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ABSTRACT

FOOTWASHING AS A MEANS OF RECONCILIATION
WITH GOD AND MAN

by

Ronald G. Schmidt

Adviser: Robert M. Johnston

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: FOOTWASHING AS A MEANS OF RECONCILIATION WITH GOD AND
MAN

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Name and degree of faculty adviser: Robert M. Johnston,
Ph.D.

Date completed: June 1996

Problem

Presently there are seven major interpretations of the footwashing recorded in the Gospel of John 13. This study attempts to discover the true meaning and function of footwashing that is in harmony with Johannine theology, Christology, and Sola Scriptura.

Method

This study was conducted in the following fashion. It traced the function and meaning of footwashing in both secular and sacred history throughout the Bible, as well as Jewish and Greco-Roman history. In particular it focuses on the setting of footwashing in the Gospel of John, and the

practice and meaning of footwashing in Church history, with emphasis on the early centuries.

Result

Footwashing is a very important concept in the Gospel of John, since that Gospel focuses uniquely on cleansing and purification from sin through faith in Jesus Christ.

Water plays a significant role in Johannine thought and is intricately connected to the concept of blood and Spirit, both existentially and eschatologically.

Philologically, footwashing is tied to baptism as a means of cleansing the believer from post-baptismal sins, while chronologically it is tied to the Lord's Supper, a memorial of Christ's substitutionary death. Therefore footwashing has an important soteriological function in the believer's life as well as congregational life.

It is a sign and symbol of cleansing that is central in Scripture, reaching back to the Old Testament, particularly the sanctuary service where blood and water were the two great cleansing agents.

Conclusion

Footwashing is a means of reconciliation with God and man. It is a constant reminder that man is in great need of continued cleansing from post-baptismal sins and stands in constant need of God's love and grace, which issue forth in forgiveness, justification, and sanctification. At the same time it is a reminder to treat our fellow believer the way

Jesus treats us; to forgive and be reconciled so that a community of love, unity, and fellowship will be created and maintained that experiences and reflects the love of God.

Thus, footwashing correctly understood and practiced will be the means to accomplish and/or greatly contribute to bring about that kind of community.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

FOOTWASHING AS A MEANS OF RECONCILIATION
WITH GOD AND MAN

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Ronald G. Schmidt

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The footwashing recorded in the Gospel of John, chap. 13, has evoked vigorous discussion over the last two millennia in the Church by both scholars and laymen.

There are several reasons why footwashing has caught the attention of so many commentators. First, the Gospel of John is the only Gospel that contains an account of Christ washing His disciples' feet. Second, the footwashing in John is chronicled in the place where the Synoptics give witness to the institution of the Lord's Supper. Third, the footwashing is recorded by John in a pivotal location. It is universally recognized that this Gospel has two clearly defined divisions. The first focuses on the public ministry of Christ and is confined to chaps. 1 through 12; it distinctly comes to a conclusion in vs. 36 where John says: "These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them."

The second division of the Gospel of John begins with chap. 13 and concentrates on Christ's exclusive ministry to His disciples. The intensity and drama of these chapters (13-18) are heightened by the impending death of Jesus on

cross. This theme, the crucifixion of the Son of God, referred to in John as "His hour," is immediately introduced in 13:1 in connection with the Passover and immediately followed by footwashing.

The footwashing comprises the first action of Christ in this division and His first recorded words to His disciples (the first words of Christ in this division are spoken to Peter in their dialogue concerning the washing of Peter's feet; however, many believe these words are in fact addressed to all disciples and, hence, readers of this Gospel), commanding them to wash each other's feet, following the example of Jesus. Fourth, John connects the footwashing intrinsically with the Passover meal and "the hour" of Christ. Fifth, the footwashing separates the disciples into two groups: the "clean" and the "not clean." Sixth, the soteriological importance of the footwashing is expressed in the words of Jesus to Peter when He says: "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (13:8b). Seventh, the key text in this passage, vs. 10, records Christ's words, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean," have obvious implications. What is meant by "bathed" and what is the ultimate meaning and purpose of the washing of feet? Especially in the light of Christ's words to Peter that unless Peter is washed by Christ (Peter's feet are washed?), he has no inheritance (μερος, part) in His kingdom. Seventh, vs. 10 has a short

and long edition. The short edition does not include the words, "needs only to wash his feet." Obviously, this is a crucial point that needs to be resolved, since Jesus has just washed the disciples' feet, and in doing so, has pronounced the importance of washing feet to Peter and then commanded the disciples to wash each other's feet (13:14-15).

If the shorter text is accepted, the interpretation of footwashing will apparently be different than if the longer text is judged to be authentic. Consequently, in order for anyone to correctly understand and interpret footwashing, one needs to determine which text has the best textual support and results in an interpretation of the footwashing that supports and fits the Johannine theology in this Gospel. This question is very important, since the author placed the account of the footwashing purposely in such a strategic location, breaking with the earlier tradition of the Synoptics. Eighth, besides the impact on the theology of John, the footwashing has far-reaching Christological implications. Depending on the interpretation of footwashing, the student will have a certain, perhaps different, understanding of Christ's ministry for His disciples (the Church), as well as the disciples' ministry for one another.

The discussion of footwashing on the above points,¹ during the Christian era, has given birth to eleven different interpretations,² of which seven are most common.³ Here is a short list of these most common interpretations:

1. The footwashing is an example of humility.
2. It is a symbol of the Eucharist.
3. It is a symbol of baptism.
4. It is a symbol of forgiveness of sins and/or cleansing.
5. It is a sacrament separate from baptism and the Eucharist.
6. It is a soteriological sign.
7. It is a polemic.⁴

¹The points listed above are my own and are not meant to be exhaustive. Perhaps other points could be added, dependent upon the perspective of the student.

²The most complete source on the subject of the history of the interpretation of footwashing has been accomplished by two German scholars: George Richter, Die Fusswaschung im Johannesevangelium (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet Verlag, 1967); Wolfram Lohse, "Die Fusswaschung (Joh 13,1-20): Eine Geschichte ihrer Deutung" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität zu Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1967). Another valuable study that ought to be included is that of N. M. Haring, "Historical Notes on the Interpretation of John 13:10." The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Oct. 13, 1951, 355-380. Although this study focuses only on John 13:10, it has made a great contribution to the understanding of the medieval interpretation of this verse and the footwashing.

³The most complete list with excellent summaries is found in: John C. Thomas, Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community (Worcester, England: Billings & Sons, 1991), 11-17.

⁴Ibid.

This study attempts to set forth an interpretation of footwashing, and in the process, makes an effort to answer many of the questions mentioned in the points above.

I strive to accomplish this in the following manner: I trace footwashing in both secular and sacred history in the ancient world. Important questions to ask are: What can the Old Testament tell us concerning footwashing? What was the understanding of footwashing in the contemporary setting when Jesus washed His disciples' feet? What did contemporaries write about this practice, especially in a religious context?

Obviously, an exegesis of John 13 is mandatory, and an inquisition of how this passage fits into and contributes to John's theology is of special importance. Also, did the Early Church practice footwashing and what did it have to say concerning this practice? Is it a sacrament and/or ordinance in harmony with biblical principles? Lastly, when did Seventh-day Adventists begin practicing footwashing and why? Was it immediately accepted as an ordinance?

CHAPTER TWO

THE FOOTWASHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, JUDAISM, GRECO-ROMAN CULTURE, AND ISLAM

For the study and understanding of footwashing recorded in the Gospel of John, it is imperative to investigate the role of footwashing before, during, and after the time Jesus performed this service for His disciples. While the practice in the Old Testament (OT) is of special importance to this study, the understanding of this practice in later Judaism, Greco-Roman culture, and in Islam is very enlightening.

Although the footwashing holds such a prominent position in Johannine theology, very limited historical research has been conducted by commentators as to the role footwashing occupies in the Jewish and Greco-Roman world.¹

¹"Exegetes of John 13 have given surprisingly little attention to Jewish and Greco-Roman texts which speak of footwashing. . . . The majority of commentators either assume the significance of footwashing without documentation or supply one or two examples of its function. Ibid., 26. Hultgren agrees with the lack of historical research by scholars on the footwashing; he observes: "None [prior interpretations] is informed by a study of the general significance of footwashing in the ancient world prior to exploring the question of meaning within the Johannine context." Arland J. Hultgren, "The Johannine Footwashing as Symbol of Eschatological Hospitality," New Testament Studies, 28 Oct. 1982, 539-546.

A custom so deeply entrenched in the culture of the ancient world and its rich heritage obviously needs to be considered in order to gain clearer insight into the act of Jesus and His instructions concerning this rite. This is especially true since symbolism and typology play such an important part in the Judeo-Christian religion.

Footwashing in the Old Testament

This examination of footwashing in the Old Testament is divided into two main sections. The first explores footwashing as a social practice of hospitality, hygiene, and personal comfort, while the second part probes into the cultic setting of this custom.

The foot itself, because of its position on the human body and its constant contact with dust, dirt, and other foreign matter, was viewed as the least esteemed part of a person. Consequently, many concepts become associated with feet.

To be *under* someone's foot (feet) meant to be conquered or subjected. "God will trample the Assyrians" (presumably under His feet), Isa 14:25. The saved will "tread down the wicked," and they will be "ashes under the soles of your feet," showing the final and irreversible victory of God's people over the unrighteous (Mal 4:3). Ancient monuments picture the victors treading down their

conquered enemies.¹

Joshua, after defeating the five kings, had his commanders place their feet upon the necks of these kings before the assembled Israelites, presumably to show their complete defeat.

And it came about when they brought these kings out to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came near and put their feet on their necks. (Josh 10:24)²

In the verse Jesus referred to (Ps 110:1), to confound the Jewish leaders (Matt 22:43-46) the LORD (Yahweh) says to David's Lord (Adonai) that He will make His enemies "a footstool," assuring the ultimate victory of God's Anointed over His enemies.

A learner sits at his teacher's feet (Luke 10:39), yet no Christian leader (or any other believer) should ask an underprivileged person to sit at his feet (Jas 2:3), showing discrimination.

On the other hand, out of love or gratitude you may embrace someone's feet, as Mary did to the resurrected Christ (John 20:17), or fall at someone's feet, out of respect and submission, as Jairus did in order to entreat

¹"Egyptian monuments picture conquerors treading on the vanquished as a method of insult." R. L. Mixter, "Foot," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (1975), 2:588.

²All quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

the Master to heal his daughter (Mark 5:22).

Since the feet were consistently exposed to weather and terrain, and were for the most part unprotected, except for sandals (usually consisting of a sole held in place by leather straps),¹ it made footwashing almost a necessity, especially since the poor often walked short distances barefoot.² Aside from the possible scrapes and wounds received as a person travelled or worked in the field, there were also the insects and infections that were a constant irritant. Apart from making the feet unsightly, they required a lot of care. For the above reasons and the sheer comfort of washing one's feet, footwashing became an important part of ancient hospitality. Travelling in the dust and heat, with injured, aching feet, the traveller looked forward to having a refreshing foot bath at the end of the journey, often followed by anointing with oil or some other ointment.

Footwashing as a Social Custom

Gen 18:4; 19:2

The first mention of footwashing in the Bible is found in Gen 18:4, where Abraham says: "Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves

¹"Sandals . . . consisted of soles of wood, leather or some fibrous material kept in position by leather thongs." W. J. Cameron, "Sandal," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (1975), 5:268.

²Ibid.

under the tree."

The very first deed of hospitality was to offer water to a guest to wash his feet. While the Hebrew text suggests that the travellers washed their own feet, the LXX says:

"Let water now be brought, and let them wash your feet (καὶ νιψάτωσαν τοὺς ποδας ὑμῶν),¹ with all likelihood, referring to the servants who fetched the water. We also note that the feet were washed before the meal was eaten.

Two of the three travellers (angels) enter Sodom in the evening and are spotted by Lot who sat in the gate. Lot immediately stepped forward and offered them hospitality in his home. "And he said, 'Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way'" (Gen 19:2).

Here the Hebrew and Greek text agree that the guests washed their own feet. In both cases it was a fine gesture of hospitality extended to strangers. Let us note again that "wash" is νιψασθε, as it is in every text where it refers to washing of feet, or feet and hands in the Old Testament.²

¹All Greek quotations of the Old Testament are taken from the following version, unless designated otherwise. Charles Lee Brenton, The Septuagint Version with Apocrypha (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978).

²In each case the word used in the LXX is a form from the root νιπτειν.

Gen 24:32; 43:24

We encounter the next footwashing in Gen 24:32, where Abraham's servant Eliezer, after meeting Rebekah, is invited to lodge in her brother Laban's home; he is offered fodder for his camels and water to wash his feet and those of his entourage. "So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him."

