

Preface

This book was born from the realization that few people have a precise sense of what purity is. It is of course discussed by scholars of the Hebrew Bible, of the Greek and Roman worlds, and of various religions: most of the purity literature comes from those stables. Yet whilst their scholarly debates continue, its place in contemporary culture and Christian theology has become marginal. There is nothing necessarily wrong with this situation but it would be interesting to know how it came about and whether it is an achievement or regression (socially, morally, politically, theologically) or both. To this end the present volume seeks to bring together both biblical and theological essays. No pretension to exhaustive treatment is made; we readily acknowledge the lack of perspectives from other theological angles, religions and parts of the ancient world. Nevertheless we think an accessible yet scholarly serious investigation into purity is worthwhile to further our knowledge of our history and ourselves.

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