comparing Ancient Near Eastern culture with that of modern *Shinto* can also contribute towards comparative religion. I believe the similarities are significant and give a fresh perspective to Jesus' words in Mark 7:14-23 about nothing outside a person's heart bringing defilement.

Finally, Western theology has not made an indelible impact on the people of Japan. Part of this is because many Western values and ideas are incompatible with that of the Japanese. My research has made a contribution towards understanding this better. Furthermore, I believe my study shows that the Bible does have something to say about the Japanese longing for purity and I hope my theology of purification can contribute towards the ongoing efforts to grow the Japanese church. Perhaps my research can open new trends in the study of the atonement in light of my restorative purity theory.

6.4 Recommended Topics for Further Theological Research

- (i) Purity and harmony displayed in the Christian ordinances: Baptism and Lord's supper.
- (ii) *Musubi* 産霊 and sanctification: A Contextualized theology of the work of the Spirit.
- (iii) Foundational elements of Japanese Buddhism and its conflict with Christian soteriology.
- (iv) The problem of Matthew 10:34-39 in light of the Japanese value for relational harmony.

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