The last passage in Genesis that mentions the washing of feet is in connection with Joseph's brothers who are invited to stay at his house. "Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder" (Gen 43:24).

Here again the LXX disagrees with the Hebrew text and suggests that the steward washed their feet (καὶ ἠνεγκεν ὕδωρ νιψαὶ τοὺς ποδὰς αὐτῶν). Again the washing (νιψαὶ) of feet precedes the meal.

Judg 19:21

One of the more unusual verses of Scripture, dealing with the Levi and his concubine, recorded in Judg 19:21, also includes the washing of feet as a sign of hospitality. "So he took him into his house and gave the donkeys fodder, and they washed their feet and ate and drank."

The washing (ἐννιψάντο) of feet here is simply a

gesture of hospitality, and as usual, precedes the meal.

1 Sam 25:41-42

This instance of footwashing is in some ways unique. This passage contains the narration of David's encounter with Abigail. After her husband, Nabal, insults David's men, David in anger leads his troops to take revenge on this ungrateful character; however, before David can reach Nabal's place, Abigail intercepts David and his men.

After apologizing to David for her husband's foolish response and bringing the much-needed provisions, David has a change of heart and returns to his camp. When Nabal dies, David sends word by way of his servants, and proposes to take Abigail as his wife.

Her response is one of grateful humility as she washes (וַיַּשְׁׁאֵל) the feet of David's messengers. "And she arose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, 'Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord's servants'" (1 Sam 25:41).

Aside from the variant readings in the LXX, this is the first instance in Scripture where an individual washes someone else's feet. However, even if the variant readings should be preferred, assuming that Abraham asked his servants to wash his guests' feet, and assuming that Joseph would have given specific instructions to his steward concerning the steward's behavior towards his brothers, this

would still signify the first instance where an individual voluntarily washed someone else's feet. In both Testaments it was a woman who offered to wash the feet of someone else.¹

The question of why Abigail washed David's servants' feet on this occasion must be of interest. Scripture does not indicate that the servants entered Abigail's dwelling or partook of any food, rather it suggests that she immediately, after washing their feet, mounted her donkey and joined David's men and accompanied them, along with her five maidens, to meet David and become his wife. "Then Abigail quickly arose, and rode on a donkey, with her five maidens who attended her, and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife" (1 Sam 25:42).

Until this point, Scripture informs us, the footwashing was an act of hospitality and comfort, and was practiced before partaking of a meal. Here on the other hand, it may signify Abigail's total submission to David, not only as his future wife, but also as his subject. And since footwashing was reserved for foreign slaves, and therefore signified the most menial task in that culture, it emphasized Abigail's willingness to be the least of servants in David's household and kingdom, although she had just been selected to be his queen.

By washing David's servants' feet, Abigail, in her

¹John 12:1-8; Luke 7:36-39.

act of service and humility, offered this service to David himself, as his men were, so to speak, an extension of him. In Abigail's case, it is a self-imposed service where she stoops to the level of a slave (ἡ δούλη). It may be that we see her anticipate the spirit of service Jesus mentioned when He said:

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors'. But not so with you, but, let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. (Luke 22:25-27)

As his future subject, she sees in David the Lord's anointed, for she has already expressed her faith that God will install David as the next king of Israel. "And it shall come about when the LORD shall do for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and shall anoint you ruler over Israel" (1 Sam 25:30).

And now her faith takes on form as she in deed anticipates his rulership and signifies her total submission to the Lord's anointed.

Here, in the Old Testament, a woman washes the feet of the future king in humility and gratitude for being selected as his future queen, just before he ascends his throne.

In the New Testament, a woman washes Christ's feet before His death, which precedes His ascension to the throne

(John 13:1). She also, out of gratitude and love, in utter humility, ministered as a servant of servants (John 12:3-8), anticipating Christ's instruction to His disciples.

Many scholars rightly feel that the woman washing Jesus' "feet with her tears, [and] kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume" (Luke 7:38) is none other than Mary, and that Luke and John are recording the same event but place it in different circumstances for theological reasons.

However, it may simply be that Abigail responded to David's solicitation to become his wife with a gesture of love and submission.¹

2 Sam 11:8, 11

We find another intriguing instance of footwashing mentioned in the encounter of David and Uriah. By this time David has become king of Israel.

After having a sexual encounter with Bathsheba, which causes her to conceive, David summons her husband from the battle field. Eager to have Uriah return to his home and hoping he will seize the opportunity to sleep with his wife, and thereby, hoping to cover up Bathsheba's unfaithfulness as well as David's sin, the king says to Uriah: 'Go down to your house, and wash your feet.' And Uriah went out of the king's house, and a present from the king was sent out after

¹As was the case with Asenath when she washed Joseph's feet, see p. 42, below.

him" (2 Sam 11:8).

A straightforward reading would render the meaning that David simply commanded (καταβηθι) Uriah to go home; "refresh yourself after the journey, relax, and take your ease."¹

Nevertheless, there are a number of scholars who see deeper significance in the footwashing commanded to Uriah. A

A number of commentators discern here a reference to the required ritual purification associated with Holy War (cf. Num 31:16-24; Deut 23:10-15; 1 Sam 21:5). One of the requirements was to abstain from sexual intercourse with women.² This principle is broadly accepted; from which in turn, two main theories emerge. The first theory is that "wash your feet" in this case is a euphemism, giving permission to Uriah to copulate with Bathsheba, thus resulting in Uriah losing his ritual purity.³

The other theory advocates, that "washing your feet" is a "ceremony" that makes you ritually pure. Swetnam comments:

The text from 2 Kings says that David told Uriah the Hittite to 'go to your house and wash your feet

¹"2 Samuel," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1972), 2:647.

²Gerhard von Rad, Der Heilige Krieg in Alten Israel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 7.

³U. Simon, "The Poor Man's Ewe-Lamb: An Example of a Juridical Parable," Biblica 48 (1967): 214.

(καταβηθῇ εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου, καὶ νιψαὶ τοὺς πόδας σου)'. The context makes it clear that what David wants is that Uriah have intercourse with his wife, Bathsheba, so that the child she had conceived by David might be attributed to Uriah. The exact function of the phrase 'wash your feet' is not perfectly clear. But one defensible interpretation is that the phrase refers to the ceremony of ritual purification which the Israelite warrior went through before engaging in a Holy War. As such a warrior, Uriah would be in a state of ritual purity requiring abstention from sexual relations with his wife. David, as king and leader of the Holy War, tells him to go to his house and then to repeat the ceremony, i.e., to go to his home, put himself out of the state of ritual purity by having intercourse with his wife, and then perform the ceremony whereby he regains the ritual purity.¹

However, Swetnam admits that this is pure conjecture on his part and there are no existing references to support his theory. In spite of missing support he nevertheless feels it is reasonable:

This interpretation is speculative, for there is no clear proof elsewhere that the washing of the feet was a ceremony which initiated the ritual purity required by an Israelite warrior. But there is no intrinsic reason why speculation cannot be true.²

We cannot be sure of how the washing of feet related to the ritual purification of an Israelite warrior. However, that there was a close relationship between the footwashing and sexual relations between husband and wife seems to be evident from pagan wedding ceremonies, where footwashing was a required part of the nuptial agreement. That this was also known among the Semites may be supported

¹James Swetnam, "Sacrifice and Revelation in the Epistle to the Hebrews," Biblica 49 (1968): 441.

²Ibid.

by the fact that among certain Jewish groups husbands wash their wives feet before copulation. This special footwashing before sexual intercourse was practiced apart from other baths and ritual purifications.¹

Interesting as this evidence is, Eisler only uses it in support of the documented pagan rite of footwashing at the wedding ceremony,² which he in turn presumes casts light on the interpretation of the footwashing in the Gospel of John.

Against the background of this practice, Eisler interprets John 13 as the preparation for Christ's mystical marriage, as the heavenly Bridegroom, to the Church. Therefore, without the footwashing (being wedded to Christ), the believer has no part with Christ (13:8). He says: "I do not doubt, that John 13:2-18 is to be understood in this way: the heavenly Bridegroom (Mc 2,19; Mt 22,2f; Joh 3,29; 2 Kor 11,2; Apc Joh 19,17ff.; 21,2), Who Himself has no need of such Lustration, executes, as the *servus servorum Dei*, the footwashing on his mystical Bride, the primitive Church,

¹"Daß heute noch bei den galizischen, und dann wohl auch bei russischen and anderen Juden vor der Kopulation, abgesehen von sonstigen Bädern and Waschungen, eine besondere Fusswaschung hier und da noch üblich ist." R. Eisler, "Zur Fusswaschung am Tage vor dem Passah: Ev. Joh. 13:2-16," Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, 14 (1913): 269.

²Eisler's source is Servius (Aen. IV 167). And in his footnote (269 n. 2.), he quotes: "Aqua petita de puro fonte per felicissimum puerum aliquem aut puellam interest nuptiis, de qua nubentibus solebant pedes lavari."

which is represented by the 'twelve'."¹

Eisler further contends that this custom was known and practiced by the Jews is evident from the Midrash: "to wash the feet signifies, as one knows, in Hebrew, the conjugal relationship."² Therefore, "wash your feet" was a euphemism for conjugal relations and was understood in that way by Uriah. This is evident from the context by the way Uriah responds to David, recorded in vs. 11: "Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife?" It is undoubtedly true that David never voiced or suggested that Uriah have sexual relations with Bathsheba, and yet, it seems that Uriah certainly understood it that way.

Consequently, Eisler is convinced that since the Passover is the Mystical Wedding ceremony of Israel to her God,³ the footwashing represents the eschatological preparation for the union of Christ to His Bride.

Bacon agrees with Eisler in the sources he uses and

¹"Ich zweifle also nicht mehr daran, daß Joh 13,2-18 so zu verstehen ist: der himmlische Bräutigam (Mc 2,19; Mt 22,2f.; Joh 3,29; 2Kor 11,2; Apc Joh 19,7ff.; 21,2), der selbst natürlich keiner solchen Lustration bedarf, vollzieht als servus servorum Dei die Fußwaschung an seiner mystischen Braut, der Urkirche, die durch die 'Zwölf' dargestellt erscheint." Ibid., 270.

²Eisler quotes a footnote from de Pauly, in Söharausgabe (zu Fol. 80; vol. I, 47, Anm. 1) which is found in the Midrash: "«laver les pieds» signifie, comme on sait, en hebreu, les relations conjugales." Ibid., 269.

³"Denn nach dem kabbalistischen Traktat Raa'iah Mehemnah (= Pastor fidus) im Söhar III fol. (258b, ed. de Pauly vol. V, 599) ist das Passahfest die mystische Hochzeit Israels mit seinem Gotte." Ibid., 270.

the thesis he advances,¹ although Bacon asserts that the footwashing is a sacrament that cleanseth from post-baptismal sin, but agrees that the footwashing is necessary to prepare the Church for the "heavenly Passover."²

I agree here with Swetnam and Eisler and believe that both are correct in that there is a close relationship between the purification rite of an Israelite warrior in preparation for Holy War and the footwashing. The footwashing, while we cannot be sure, was probably an intricate and important aspect of reaching a state of purity.³

This conclusion is based upon the fact that the Levitical priests, in order to reach a state of purity and holiness before God before they were able to enter into His presence in the Sanctuary, had to wash their feet.⁴

¹"Robert Eisler . . . quotes from Servian's comment . . . to prove that washing of the feet of the bride was a current pagan ceremony preceding nuptials. It would not be more difficult for us to imagine John making use of heathen practice for his symbolism. . . . But Eisler goes further. He cites Rabbinic sources to prove that the observance was not unknown to the ancient Semitic world also, and to the Jewish world of early Christian times." B. W. Bacon, "The Sacrament of Footwashing," Expository Times 43 (1931-32): 218-221.

²"And the eve of that Christian Passover is the Church's preparation, for 'Consecration' for entrance, after her conflict with the world is over, into the joy of her Lord, the 'Marriage Supper of the Lamb'." Ibid., 220.

³This is even more plausible since footwashing is always a preparation, see chapter 6, pp. 197-206.

⁴See the section below on "The Cultic Function of Footwashing."

However, the above study also shows that there was a universal principle in later Judaism, paganism, and Islam which mandated the footwashing before reaching a state of purity.

It is not difficult to imagine that the footwashing would become an intricate and important part of the ritual to reach a state of purity for those about to engage in Holy War, and therefore was closely related to having intercourse with women.¹

In addition, it seems apparent that the context supports this position by Uriah's response in vs. 11.

Ps 60:8

The footwashing by nature being linked to slavery and servitude became symbolic of subjection and slavery in general and is used that way in Ps 60:8: "Moab is My washbowl; Over Edom I shall throw My shoe; Shout loud."

The "washbowl" evidently refers to the washing of feet² and is linked with "I shall throw My shoe," which

¹Cf. 1 Sam 21:5; see also the reference to hadath where it states that any discharge of semen results in a state of uncleanness. See, p. 50, n. 3.

²"washbasin. . . . A metaphor expressing extreme contempt, likening Moab to a basin in which a conqueror washes his feet." "Psalms," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1972), 3:775.

becomes a metaphor of subjection and servitude.¹

Footwashing as a Cultic Function

As we look at the footwashing in the cultic setting, we notice that it is not a personal choice for comfort or hygiene, or an extension of hospitality, but is now commanded by Yahweh and is part of a priest's duties. The washing of feet (almost always connected with the washing of hands) is absolutely necessary before the priest is allowed to enter the Sanctuary where God's glory is revealed above the Mercy Seat.

Exod 30:17-21

The first command issued by God to Moses, detailing the priests' duties concerning the washing of hands and feet in the laver before they were to minister on behalf of Israel in the newly constructed Sanctuary, is found in Exod 30:17-21.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. And Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, that they may not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the LORD. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they may not die; and it shall be a

¹"To unloose the shoe was often the work of a slave, who might also carry the shoe to an appropriate place. . . . The latter practice prob. lies behind Ps 60:8 and 108:9. As shoes might sometimes be thrown to a slave to carry away, the figure suggests power exercised over Edom to make its people serve God's purpose." Cameron, 268.

perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations.

While the size and dimensions of the laver are not specified, its purpose is stated immediately, it is for "washing" (ὑπέρθεσι). The laver was to be placed between the altar and the Sanctuary, and the priests (Aaron and his sons) are to wash their hands and feet each time before entering the Holy Place. The importance of this command is apparent from its fourfold repetition, and threat of death to the disobedient (mentioned twice in vss. 20, 21). The command is perpetual, to all generations.

There was obviously a physical and hygienic need to wash the hands since the priest was constantly involved in the slaying of animals, as well as carrying and handling the blood employed in the ministration of reconciliation. This was perhaps also true of the feet, but to a far lesser degree.

However, there is a widespread recognition that the washings or ritual cleansing, commanded here, go beyond mere physical cleansing and aim at the necessity of moral cleansing, that is, the removal of sin.¹ It is interesting

¹"The Lord did not tolerate uncleanness; dust on hands or feet was reminiscent of the uncleanness of sin" (cf. Isa 52:11; John 13:1-10). W. H. Gispen, Exodus, Bible Student's Commentary, trans. Ed van der Maas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 284. "Typically, the laver represents the washing away of our sins, through faith in the shed blood of Christ." "Exodus," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichols (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1972), 1:659.

to observe that this Old Testament scholar sees here a close connection between the rite of the priests in washing their hands and feet with the water contained in the laver, which he thinks is a sign of ridding oneself of the "uncleanness of sin," and the footwashing in John 13.¹

Since these perpetual purifications followed the animal sacrifices, which in type pointed to Christ's atonement on Calvary, they are often viewed as a symbol of sanctification and purity of life, on the part of the believer.² Since sanctification is the fruit of justification and follows in the wake of the believer's acceptance of God's gift of forgiveness and Christ's righteousness through faith, the believer now orders his life according to God's will and purpose. The believer continues to stand in need of God's forgiving grace (1 John 1:8-9), although the mandate to live a sinless life is ever before him (1 John 2:1).

This not only applied to priests in the Old Testament, but to believers today, who are priests, consecrated unto God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:5, 6; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). And like priests of old, every believer is to live in moral purity and holiness in the service of

¹Gispen, 284.

²"Washing the hands and the feet symbolized the reformation of the life." "Exodus," SDA Bible Commentary, 1:659.

God through faith in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹

This ordinance was to last forever, not as a ceremonial washing,² but as a perpetual sign pointing to the necessity and privilege of the believer's moral purity and cleansing from sin.³

The laver, thus placed between the altar and the Holy Place in the courtyard of the Sanctuary, and the function it fulfilled played an intricate part in the Levitical law, as it typified the ministry and person of Jesus Christ.⁴

¹"For the believer, in his position as priest, the requirement of cleanness remains, even though Christ has also fulfilled this ordinance. The basin symbolizes the need for purity in thought and deed, a purity that can be found and realized only in Christ." Gispen, 284.

²"Throughout their generations." "This rule has been observed by the pious in all ages, who wash their hands before beginning any of the statutory services, which the Rabbis declare to be the present-day equivalents of the sacrifices. Many synagogues arrange lavers at the entrance for such a ceremonial washing of the hands by the worshippers." J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (London: Soncino Press, 1965), 353.

³"That external purification rites were symbols of inner cleanness and moral purity is well attested to by the Old Testament. David pleads for moral purity when he says: "Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me." Ps 51:7, 10. Job says: "Nevertheless the righteous shall hold to his way, And he who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger." Job 17:9. Here, walking in obedience with God's will is a synonym for "clean hands," and the reward is strength. In Ps 73:13 purity of heart is synonymous with "washing my hands in innocence."

⁴"The basin for washing was thus part of the ministry of reconciliation!" Cf. also 1 Kgs 7:23; Rev 15:2; Gispen, 284.

In the context of ritual purity, as it pertains to the priests ministering in the Sanctuary, it is well to look at the passage that relates the initial consecration service for Aaron and his sons.

Exod 29:4

After the selection of the sacrificial beasts, and before the vestments were placed on them, Aaron and his sons were brought to the entrance of the Sanctuary to be washed by Moses. "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water" (Exod 29:4).

This washing, though not specifically mentioned, was most likely a full bath,¹ and was not repeated. This 'washing' is translated λουσεις by the translators of the LXX, which seems to substantiate that this was a bath (by immersion).²

The initial "bath" served as the first part of the priest's consecration and symbolized complete cleansing from sin.³ The physical cleansing, though necessary, was a

¹"The text does not indicate whether this washing involved merely the hands and feet, or immersion; the latter is more probable." Gispén, 274.

²For a more detailed discussion see p. 24, n. 2.

³"Washing with water here symbolized the removal of uncleanness that was the result of sin; this was carried out in 40:12-13 and Leviticus 8:6-9 (cf. Heb. 10:22 for its significance)." Gispén, 274. "This cleansing from bodily uncleanness was a symbol of the putting away of the filth of

symbol to remind God's faithful that God is holy and He requires His people to walk in moral and ethical innocence.¹

It was Moses, as God's mediator (and type of Christ), who was instructed to carry out the "washing" of Aaron the High Priest, and his sons.

Exod 40:30-32

How these instructions were carried out is described in Exod 40:30-32.

And he placed the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing. "And from it Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. When they entered the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

This service was later continued in Solomon's temple,

sin; the washing of the body therefore was a symbol of spiritual cleansing, without which no one can draw near to God, and least of all those who were to perform the duties of reconciliation." C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes: The Pentateuch, trans. J. Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 335.

¹"This was natural; physical cleansing is an appropriate analogy to moral and spiritual cleansing . . . for, they must be free from the stain and defilement of sin themselves before they ministered on behalf of others." "Exodus," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1972), 1:653. "The ceremonies . . . included a consecration bathing. . . . The washing was intended to symbolize cleansing of heart for the duties that were so intimately related to the purity of the nation before God." C. L. Feinberg, "Priests and Levites," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (1975), 4:854. "'Shalt wash them.' See that they undergo ablution of the entire body. The moral symbolism of the act of washing, as the first stage in the ceremony of induction, is obvious. 'Clean hands and a pure heart,' according to the Psalmist (XXIV, 4), are an essential qualification in those who would draw near to God." Hertz, 344.

but the laver was then called "the sea" (η θαλασσα).¹

Here Moses is included as one who washes his hands in the laver. Although there seems to be no evidence that Moses, though he was a levite, ever served as a priest (he did sprinkle the blood of the covenant on the people, Exod 24:8, although he did not officiate in the slaying of the sacrifices, Exod 24:5); yet, he too observed the command to wash his hands and feet in the laver.

The fact that Moses participated in the same cultic rite of washing his hands and feet before entering the Sanctuary may emphasize the fact that the laver was purposely set before the Sanctuary entrance, not so much with the intention to clean hands and feet from the blood of animals, but to signify the importance of a sanctified life in order to live with God in a close relationship, i.e., enter His presence.

It seems that if the primary reason for the washing of hands and feet would have been to rid the priest of the impurities received in handling the blood of the sacrifices, that is, physical cleanness and hygiene, the command would have been more productive if the priests would have been instructed to wash after they departed the Sanctuary, since their hands handled the blood inside the Holy Place.

¹In both 1 Kgs 7:38 and 2 Chr 4:6, the sea (laver) is referred to and the passages are almost identical, although, in Chronicles the purpose for the sea is identified by adding, "for the washing (ὑπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ) of the priests."

Summary

The priestly ritual cleansings, commanded by God, seem to provide a fertile background for the interpretation of John 13. Not only have some Old Testament scholars seen a connection between these purification rites and John 13, but we also observed that the priests were once "bathed" (λουω) at the beginning of their ministry, but needed to wash (νίπτω) daily as they served in the Sanctuary. This may well help us to understand and interpret Christ's words to Peter recorded in John 13:10. Both washings are understood by Christian and Jewish commentators to be symbols of a required inner cleansing, that is, the removal of sin and moral defilement.

Footwashing in Judaism

The command of God to Moses that the priests were to wash their hands and feet with water contained in the laver placed between the altar and the Holy Place in the Sanctuary courtyard,¹ before entering the Holy or Most Holy Place, or before offering sacrifices on the altar,² is referred to by Josephus: "Now, he appointed the sea to be for washing the hands and the feet of the priests when they entered into the temple and were to ascend the altar" (Antiquity 8, chapter

¹Exod 40:30-32.

²Exod 30:17-21.

3, #6).¹

It is also documented in the Mishnah. Yoma 3:2-4, 6; 4:5; 7:3 mentions that the High Priest must wash his hands and feet on the Day of Atonement. It is important to notice that an offering is rendered ineffective if the priest neglects to wash his hands and feet (cf. Men. 1:2).

As mentioned above, this instruction of God to Moses is recorded in Exod 29:4-6 and, it seems, was not carried out until later.²

At the consecration of the priest he was completely washed³ and this bath was part of the ceremony that set him apart to become a mediator between God and man.⁴

¹The Works of Flavius Josephus, vol. 2, trans. by William Whiston, A.M., in 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 498.

²Lev 8:1ff.

³וָיָח means to "wash," "take a bath," or "dip." William Holladay, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. (1974), 338. While this word is also used of partial washings and certain body parts, in the context it strongly suggests a complete bath. Certainly the translators of the LXX thought so and translated וָיָח with ελουσεν. This initial consecration service was not repeated during the life of a priest. However, at least on two occasions the High Priest took a bath. On the Day of Atonement he was to bathe (וָיָח, ελουσεται) himself before and after he entered the Most Holy Place (cf. Lev 16:4, 25). On at least one other occasion was he to repeat a full body bath, which was in connection with the Red Heifer ordinance (cf. Lev 19:7).

⁴While it appears that this ceremony of a full bath was not repeated during the life of a priest (see p. 25, n. 4), the washing of hands and feet was a perpetual command as long as the priest served in the Sanctuary.

The principle that the physical purification had a deeper meaning pointing to the necessity of spiritual purification (sanctification), that is, the putting away of sin in the priest's life, is almost universally recognized. An important point to be noted is that blood and water were the only two agents used in the sanctuary service that signified cleansing and purification from sin and pointed to the necessity of both--justification and sanctification--in the priest's (i.e. in the believer's) life.

One wonders if the instruction given in the Mishnah concerning the washing of hands and feet by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement replaced the full bath mentioned in Leviticus after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. It would certainly stress the point that the two are closely related and had, at least to some degree, the same purpose and function.

The Angel Visits Abraham

The event of Christ, accompanied by two angels, visiting His servant Abraham,¹ recorded in Gen. 18:1ff., is

¹"Many scholars have recognized that Christ is often referred to as 'the angel of the LORD' in the Old Testament and is at times the person of the Godhead called LORD as is the case in Gen 18. In other passages, an individual manifesting himself in human form is frequently called 'the Lord' (Gen 12:7; 17:1; 18:1). Many believe, along with me, that the angel of the Lord is our Lord Jesus Christ appearing in the Old Testament in human form." Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Hard Sayings of the Old Testament (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1973), 98. "It was Christ who spoke with Abraham under the oaks at Mamre." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Boise, ID: Pacific Press

referred to in a Jewish legend when the patriarch is near death. In this legend the visitor is the Archangel Michael and Abraham and Isaac are pictured as washing his feet:

When the day of the death of Abraham drew near, the Lord said to Michael, "Arise and go to Abraham and say to him, Thou shalt depart from life: so that he might set his house in order before he died." And Michael went and came to Abraham and found him sitting before his oxen for ploughing. . . . Arrived at his house, he (Abraham) ordered the servants to prepare a meal, and while they were busy with their work, he called his son Isaac, and said to him, "Arise and put water in the vessel, that we may wash the feet of the stranger." And he brought it as he was commanded, and Abraham said, "I perceive that in this basin I shall never again wash the feet of any man coming to us as a guest."¹

The story continues, as Sarah, after hearing Michael speak, understands his identity and through a sign notifies Abraham of her discovery, to which he answers: "Thou has perceived well, for I, too, when I washed his feet, knew in my heart that they were the feet that I had washed at the oak of Mamre, and that went to save Lot."²

One might note that there is a progression in this account from the Hebrew Scriptures, where the water is provided for the guests, to the LXX, where the servants are asked to wash the visitors' feet, to this legend, where Abraham states that he washed Michael's feet at his first

Publishing Association, 1940), 290-291.

¹Louis Ginsberg, The Legends of the Jews, in 7 vols., trans. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942), 1:299-302.

²Ibid.

visit.¹

Leah and Jacob

Ginsberg, in recording another legend, this time of the Patriarch Jacob, documents that footwashing was an honored custom among the ancients before they entered the house.

Jacob came home from the field after night had fallen, for he observed the law obliging a day laborer to work until darkness sets in, and Jacob's zeal in the affairs of Laban was as great in the last seven years, after his marriage, as in the first seven, while he was serving for the hand of Rachel. When Leah heard the braying of Jacob's ass, she ran to meet her husband, and without giving him time to wash his feet, she insisted upon his turning aside into her tent.²

Philo

Philo also mentions the sanctuary (temple) ritual where the priests wash their hands and feet before entering the Holy Place, with the water contained in the laver. After mentioning the material used to construct the laver he says:

The maker then thought it well to accept these offerings, . . . in order that the priests who were about to enter the temple might be supplied from it, with water of purification for the purpose of performing the sacred

¹According to Ellen White, it was Abraham himself who hauled the water for his special guests and concurs with the Hebrew Scriptures that the guests washed their own feet. "With his own hands he brought water that they might wash the dust of travel from their feet." Ellen G. White, The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), 138.

²Ginsberg, 367.

ministration which were appointed for them.¹

Through the writings of Philo, a contemporary of Jesus, one gains the important insight that the washing of hands and feet is a synonym for a blameless life, a life of moral and spiritual strength. This becomes evident when he says that Abraham, "the patriarch, father and founder," cannot be conceived as, "stupid and silly among those who go far in wrongdoing." Although the patriarch identified his wife Sarah as his sister, he could not be accused of acting with "levity of character with unwashed feet and with a changed countenance." What is meant by "unwashed feet"? The context makes it clear that it denotes a state of moral and spiritual rectitude.

There is further evidence that at the time of Jesus, the washing of hands and feet signified moral and ethical purity. Philo, commenting on the priestly regulations of washing their hands and feet in the laver, says that the purpose was not only physical cleanness, but was a symbol for ethic/moral behavior. He says:

The priests . . . washing their feet most especially, and their hands, as a symbol of their irreproachable life, and of a course of conduct which takes itself pure in all kinds of praiseworthy actions, proceeding not along the rough road of wickedness . . . but keeping straight along the level and direct path of virtue.²

Philo here calls the washing of hands and feet a

¹Philo, "De Vita Mosaic" II:138, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 503.

²Ibid.

"symbol" (συμβολον) of a blameless (pure) life.

There is no question that Philo makes a direct connection between the washing of hands and feet, moral and ethical purity, and sanctification. In Quaes. Gen IV 5., where he comments on Gen 18:4, he allegorizes the fact that God's foot was set in water and sees in it a repetition of creation, when the Spirit of God was upon the waters (foot being the last part of the body, and spirit/air being the last of the four elements). Since the foot (air/spirit) of God touched the water, water becomes sanctified, consequently "men are sanctified when washed with water." Weiss sees in this a clear indication that the footwashing was practiced in the Hellenistic synagogue with a mystical, spiritual meaning resulting in sanctification:¹

It becomes quite obvious from this passage that in the Hellenistic synagogue there was speculation about footwashing as providing sanctification by the divine spirit and opening up the soul to the divine manifestation. . . . From these . . . references it may be seen that in the Hellenistic synagogue the washing of the feet was a preparation for meeting God.²

Again, Philo (Quaes. Ex. 1:2) connects sanctification

¹If the footwashing was indeed practiced in the Hellenistic synagogue it would explain why John would include this event of Christ's life in his Gospel and the close connection water, blood, and the Spirit play in his theology. That the washing of hands and feet may well have carried over into the synagogue after the destruction of the temple may be evident that the ritual of washing one's hands is still practiced today. See above p. 15, n. 2.

²Harold Weiss, "Foot Washing in the Johannine Community," Novum Testamentum 21 (1979): fasc. 4, 304.

(that is the preparation of body and soul) with the priestly preparation before offering a sacrifice, in particular to footwashing, when he comments: "According to the saying one should not enter with unwashed feet on the pavement of the temple of God."¹

The Levitical law commanded that the feet of the sacrificial animals used for a whole burnt offering had to be washed.² Again, Philo sees in the washing of feet a reference to a sanctified life, a life that walks in virtue and as a result ends in the presence of God. He says:

And by the command that the feet of the victim should be washed, it is figuratively shown that we must no longer walk upon the earth, but soar aloft and traverse the air. For the soul of the man who is devoted to God, being eager for truth, springs upward and mounts from earth to heaven.³

Pap. Oxyrh. 840

Another reference to footwashing connected with priestly purification is found in a Christian document dated ca. A.D. 400. According to this Gospel fragment, Jesus and his disciples are confronted by a Pharisaic chief priest by the name of Levi as they enter the outer court of the temple. The priest challenges the prerogative of Jesus and

¹Philo, Questions and Answers in Exodus, Supplement II, trans. Ralph Marcus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 7.

²Lev 1:9, 13; 8:21; 9:14.

³Philo, "De Specialibus Legibus," I:207; trans. C. D. Yonge. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 553.

His disciples to walk on the sacred pavement and to look upon the sacred vessels, "without having bathed yourself and your disciples not having washed their feet."¹ In defense of his own purity, Levi says: "I am clean. For I have bathed myself (ελουσασμην) in the pool of David and have gone down by one stair and come by the other and have put on white and clean clothes and only then have I come hither and viewed the holy utensils."²

The text continues to focus on what constitutes true cleansing and makes a distinction between the external and internal washing and advocates internal cleansing as superior.

From this reference as well as Philo's statements, it seems that it had become a universal principle to wash one's feet before entering the temple proper and, in a wider sense, coming into the presence of God required a person to live in harmony with God's will and turn away from evil and sin.

At one time this Gospel account was considered of little or no historical value and judged ignorant of temple practices at the time of Jesus. However, J. Jeremias has argued that this reflects an actual historical event in the life of Jesus and therefore is of great historical value in

¹Pap. Oxyrh. 840.

²Ibid.

understanding the priestly practices in the temple at that time. Jeremias places this Gospel fragment on an equal authoritative footing with the Synoptics when he says it is "excellently informed," and ranks it "as high as the Synoptic account."¹

Of great interest is the importance that is placed on washing the feet before walking on the temple pavement as one seeks to come into the presence of God. It certainly reflects the same emphasis one finds in Philo's writings concerning this subject.

Both Philo and the writer of this Gospel account represent a very similar contemporary attitude (if indeed Jeremias is correct in his conviction that this represents an historical event in the life of Christ) about priestly purity and cultic preparation, but in a wider sense they focus on the meaning of footwashing as a synonym for a holy and blameless life as one seeks to walk with God and live a God-centered life.

The Mishnah

The concept that the worshipper of God must wash his/her feet before entering the temple is also preserved in the Mishnah. Berakot 9:5 states: "One should not enter the Temple Mount with his walking stick, his overshoes, his

¹Joachim Jeremias, The Unknown Sayings of Jesus, trans. R. H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1957), 47-60.

money bag, or with dust on his feet."¹

The Talmud stipulates that priests could not perform their function unless their feet were washed first.² The Mishnah, too, lists the necessity of washing hands and feet before the priest can take up his duties in the temple service.

He whose lot it was to clear the Altar of ashes went to clear the Altar of ashes, while they said to him, 'Take heed that thou touch not the vessel before thou hast sanctified thy hands and feet in the laver.' When his brethren saw that he was come down they came running and hastened and sanctified their hands and their feet at the laver, and they took the shovels and the rakes and mounted to the top of the Altar.³

What is very noteworthy here is that it does not say, "washed thy hands and feet in the laver," but "sanctified." This again indicates that the washing of hands and feet was understood to emphasize and point to a removal of sin and the necessity of a sanctified life in the service of God, beyond the physical and hygienic to the inner and spiritual.

The Rabbis

In the Rabbinic literature footwashing is mentioned frequently and it is evident that specific laws governed who was to wash whose feet. Among those whose duty it was to

¹The Mishnah: A New Translation, trans. J. Neusner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 14.

²Abraham A. Cohen, Talmud: Minor Tractates, Zebahim 15b, 17b, 119b (London: Soncino Press, 1971), 80, 89, 592.

³The Mishnah, trans. Herbert Danby (London: Soncino Press, 1933), Tamid 1:4; 2:1, 583.

wash the feet of others are the following: Wives are to wash their husbands' feet. R. Jose b. Hanina (3rd cent.) ruled:

All manner of work which a wife must render to her husband a widow must render to the orphans, with the exception of serving one's drinks, making ready one's bed and washing one's face, hands or feet.¹

It seems that a wife was never able to shed the responsibility of washing her husband's face, hands, and feet, even after sufficient help was available in the household. We find the following ruling by R. Isaac b. Hanania (3rd cent.):

If four (that is if a wife brings four female slaves to her husband), she may lounge in an easy chair. Although it has been said, she may lounge in an easy chair she should nevertheless fill for him his cup, make ready his bed and wash his face, hands and feet.²

A Hebrew slave was not required to wash his master's feet:

I might understand this to mean in any kind of service, but Scripture says: "Thou shalt not make him to serve as a bondservant" (Lev. 25:39). Hence the sages said: A Hebrew slave must not wash the feet of his master, nor put his shoes on him, nor carry his things before him when going to the bathhouse, nor support him by the hips when ascending steps, nor carry him in a litter or a chair or a sedan chair as slaves do. For it is said: "But over your brethren the children of Israel ye shall not rule, one over another, with rigour" (ibid., v. 46). But one's son or pupil may do so.³

¹Cohen, Talmud, Kethuboth 96a, ibid., 610.

²Cohen, Talmud, Kethuboth 61a, ibid., 365.

³Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, vol. 3, trans. Jacob Z. Lauterbach (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), 5-6.

There seems agreement on the point that students were to honor their teachers by serving them as a son does his father, even washing their feet. R. Joshua b. Levi (3rd cent.) ruled:

All manner of service that a slave must render to his master a student must render to his teacher, except that of taking off his shoe. Raba explained: This ruling applies only to a place where he is not known, but where he is known there can be no objection. H. Ashi (4th cent.) said: Even where he is not known the ruling applies only where he does not put on tefillin but where he puts on tefillin, he may well perform such a service.¹

Some have questioned if a student indeed had to wash his teacher's feet, since there is no place found that specifically says so; however, Strack and Billerbeck believe this to be the case: "That a student was obliged to wash his teacher's feet, seems to be substantiated by Ketn 96a."²

We should note that to take "off his shoe" here is a synonym for footwashing. The common denominator here seems to be that the lesser always was obliged to wash the feet of the greater. It was a service expected of slaves, servants, wives and children, which in turn lent itself as an opportunity to show gratitude, honor, and love by those who were not compelled by law to do so.

¹Cohen, Talmud, Kethuboth 96a, *ibid.*, 610.

²Daß auch ein Schüler verpflichtet war, seinem Lehrer die Füße zu waschen, scheint aus Ketn 96a hervorzugehn." Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas und Johannes und die Apostelgeschichte, vol. 2, Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud and Midrash (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1924), 557.

Joseph and Asenath

The custom of brides and wives washing the feet of their bridegrooms and husbands, respectively, is also found in the narrative of Joseph and Asenath. In her prayer to God she commits herself to Joseph as his wife and servant:

Lord, I commit him to you, because I love him beyond my [own] soul. Preserve him in the wisdom of your grace. And you, Lord, commit me to him for a maidservant and slave. And I will make his bed and wash his feet and wait for him and be his slave for him and serve him forever [and] ever.¹

This is in keeping with the traditions of this time where wives washed their husbands' feet. Later on in the story it becomes evident, however, that Asenath is not required to wash Joseph's feet but is anxious to do so because of her great love and devotion for the man she hopes to marry:

And Asenath said to Joseph, 'Come, my Lord, and enter our house, because I have prepared our house and made a great dinner'. And she grasped his right hand and led him into her house and seated him on Pentephres' her father's throne. And she brought water to wash his feet. And Joseph said, 'Let one of the virgins come and wash my feet'. And Asenath said to him, 'No my Lord, because you are my lord from now on, and I (am) your maidservant. And why do you say this (that) another virgin (is) to wash your feet? For your feet are my feet, and your hands are my hands, and your soul my soul, and your feet another (woman) will never wash'. And she urged him and washed his feet. And Joseph looked at her hands, and they were like hands of life, and her fingers fine like (the) fingers of a fast scribe. And after this Joseph grasped her right hand and kissed it, and Asenath kissed his head and sat at his right (hand).²

¹OTP, II, 224, as cited by Thomas, 39.

²Ibid., 40.

Asenath, out of love for Joseph, is willing to do any service for him, not because the custom demands it, but because she is propelled by love. She is a willing and voluntary slave to him.

Summary

In this section it becomes apparent that footwashing was not only practiced as a custom of hospitality, hygiene, and personal pleasure, but also became a synonym of a blameless and sanctified life. In Philo's writings it is obvious that the footwashing is a sign of a person's moral and ethical life before his Maker. The fact that Philo was a contemporary of Jesus indicates that this concept was widespread and had permeated all the existing cultures, and was clearly understood in that way by the Jews of that time.

Footwashing in the Greco-Roman World

The Cultic Function of Footwashing

There is some evidence that footwashing was part of the ritual purification that priests may have participated in on a regular basis: "He has to present water for hands and feet, in the left hand he has to hold the wash basin, in his right hand a vessel with water."¹

Since only this fragment exists, we do not know what cult it refers to, nor what particular occasion it

¹H. Peter, Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1967), 116.

addressed. However, the fact that footwashing was a part of the process to attain ritual purification is also evident from a paragraph contained in the writings of Pliny:

Like this sabine herb is the plant called selago. It is gathered without iron with the right hand, thrust under the tunic through the left arm hole, as though the gatherer were thieving. He should be clad in white, and have bare feet washed clean; before gathering he should make a sacrificial offering of bread and wine. The plant is carried in a new napkin. The Druids of Gaul have recorded that it should be kept on the person to ward off fatalities, and that smoke of it is good for all diseases of the eyes.¹

Footwashing as a Social Custom

The washing of feet is also mentioned by Homer in the Odyssey. After Melanthius is murdered, those who committed his murder are said to have washed their hands and feet: "Therefore they washed their hands and feet, and went into the house of Odysseus, and the work was done."²

Odysseus

As in the Old Testament, footwashing was a standard practice before entering a house or receiving a guest. As Odysseus finally arrives home, he is received by his wife Penelope, although she does not recognize him nor does he identify himself; yet, he says that Odysseus will return home:

¹Pliny: Natural History, vol. 7, trans. W. H. S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 75.

²Homer: The Odyssey, vol. 2, trans. A. T. Murray (London: William Heinemann, 1919), 371, quoted in Thomas, 46-51.

Then wise Penelope answered him: 'Ah, stranger, I would that this word of thine might be fulfilled. Then shouldest thou straightway know of kindness and many a gift from me, so that one who met thee would call thee blessed. Yet in my heart I forebode it thus, even as it shall be. Neither shall Odysseus any more come home, nor shalt thou obtain a convoy hence, since there are not now in the house such masters as Odysseus was among men--as sure as ever such a man there was--to send reverend strangers on their way, and to welcome them. But still my maidens, wash the stranger's feet and prepare his bed-bedstead and cloaks and bright coverlets--that in warmth and comfort he may come to the golden Dawn'.¹

Odysseus requests that a trusted old servant wash his feet:

Nor shall any woman touch my foot of all those who are serving-women in the hall, unless there is some old true-hearted dame who has suffered in her heart as many woes as I; such one I would not grudge to touch my feet.²

In this case it becomes an honor to wash Odysseus's feet. The female slave must have certain qualifications to make her fit to serve him, that is, she must be a fellow sufferer, which leads to a special identification with Odysseus.

Penelope offers wise old Eurycleia to serve Odysseus, who offers to wash his feet. Eurycleia declares: "Therefore will I wash thy feet, both for Penelope's own sake and for thine."³

The story continues:

¹Ibid., 251.

²Ibid., 253.

³Ibid., 255.

So he spoke and the old dame took the shining couldron with water where from she was about to wash his feet, and poured in cold water in plenty, and then added thereto warm. . . . So he (Odysseus) spoke, and the old woman went forth through the hall to bring water for his feet, for all the first was spilled. And when she had washed him, and anointed him richly with oil, Odyssey again drew his chair nearer to the fire to warm himself.¹

Here, it mattered who washed Odysseus' feet. It was a special occasion when he finally returned home after much suffering and trials. Not just anyone would do.

Amasis

A story told by Herodotus verifies that the washing of feet was common. In this narrative, Herodotus tells of how Amasis tricked the Egyptians into accepting him as their king and honoring him, although, he was a commoner:

He [Amasis] had among his countless treasures a golden footbath, in which he and all those who feasted with him were ever wont to wash their feet. This he broke in pieces and made thereof a god's image, which he set in the most fitting place in the city; and the Egyptians came over and bowed to this image and held it in great reverence. When Amasis knew what the townsmen did, he called the Egyptians together and told them that the image had been made out of the footbath; once (said he) his subjects had washed their feet in it and put it to yet viler uses; now they greatly revered it. 'So now' (quoth he to them) 'it has fared with me as with the footbath; once I was a common man, now I am your king; it is your duty to honor me and hold me in regard'.²

Amasis's footbath was used by him and his banquet guests consistently, testifying to the common practice of

¹Ibid.

²Herodotus, vol. 1, trans. A. D. Godley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 485-487.

footwashing, not only when entering a house, but also before meals were taken. We should also record that footwashing ranked with the least or vile experiences of everyday life.

Pompey

That footwashing was a menial task usually reserved for slaves is also apparent from the account of Pompey's flight after his defeat at the hands of Caesar. After boarding a vessel, Plutarch recounts:

Now, when it was time for supper and the master of the ship had made such provision for them as he could, Favonius, seeing that Pompey, for lack of servants, was beginning to take off his shoes, ran to him and took off his shoes for him, and helped him to anoint himself. And from that time on he continued to give Pompey such ministry and service as slaves give their masters, even down to the washing of his feet and the preparation of his meals.¹

We might observe here that Pompey was ready to wash his feet before he was willing to partake of the food, and that the removing of shoes is used as a synonym, as is apparent in other instances as well. Also, Favonius's absolute subjection to Pompey was manifested by his willingness to "even . . . wash his feet."

Other Examples

However, footwashing could become quite elaborate; Plutarch documents an episode where a host even used spiced wine to wash the feet of his guests at a very special

¹Plutarch's Lives, vol. 8, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 309.

occasion:

But Phocion declined the other invitations and granted the coveted honor to one host only. And when he (Phocion) went to the banquet and saw the general magnificence of the preparations, and particularly the footbasins of spiced wine that were brought to the guests as they entered, he called his son and said: 'Phocus, do not let thy companion ruin thy victory'.¹

Footwashing can also be a token of slavery.

Herodotus records an utterance of the Oracle at Delphi concerning Miletus:

In that day, Miletus, thou planner of works that are evil, Thou for a banquet shall serve a guerdon rich shall be the spoiler; Many the long-locked gallants whose feet shall be washed by thy women, Woe for my Didyman shrine! No more shall its ministers tend it. All this now came upon the Milesians; for the most part of their men were slain by the longhaired Persians, and their women and children were accounted as slaves.²

The prophecy that the Milesian women would wash the feet of the invaders was fulfilled, as the women and children were enslaved by the conquerors. In Plato, Alcibiades arrives at Agathon's home and joins him and Socrates at table. Again, it appears that the removal of shoes is but a synonym for the washing of feet: "Then Agathon said to the servants, 'Take off Alcibiades' shoes, so that he can recline here with us two'."³

The following quotation is confirmation that the

¹Ibid., 189-191.

²Herodotus, vol. 3, trans. A. D. Godley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 3:165-167.

³Plato: Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (London: William Heinemann, 1925), 211.

washing of feet can be a special service of love and devotion, if rendered by choice, as was also the case with Asenath. It perhaps the most complete service of love, because it signifies both love and honor to the person rendered in a spirit of gratitude and humility.

It was a custom of the maidens of Ceos to go in a company to the public shrines and spend the day together, and their suitors watched their sports and dances. At evening they went by turns to each one's home and waited upon one another's parents and brothers even to washing their feet.¹

Footwashing was obviously recognized as a servile service, that, if done voluntarily, was a sign of love and honor bestowed upon the recipient.

Footwashing was so common and universally practiced that it gave rise to an aphorism, that any person who rushed into making a decision without proper contemplation and reflection was said to do so "with unwashed feet." Lucian, commenting upon a young man by the name of Demonax, who made a quick decision to study philosophy, says: "You must not conceive, however, that he rushed into these matters with unwashed feet, as the saying goes."²

From this we might conjecture that footwashing was a common practice in the ancient world, and any person who failed to make proper preparation for a task was said to

¹Plutarch's Moralia, vol. 3, trans. F. C. Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 509-511.

²Lucian: Demonax, trans. A. M. Harmon (London: William Heinemann, 1913), 145.

enter with unwashed feet.

The Footwashing in Islam

W. Farag includes in his dissertation a chapter on footwashing as it is practiced in Islam.¹ He notes that "Muslim regulations for purity based on Koranic passages manifest a striking similarity with the corresponding regulations in Judaism."²

The Rite of Wudu and the Forgiveness of Sins after Footwashing

Footwashing is mentioned as part of the wudū which removes hadath,³ that is, "minor" ritual impurity. The wudū is practiced before the salāt (prayer) and takes about two

¹Wadie Farag, "Religious Foot Washing in Doctrine and Practice with Special Reference to Christianity" (Ph.D. thesis, Dropsie University, March 1970).

²Ibid., 23.

³"Hadath is incurred: 1. by contact with an unclean substance (khābath, nādjās) which soils the person or clothing, etc.: sperm, pus, urine, fermented liquor, and some other kinds. There is some controversy about corpses or the bodies of animals. It is only in the view of the Māliki school that the pig and dog, when alive, do not soil, Except with the Shi'is, contact with a human being never soils according to Muslim law, unlike the prescriptions of Jewish law; 2. by certain facts; by the emission of any substance whether solid, liquid or gaseous from the anus, urethra or vagina (further to those which bring about major impurity); by loss of consciousness--sleep, syncope, madness; by apostasy, and in certain other circumstances." G. H. Bousquet, "Hadath," The Encyclopaedia of Islam (1965), 3:19.

minutes to perform.¹ The Koran stipulates that any person before he prays must purify himself, that is, perform the wudū: "O you who believe, when you rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles."²

The wudū involves an elaborate purification rite and is described by 'Othmān ibi 'Affān as follows:

[I received a tradition from Abū Tāhir Abmad b. 'Amr b. 'Abdallah ibi 'Amr ibi Sarb . . . as follows: 'Uthmān ibi 'Affān called for ablution, and performed his own ablution by washing the palms of his hands three times. After that he rinsed his mouth, then his nostrils, then washed his face three times, then washed his right hand up to the elbow three times, then his left hand in the same manner, then wiped his head, washed his right foot up to both sides of the ankle three times, then his left foot in the same manner, and then said: "I saw the messenger of Allah perform the ablution just as I have performed it now. Whereupon the messenger of Allah said: 'Whosoever performs his ablution as I have just done, and then rises and performs two sets of genuflections, without distracting his attention in the meantime, will obtain forgiveness for his past sin'." Ibn Shihab said: Our learned men say that this is the most complete ablution to be performed by anyone before prayer.]³

As Faraq observes, "With reference to the wudū, it is clear that the feet are among the parts of the body that

¹"The wudoo is generally performed in less than two minutes; most persons hurrying through the act, as well as omitting almost all the prayers, etc., which should accompany and follow the actions." E. W. Lane, An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians (London: n.p., 1860), 68-71.

²The Holy Qur'ān, trans. Maulana Muhammad Ali (Columbus, OH: Islam Lahore U.S.A., 1951), ch. 5, vs. 6, 243; see also ch. 4, vs. 43; Faraq, 24.

³Muslim Sahīb (Cairo, Egypt: n.p., 1283), ch. 1, 141; Faraq, 25.

the believer is supposed to wash in the ritual ablution before salāt."¹

The forgiveness of "past sin" is directly tied to the practice of wudū, which includes the footwashing.

The rite of wudū is still practiced by Muslims today. A fountain in the mosque court is provided for that purpose. An eye-witness account, dating from the "first half of the nineteenth century,"² follows:

There are partial washings, or purifications, which all Muslims perform on certain occasions, even if they neglect their prayers, and which are considered as religious acts. The ablution called 'elwudoo,' which is preparatory to prayer, I shall now describe. The purifications just before alluded to are a part of the wudoo: the other washings are not, of necessity, to be performed immediately after, but only when the person is about to say his prayers; and these are performed in the mosque or in the house, in public or in private. There is in every mosque a tank (called 'meydaah') or a 'banefeeyah,' which is a raised reservoir, with spouts round it, from which the water falls. In some mosques there are both these. The Muslims of the Hanafee sect (of which are the Turks) perform the ablution at the latter (which has received its name from that cause); for they must do it with running water, or from a tank or pool at least ten cubits in breadth, and the same in depth; and I believe that there is only one modash in Cairo of that depth, which is in the great mosque El-Azbar. A small banefeevah of tinned copper, placed on a low shelf, and a large basin, or a small ewer and basin of the same metal, are generally used in the house for the performance of the wudoo.

The person, having tucked up his sleeves a little higher than his elbows, says, in a low voice, or inaudible, "I purpose performing the wudoo, for prayer." He then washes his hands three times; saying, in the same manner as before, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, who hath sent down water for purification, and made El-Islam to

¹Faraq, 28.

²Ibid.

be a light and a conductor, and a guide to thy gardens, the gardens of delight, and to thy mansions, the mansions of peace." Then he rinses his mouth three times, throwing the water into it with his right hand; and in doing this he says, "O God, assist me in the reading of thy book and in commemorating thee, and in thanking Thee, and in worshipping Thee well.

Next, with his right hand, he throws water up his nostrils (snuffing it up at the same time), and then blows it out, compressing his nostrils with the thumb and finger of the left hand; and this also is done three times. While doing this he says, "O God, make me to smell the odours of Paradise, and bless me with its delights; and make me not to smell the smell of the fires (of Hell)." He then washes his face three times, throwing up the water with both hands, and saying, "O God, whiten my face with thy light, on the day when Thou shalt whiten the faces of thy favourites; and do not blacken my face, on the day when thou shalt blacken the faces of thine enemies." His right hand and arm, as high as the elbow, he next washes three times, and as many times causes some water to run along his arm, from the palm of the hand to the elbow, saying, as he does this, "O God, give me my book in my right hand; and reckon with me with an easy reckoning." In the same manner he washes the left hand and arm, saying, "O God, do not give me my book in my left hand, nor behind my back; and do not reckon with me with a difficult reckoning; nor make me to be one of the people of the fire." He next draws his wetted right hand over the upper part of his head, raising his turban or cap with his left; this he does but once; and he accompanies the action with this supplication, "O God, cover me with thy mercy, and pour down thy blessing upon me; and shade me under the shadow of thy canopy, on the day when there shall be no shade but its shade." If he has a beard, he then combs it with the wetted fingers of his right hand; holding his hand with the palm forwards, and passing the fingers through his beard from the throat upwards. He then puts the tips of his forefingers into his ears, and twists them round, passing his thumbs at the same time round the back of the ears, from the bottom upwards; and saying, "O God, make me to be of those who hear what is said, and obey what is best;" or, "O God, make me to hear good." Next he wipes his neck with the back of the fingers of both hands, making the ends of his fingers meet behind his neck, and then drawing them forward; and in doing so he says, "O God, free my neck from the fire; and keep me from the chains, and the collars, and the fetters." Lastly he washes his feet, as high as the ankles, and passes his fingers between the toes: he washes the right foot first, saying, at the same time,

"O God, make firm my feet upon the Sirat, on the day when feet shall slip upon it:" on washing the left foot, he says, "O God, make my labour to be approved, and my sin forgiven, and my works accepted, merchandise that shall not perish, by thy pardon, O Mighty, O very Forgiving; by thy mercy, O most Merciful of Those who shew mercy." After having thus completed the ablution, he says, looking towards heaven, "Thy perfection, O God, (I extol) with thy praise: I testify that there is no deity but Thou Alone: Thou hast no companion: I implore thy forgiveness, and turn to Thee with repentance." Then, looking towards the earth, he adds, "I testify that there is no deity but God: and I testify that Mohammad is his servant and his apostle." Having uttered these words, he should recite, once, twice, or three times, the "Soorat el-Kadr." or 97th chapter of the Koran.¹

Once the washing of the left foot commences, the prayer takes on a repentant tone; the emphasis is now on forgiveness, repentance, and God's pardon. We can see here that the washing of feet is closely connected to the forgiveness of sin. We observe this also in the frequency with which particular words are used. Some form of forgiveness is used three times, mercy three times, pardon and repentance once each. Therefore, when the worshipper engages in the wudū and praise God, "who hath sent down water for purification," he must be keenly aware that this water used in the wudū is meant to bring about more than physical cleansing, but rather serves as a commemoration that God, the all Merciful One, is the only One Who can forgive sin and extend pardon to the sinner.

That the washing of face, hands, and feet was closely associated with forgiveness of sin and spiritual and moral

¹Lane, 68-71.

cleansing is substantiated by the following quotation:

Said the Prophet of God: 'If a Moslem servant of God performs the ablution when he washes his face every sin which his face has committed is taken away by it with the water or with the last drop of water. And when he washes his hands the sin of his hands are taken away with the last drop of water. And when he washes his feet all the sins which his feet have committed are taken away with the water or with the last drop of water until he becomes pure from sin altogether'.¹

Faraq observes that while the Koran prescribes a ritual ablution (wudū) before each salāt, in actuality only two sects in Islam maintain this rite as obligatory,² Zāhiris³ and Shi'is.⁴

The observance of wudū, according to "all the schools" of Islam, "is indispensable for the validity of salāt only in case of minor hadath."⁵ Otherwise a full

¹Samuel M. Zwemer, The Influence of Animism on Islam (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1920), 45.

²"The system which was based on the Quran, the sunnah, consensus, (i jma'), and analogy (qihās) reduced the acts of the believer to five categories: 1. Obligatory, 2. Recommended but not obligatory, 3. Indifferent, 4. Disapproved but not forbidden, 5. Prohibited." Faraq, 32.

³"Al-Zāhiriya, a school of law, which would derive the law only from the literal text (zāhir) of the Kur'ān and Sunna." A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, eds., Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden, E. J. Brett, 1965), 649; Faraq, 32.

⁴"A sect in Islam that rent the Muslim world in twain since 'Ali, their leader, who was the fourth caliph." "The Shi'itis derive their name from the fact that they are par excellence the 'party' (Shi'a), that is, of 'Ali." W. M. Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology (Edinburgh: n.p., 1964), 3; Faraq, 32.

⁵Faraq, 33.

washing (bath) must be taken; the whole body, including the hair, must be cleansed.¹

In certain places among the Muslims, the custom of washing feet before entering still prevails. In "Afghanistan . . . custom compels strangers to have their feet washed before entering and the same is true of the city of Benin in Africa."²

Also, the practice of washing the bride's feet and anointing them persists even today in Egypt.³

From the above we can deduct that in Islam, as in Judaism, there is a close connection between water purification and the forgiveness of sin. The footwashing is an essential part of ritual purification, which prepares a person to draw close to God in prayer and communion.

Also, the rite of wudū is a reminder that a moral and ethically pure life is demanded of the worshipper. As mentioned earlier, many scholars have recognized the prominent influence Judaism has exerted on Islam.⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 36.

³Ibid., 36-37.

⁴"Indeed some scholars have concluded that the evidence for abundant and far-reaching Jewish influence on early Islam is overwhelming." Faraq, 24. For references, see *ibid.*, n. 1.

CHAPTER THREE

AN EXEGESIS OF JOHN 13:1-17

Chap. 13, and in particular, the footwashing account, begins a new section¹ or division² in the Gospel of John. Bultmann calls it a "radical" division³ that is brought about by the action of Jesus.

While some do not agree with dividing the Gospel at this point,⁴ it is nevertheless true that most interpreters

¹Smalley refers to John 13-20 as "Act Two." Stephen S. Smalley, John, Evangelist and Interpreter (Exeter: Attic Press, 1983), 200.

²"After closing Jesus' revelation to the world (12:36b) and emphasizing this with a final reflection on unbelief (12:37-43) and a summary of Jesus' revelatory discourse (12:33-50), the evangelist opens a new part of the gospel in Chapter 13." Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 1.

³"Durch die damit erreichte radikale Zweiteilung des Evg ist ein Grundgedanke auch äußerlich deutlich gemacht: Jesu Wirken ist die κρίσις, die Scheidung zwischen Licht und Finsternis bewirkt." Rudolf Bultman, The Gospel of John; a Commentary, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1971), 349.

⁴"By applying the principle of structural analysis of narrative in the examination of the Johannine passion narrative (story), the present study proposes to show that the account of the passion in the Fourth Gospel starts at 11:55." J. Owanga-Welo, "The Function and Meaning of the Footwashing in the Johannine Passion Narrative: A Structural Approach" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1980), 683.

agree that John 13:1 marks the most significant transition in the Gospel. Jesus shifts from a public ministry to instructing His disciples preparing them for the upcoming events.¹

It is true that the Gospel cannot be divided sharply² since many of the themes are found in both sections, as Barrett has noted, but there is an obvious shift not only in the audience but in subject material.

Text and Comments on John 13:1-11

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, rose from supper and taking a towel, girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel

¹"John turns from the completed public ministry to the final intimate hours of Jesus with his own disciples before his trial and death. This forms a major division in the book." Frank Pack, The Gospel According to John, vol. 2 (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Company, 1977), 42.

²Dodd divides the Gospel of John into the "The Book of Signs," and "The Book of the Passion." C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960), 297ff. Brown also divides the Gospel into two sections, designating them respectively as "The Book of Signs," including chaps. 1-12, and "The Book of Glory," including chaps. 13-21. Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John, The Anchor Bible series, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966). However, Barrett objects to calling the second section the book of Glory since that motif is present also in the first twelve chapters. Yet, he does agree that there is a new section beginning with chapter 13. C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), 357.

with which He was girded. And so He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now; but you shall understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean, and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean." John 13:1-11 (NASB)

Vss. 1-3

These verses not only introduce the footwashing but also serve as the introduction for the next part of the Gospel, that is, chaps. 13-20.¹ They also closely parallel John 1:1-3 and serve the same function primarily as what the latter do for the first section.² This section also contains several contrasts, which are later expanded and serve to alert the reader to be attentive. It contrasts the action of Jesus, motivated by love for His own, with the action of the devil and with that of Judas, who, although he is a recipient of that love, is about to betray Him.

Also, the perfect knowledge of Jesus³ is contrasted

¹Lohse, 130. Also, "The whole of vs. 1 may, as R. E. Brown has suggested, be a heading to the second main part of the gospel, in which the bow is stretched from the washing of the feet to the death of Jesus." Schnackenburg, 11.

²Lohse, 5, 131.

³"Jesus knows Nathanael before Philip called him (1:48); he knows all things, even what is in the hearts of others (2:24-25); he knows that the testimony about him is true (5:32); he knows what he is about to do (6:6); . . . when his disciples grumble about him (6:61); . . . who do not believe in him and . . . who his betrayers will be (6:64);

with the ignorance of Peter and the other disciples. Linguistically, the sentences here are participle constructions and are found nowhere else in the Gospel.¹ Some think this is evidence of multiple authors;² however, the unity of John 13 has been supported by many scholars based on different methods and procedures of investigation.³

Much scholarly discussion has been evoked concerning the meal that was in progress mentioned in vs. 2. Jeremias has provided strong evidence that the supper mentioned in this verse was the Passover also recorded in the Synoptics.⁴ John has been leading up to this climactic Passover. In

. . . the one who sent him (7:29; 8:55); . . . from whence he came and where he was going (8:14); . . . that the Father always hears him (11:42); . . . that the Father's command is eternal life (12:50)." Alan R. Culpepper, "The Johannine Hypodeigma: A Reading of John 13." Semeia 53 (1991): 135.

¹"Vss. 1-3 are linguistically overlaid in a way that does not occur elsewhere in the whole gospel. . . . The long sentence found in 13:2-4 consists of participle constructions and is unique in the gospel of John." Schackenburg, 7.

²Ibid., 10-12.

³See here Culpepper's comments on p. 148, n. 2 and 3, where he cites F. Mann's study on formal chiasm and inclusio, rather than narratological grounds.

⁴Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus (New York: Macmillan Company, 1955). See especially his chapter entitled "Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?" 1-60. "That there are Passover characteristics in the meal, even in John, is undeniable." Brown, 556. "In the upper chamber of a dwelling at Jerusalem, Christ was sitting at table with His disciples. They had gathered to celebrate the Passover." White, The Desire of Ages, 642, see also, 652, 653.

11:55 it is "drawing near." At the anointing in Bethany it was "six days before" (12:1), and now it is just before.¹ John does not stress the new covenant, which is so prominent in the Synoptics, but, instead focuses on Jesus' personal love for His disciples.² "Jesus showed His love" (ἠγαπησεν) for His disciples when He became their servant and washed their feet; "the aorist indicates a definite act,"³ and therefore must refer to that deed.

"He loved them to the end"; the end (εἰς τέλος) in this context can have a twofold meaning: "utterly, completely" and/or "to the end of life," i.e., "to the death."⁴ Barrett places the emphasis more on the "end";⁵

¹"There are at least three observances of the Passover given in John. The first one appears in 2:13, the second, midway of the ministry, in 6:4, and the final one in 11:55. The unnamed feast of 5:1 also may be a Passover. If so, it constitutes a fourth, and fixed the length of Jesus' ministry at three and one half years." Merrill C. Tenney, John: The Gospel of Belief (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 43.

²Bultmann, 352, following W. Bauer and some of the Greek Fathers, argues that the chronological phrase must modify the first participle (=Jesus was aware before Passover), because one cannot affix a date to Jesus' love." Brown, 330.

³Ibid., 550. Someone else comments: "ἀγαπησις relates to the whole ministry of Jesus, ἠγαπησεν to the footwashing." George R. Beasley-Murray, John, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 229.

⁴Ibid.

⁵"εἰς τέλος ἠγαπησεν αὐτοὺς. εἰς τέλος . . . it is probable that here . . . τέλος retains something of its primary significance of 'end'. Jesus loved his own up to

others, however, place the emphasis on the complete outpouring of Christ's love for His disciples.¹ Tenney thinks that the force here is the final demonstration and full extent of Christ's love on behalf of His disciples.²

The same author sees here a revelation of a seven-fold love, a perfect love of Jesus for His own. "First, it was a love that could not be quenched by evil";³ "second, it was a love that was tendered by Jesus in the full

the last moment of his life. Moreover τέλος recalls the eschatology of the earlier gospels; the 'hour' of Jesus, the hour of his suffering, was an anticipation of the last events." Barrett, 365.

¹"εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτοὺς. To translate these words 'He loved them unto the end,' although linguistically defensible, reduces the sentence to a platitude. This verse introduces an incident to which Jn. gives a good deal of space, and which he regards as of high consequence." John H. Bernard, John, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 2:454.

²"Jesus . . . because he loved his own that were in the world, made one final demonstration of that love." The significance is not that He loved them to the last of His life, but that He loved them to the uttermost degree of which He was capable. The historic scene that followed was a dramatic exposition of the greatness of Christ's love for the disciples, It was a preview of the meaning of the cross, in which the essential elements of the divine love for man were all represented." Tenney, 198.

³"The words, '. . . the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him' modify the verbs 'riseth,' 'layeth aside.' 'took.' 'girded himself'. The service by which Jesus expressed His care for His disciples was offered in spite of His full knowledge of the coming betrayal by Judas . . . and of the denial by Peter . . . the divine love was given spontaneously and freely." Ibid. "His love for them was not easily disturbed or quenched." White, The Desire of Ages, 645.

consciousness of His own exalted powers."¹ Third, His love "transcended the barriers of social class."² Fourth, "the love of Jesus was an active love." When none of the disciples showed himself willing to act the part of a servant, Jesus took the initiative. "The task, however disagreeable, had to be performed; and love took the initiative."³

"Fifth, love cleanses. The colloquy between Jesus and Peter was illustrative of a principle deeper than a mere argument over social standing. Later the meaning would be intelligible in the light of the cross which provided a cleansing for all men, without which no one could have a part in the heritage of the saints."⁴

"Sixth, the love's cleansing must be constant."⁵ "Finally, the statement, 'ye are clean, but not all,' showed . . . a lesson in spiritual truth. . . . The uncleanness of Judas,

¹"He deliberately subjected Himself to the needs of His disciples, and sacrificed Himself for them by submitting to an authority which was beneath Him." Tenney, 198.

²"He was fully conscious of divine origin and of divine destiny. Nevertheless He condescended to minister to those who were His natural inferiors. . . . The act of footwashing was an amazing example of condescension." Ibid.

³Ibid., 199.

⁴Ibid.

⁵"The words bathe and wash convey two different meanings. Bath (louo) meant a thorough washing of the entire body; wash (nipto) was descriptive of washing a part of the body, such as the face or hands. The essential uncleanness of the whole man might be removed once for all, but a constant cleansing was also necessary to remove the incidental defilement resulting from the casual contact of life. The washing of the feet was typical of the daily purification of the soul from the travel stains of pilgrimage." Ibid., 200.

to whom Jesus alluded by His remark, was not in his feet but in his heart."¹

Regardless of what might be said about the love of Jesus mentioned here, it certainly cannot be divorced from the act of footwashing. While it is true that it cannot be limited to that one act, it nevertheless was a revelation of that wonderful love that only Christ has for His own people.²

Vs. 3 tells the reader that the "hour" of Jesus is now at hand. Earlier the hour had not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). In 12:23 "the hour" has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Christ made it clear that He had come "to this hour" (12:27), but now the hour has come. It is the hour of His death, it is also the hour of the greatest manifestation of His love for His own, as well as the hour of victory, because it is the time of departure, out of this world and back to His Father. The whole life of Jesus was moving towards this hour. Until now, He had been

¹"The humiliation of Jesus was instrumental to the removal of spiritual uncleanness, and He intended that His followers should dedicate themselves to the same ministry." Ibid.

²"Having loved His own which were in the world, exhibited His love for them to the uttermost, i.e. gave that remarkable manifestation of His love for His disciples which is told in the narrative of the feet-washing that follows." Bernard, 455.

protected,¹ but now it is the hour also of darkness. As Bultmann says, the literal darkness was also reflected in that the world (Jews) had rejected Christ and it was night, utter darkness. But this darkness was about to be turned into glorious light and victory.²

Vs. 4

"During supper" (vs. 2) all this time Jesus has waited, giving opportunity for one of the disciples to wash the feet of the assembled company. Traditionally the feet were washed before the meal;³ however, none of the disciples was prepared to act as a servant, which increased the tension and made the situation more awkward.⁴

¹"From the very beginning, John makes it clear that there was an appointed hour for Jesus. Till that hour came He was perfectly safe. He was safe from men. But when His hour was come, nothing could prevent His death. The Gospel moves inevitable, remorselessly, to its predetermined climax." Leon Morris, The Cross in The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 158.

²"'The hour' that is the subject of the Book of Glory. It will see Jesus's death; this verse makes clear that in the Johannine conception Jesus approached his death as an act of love for those who believed in him. . . . These two ideas of love for the disciples he is leaving behind and of return to the Father intertwine to form the leitmotif of the Book of Glory." Brown, 563.

³"It was usual to wash feet only at the beginning of a meal." Schnackenburg, 16. See also chap. 1, where the footwashing always precedes the meal. Not one instance was found where the footwashing was rendered at any other time.

⁴"The disciples made no move toward serving one another. Jesus waited for a time to see what they would do. Then He . . . began to wash the disciples feet." White, The Desire of Ages, 644.

How different was Abraham's attitude toward the travellers, as they approached his dwelling: "Please," he said, "let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree" (Gen 18:4). He was ever the perfect gentleman. Yet, here are the disciples, who, after associating with Christ for so many years, observing and witnessing Christ's daily service to mankind, noticing His humility and love, were filled instead with hopes of position and thoughts of greatness on their own behalf. As one commentator observes: "They were ready to fight for a throne, but not for a towel!"¹

Finally, Jesus rises² and proceeds to wash the feet of His disciples. There is no condemnation, disappointment, or criticism, only love. Love always finds a way. And love finds the perfect moment, not only to serve, but to teach a lesson that will never be forgotten.

It should be noted that, "δειπου γινομενου . . . At 1 Cor. 11.20 it is used with reference to the agape or

¹Tenney, 199.

²"δειπου γινομενου'. 'While supper was going on', 'during supper'." Bernard, 455. "This Phrase actually comes before the rest of vs. 2 in a construction of two consecutive genitive absolutes: 'And the supper being in progress, the devil having put it . . . Jesus fully aware . . .'. There is strong attestation for an alternative reading: 'when the supper was over': however, vs. 26 indicates that there are still plates of food on the table." Brown, 551.

eucharist."¹

Vs. 4 is one of the most remarkable verses in Scripture. Here, Jesus takes on the role of a slave as He condescends to become the servant of servants. This verse is closely related to Phil 2:5-8 and in a deeper sense "acts out" the whole plan of Redemption.²

The action of Christ, here, has a sacramental nature, in the sense that a sacrament is an "expression of his salvific work," and represents, "the visible side of the pronouncements of God's redemptive word."³ Since word and sacrament must always be united and merged, and while it is true that the sacrament has no life apart from the word,⁴ at times a particular action may communicate a truth more

¹Barrett, 365.

²"F. B. Meyer saw in this paragraph (John 13:3-5), a cameo of the plan of salvation, and paraphrased it; 'He rose from His kingly throne, and laid aside His garments of royalty; and took the towel of humanity and wrapped it around Himself. After that He poured out His precious blood, and made possible the cleansing of His disciples'." Ivor Powell, John's Wonderful Gospel (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 275.

³Hans Schwarz, Divine Communication (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 51.

⁴"Calvin approves of the saying of Augustine that 'the elements only become sacraments when the Word is added', and himself adds the comment, 'Certainly if a man only brings his eyes and shuts his ears they will differ in no respect from the profane rites of the heathen'." Ronald S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), 135.

powerfully than can the word.¹

While the disciples expected Jesus to ascend the throne of David, He girded Himself with the garb of a servant,² and proceeded to fulfill the obligation and duty of a slave,³ to teach them the eternal principle, that His kingdom is based on love and service and that the way to glory is the path of humility, service, and even death for others.⁴

Now, Jesus, dressed as a slave, performs the duty of a slave.⁵ He does so in full consciousness of Who He is, where He came from, and where He is going. He, the King of kings, becomes the Servant of servants, and "ἔδωκεν" reminds

¹"Hitherto the spoken word had failed to enlighten their souls; now Christ 'showed' them the meaning of His utterances, He awakened their understanding." Powell, 275-276.

²"λιντιον, . . . The lintum is worn by a slave in Suetonius, Caligula, 26." Barrett, 366.

³"Jesus, the master, (v.13) stands up in order to do for the disciples what would normally be done by a slave." Bultmann, 466.

⁴"οτι απο θεου εξηλθεν και προς τον θεον υπαγει. . . Jesus was going to his eternal glory with the Father through the humiliation of the cross, of which the humiliation of the feet-washing was an intended prefigurement. The glory in humiliation is one of the major themes of chs. 13-17, and the opening active parable states it very clearly." Barrett, 439.

⁵"The action of Jesus in removing his outer garment and tying a towel around him underscores the humiliation of his action; the Midrash on Gen. 21:14 states that when Abraham sent Hagar away he gave her a bill of divorce, and took her shawl and girded it around her loins 'that people should know that she was a slave'." Beasley-Murray, 233.

us that He will always remain the Servant-King.¹

We must not forget that while it is true that Jesus' act of washing His disciples feet may well be an acted out parable (among other things), His actions and words are but the audible and visible manifestation of His eternal nature and being. Christ "is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever" (Heb 13:8). Thus, the footwashing is but a visible and perpetual reminder of what God is like and what He will do for His people.

The responsibility of washing someone's feet was such a menial task that in Jewish Society an Israelite slave could refuse to wash his master's feet; the gentile slave had no such option.²

The very fact that this necessary service was so ignoble gave an opportunity to the disciples to demonstrate their love and gratitude to their rabbis.³

¹"The primary intention here and in the next clause is to emphasize the humility of the Lord and Master, who stoops to serve his servants. Jesus washes their feet in full knowledge that he is the Son of God and the heavenly Man. εἰς αἰῶνα is a 'timeless' aorist." Barrett, 439.

²"Since feet shod only in sandals tend to get dusty on unpaved roads, it was customary hospitality to provide water for a guest to wash his own feet. But as the Midrash Mekilta on Exod XXI 2 tells us, the washing of a master's feet could not be required of a Jewish slave." Brown, 564f. "The washing of the master's feet was a menial task which was not required of the Jewish slave (in distinction from slaves of other nationalities)." Barrett, 366f.

³"Disciples were expected to perform acts of personal service for their rabbis." Barrett, 366f. "As a sign of devotion, however, occasionally disciples would render this

Apart from disciples washing their teacher's feet, as an act of devotion, wives and children would also wash their husbands' and fathers' feet, respectively. Some have seen in this only the menial nature of the footwashing,¹ while others have seen it as an act of love and gratitude, as is evident from an Alexandrian work, quoted by Brown.²

Regardless of how one might view this act--as a menial task usually reserved for the least of the slaves, therefore showing the magnificent condescension of the Son of God, or as a majestic act of love for His disciples, or both--Jesus completely reversed the social and cultural norms of His day, therefore, leaving a forceful lesson

service to their teacher or rabbi; and Jesus seems to allude to this custom in vss. 13-14. Thus, in the footwashing Jesus humiliates himself and takes on the form of a servant. It is almost as if he is acting out the words of Luke xii 37: 'Happy are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. . . . He will tie a cloth around Himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them'." Brown, 564f.

¹"The menial nature of footwashing in Jewish eyes is seen in its inclusion among works which Jewish slaves should not be required to do. . . . The task was reserved for Gentile slaves and for wives and children." Beasley-Murray, 233.

²"It is possible that, besides being seen as an act of Humble devotion, the footwashing would have been understood as a traditional act of love. Schwank, 'Exemplum,' points to chapter xx of 'Joseph and Asenath, an Alexandrian Jewish work probably composed between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100. When Asenath, Joseph's bride-to-be, offers to wash his feet, Joseph protests that a servant girl could do it; but Asenath exclaims devotedly: 'Your feet are my feet . . . another shall not wash your feet'." Brown, 564f. For a the complete quote of this reference, see chapter 1, p. 37.

behind that has caught the attention of all succeeding generations.¹

One thing we may be certain about in terms of intent: The footwashing performed by Jesus for His disciples was not an act of hospitality or social custom, since such a social practice was accomplished when a guest entered the house and certainly not while a meal was in progress. Nor is there any similar custom or ritual attached to the Passover.²

Vs. 5

In vs. 5, Peter is singled out as the only disciple mentioned by name whose feet are washed by Christ. However, it is likely that Jesus washed Judas's feet first,³ then

¹"The point in the present passage is that the natural relationship is reversed in an act of unnecessary and striking (as Peter's objection, vv. 6,8, shows), humility. In John's understanding the act is at once exemplary, revelatory, and salutary. The disciples must in turn wash each other's feet (vv. 14f.); the act of loving condescension reveals the love of Jesus for his own (v. 1), just as the mutual love of the disciples will reveal their relationship with Christ (v. 35); and the feet-washing represented a real act of cleansing." Barrett, 366f.

²"There was nothing in the ritual for the Passover meal that can be compared to the footwashing. Footwashing was done when one entered the house, not during the course of a meal. The Passover ritual prescribed a washing of the hands after the second cup, but there is no evidence that Jesus's action was a variant upon that custom." Brown, 564f.

³"Some, among them, Chrysostom, think that He came to the traitor first, who submitted to be washed without a word; then He came to Peter, and the others were instructed from his case." M. F. Sadler, The Gospel According to St. John (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898), 330. "Judas, in choosing his position at table, had tried to place himself first, and Christ as a servant served him first." White,

proceeded to wash each of the disciples in turn.¹ The Synoptics make it clear that all twelve disciples were present.² The washing was probably done by pouring water out of a pitcher over the disciple's feet, which then was caught in a basin.³

Vss. 6-8

When Jesus came to Peter, the latter was totally surprised⁴ and plainly embarrassed.⁵ And while there is

The Desire of Ages, 645.

¹"ἤρξατο. This word brings out the force of ἐρχεται in the next verse; he proceeded to wash each in turn. This is therefore not the redundant Semitic use of 'to begin' as an auxiliary." Barrett, 366.

²"Disciples. Who were at the Last Supper? At least ten people were necessary for a Passover meal. Mark xiv 17 and Matt. xxvi 20 mention the Twelve (Luke xxii 14, the apostles)." Brown, 551.

³"Orientals do not wash, as we do, in a basin which visibly retains the water that was been used; that they would regard as an unclean practice. The Eastern habit is to pour water from a ewer over hands or feet (cf. 2 Kings 3:13, where Elisha performs this duty for his master Elijah), the water being caught below in a basin with a strainer, and then passing through the strainer out of sight." Bernard, 459f.

⁴"Dost thou. . . . The position of the pronouns in the original . . . brings out the sharp contrast of the persons. The thought of the kind of service is subordinated to the fact of service rendered by the Master to the servant." B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (London: John Murray, 1882), 367.

⁵"The key to the symbolism of the footwashing lies in the conversation between Jesus and Peter. It is difficult to be certain whether in voicing his objection Peter is a spokesman for the other disciples (as in vi 68) or is acting impetuously on his own (as in xviii 10, xxi 7). Although

real consideration for Jesus, there is also a complete lack of understanding of what Jesus is doing.¹ Nevertheless, Jesus assured Peter that true understanding will come, pointing to the post-resurrection period, and especially, to Pentecost.²

Yet, Peter becomes more adamant; he even uses an oath,³ assuring Jesus that He will "never" wash his feet; not realizing, in his ignorance, that he was rejecting his

the conversation has its symbolic overtones, there is nothing implausible in the basic implication, namely, that Peter was embarrassed at his master's gesture." Brown, 565. "When Peter's turn came, he exclaimed with astonishment, 'Lord, dost thou wash my feet?' Christ's condescension broke his heart. He was filled with shame to think that one of the disciples was not performing this service." White, The Desire of Ages, 645.

¹"The impression is given of Peter spluttering in astonishment and incomprehension! It is strangely akin, however, to his objection to Jesus' announcement of his impending rejection, sufferings, and death through the Jewish leaders (Mark 8:32-33); both occasions manifest a real concern for the Master but a total lack of understanding of his actions." Beasley-Murray, 233.

²"μετα ταυτα refers to the decisive turning-point that is now imminent, to the death and resurrection of Jesus. For then the Spirit could bestow knowledge, and lead into all truth (14.26; 16:13); then Jesus would no longer speak in riddles, but in plain language (16.25), then the disciples would be able to judge what Jesus had done for them in his act of service." Bultmann, 467.

³"Moreover, if we examine the passages from the Gospels where someone other than Jesus or the angel of God (Lk. 1.15) uses οὐ μὴ, we always find it in oath-like assurances (Mark 14.31 par.; Matt. 16.22; John 13.8." Jeremias, The Eucharist Words of Jesus, 166.

Lord.¹

Jesus immediately makes it clear to Peter that by refusing the footwashing, which is a symbol of a cleansing accomplished by Christ and therefore necessary for salvation, Peter loses his portion or inheritance (μερος)² in Christ, that is, in His kingdom. Only then does Peter surrender.³ It becomes clear from this interchange between Peter and Jesus that, first, the footwashing is extremely important, and, second, the reader is stimulated to inquire what the significance of this service or rite might be for the believer.

¹"Peter for all his apparent devotion to Jesus is in danger of taking the wrong side. His objection to receiving Jesus' love and service is in fact Satanic pride. . . . If Peter is not washed he will have no share in the benefits of Jesus' passion, and no place among his people." Barrett, 367. "He [Peter] was really rejecting his Lord." White, The Desire of Ages, 646.

²"μερος is used among Jews of having a part in an inheritance, notably in the promised land, and then eschatologically in the kingdom of God (cf. 15:12; Matt 24:51; Rev 20:6; and for the thought here, Luke 22:29-30). The concept of 'a part with me' is developed in 14:3; 17:24." Beasley-Murray, 233f.

³"Christ meets the confidence of the Apostle with a declaration of the necessary separation which must ensue from the want of absolute submission. 'Unless I render thee this service, unless, that is, thou receivest that which I offer, even when thou canst not understand my purpose, thou hast no part with me.' The first condition of discipleship is self-surrender." Westcott, 191. "Peter surrendered his pride and self-will. He could not endure the thought of separation from Christ; that would have been death to him." White, The Desire of Ages, 646.

Vs. 9

In this verse Peter asks for more than what Jesus offers,¹ which is typical of this disciple. It also emphasizes that he has not comprehended the meaning of Jesus' words.²

Vs. 10

With we come to the most important text in the footwashing pericope, since the meaning and theology of the footwashing is directly affected by how vs. 10 is interpreted. Scholars are divided on this issue.

There are seven variant readings,³ which can be reduced to two basic readings; the shorter text omits εἰ μὴ τοὺς ποδας.

¹"μὴ νιψῆς must be supplied. If washing is to be the only way to have fellowship with Christ, Peter would be washed entirely, no part of him being left unwashed." Barrett, 367.

²"It is clear, then, that he has not understood Jesus' words at the deeper level and that he has even misunderstood 'washing' in the figurative sense. Johannine misunderstandings frequently arise because of such words with two meanings, which can be interpreted both purely externally and disinterestedly on the one hand and metaphorically, and in the light of salvation on the other hand (see 3:3ff; 4:10-14, etc.). These have a different function with different persons who hear them. Unlike the Jews, who, in 7:34f; 8:21, are shown to be, in their unbelief, at a great distance from Jesus, Peter is seen here as unenlightened in his zeal and faith (see also 13:37). This characteristic is also stressed in 21:7." Schnackenburg, 20.

³The United Bible Societies Greek New Testament lists seven variants on John 13:10. For a complete listing of these, see: Thomas, 19.

The fact that six variant readings include εἰ μὴ τοὺς ποδας prompts some scholars to argue that the longer reading cannot be the original.¹ Yet, others see in these variants attempts to bring the passage into harmony with the different instructions concerning priestly purification rites.² Some contend that the existence of variant readings is to be expected if the longer text is original³ and constitutes sound evidence that εἰ μὴ τοὺς ποδας is, in fact, the more ancient reading.⁴

The United Bible Society has included the longer reading based on its superior textual support.⁵ The longer

¹"The variants in other MSS betray uncertainty. The Textual evidence thus suggests that they are not original, but have been added in an attempt to clarify the sense." B. Lindars, The Gospel of John (London: Oliphants, 1972), 451.

²"So scheinen die Varianten des Textes nur die Verschiedenheiten priesterlicher Waschungs Vorschriften widerzuspiegeln." ET: "So, it seems that the variants in the text only reflect different priestly purification instructions." E. Lohmeyer, "Die Fusswaschung," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (1939): 86.

³"The kinds of variants attested in these witnesses are just the sorts of modification one might expect to appear if the phrase were original." Thomas, 20.

⁴"If the words εἰ μὴ τοὺς ποδας are omitted . . . the answer of Jesus is clear, 'He that has been bathed needs not to wash.' But the variants show that τοὺς ποδας was probably in the original text, and that the omission of the words is due either to *homoioteleuton* or to the difficulty of reconciling εἰ μὴ τοὺς ποδας with the words ἀλλ' ἐστὶν καθάρος ὁλος which follow." Bernard, 462.

⁵"The UBS committee included it in view of its superior external attestation; they assumed that the phrase was omitted either by accident or through the difficulty of reconciling it with the immediately following clause."

reading undoubtedly must be the original, if the Johannine community practiced the footwashing, as a number of scholars believe.¹

Most modern scholars follow Bultmann² in opting for the shorter reading.³ This is obviously not based on textual evidence but rather a theological concern, in that this group believes that the cleansing referred to by Jesus, and symbolized by the footwashing, points to Jesus' substitutionary death and has no other application or

Beasley-Murray, 229. "The former (longer text), is supported by the majority of MSS., including B W (P⁶⁶ D Θ) and most of the VSS. The latter is supported only by κ vg (the original text-see W.W.), together with some old Latin text and Origen." Barrett, 441.

¹"It is the thesis of this paper that foot washing was practiced in the Johannine community. The community would not have preserved the command, 'you also ought to wash one another's feet' (xiii 14b), if it had not been obeying the command." Weiss, 300. "This investigation has demonstrated the strong probability that the Johannine community engaged in the practice of footwashing as a religious rite." Thomas, 188. "Instead of the washing of hands belonging to the Jewish Kiddush he substitutes a rite of the Ephesian Church, a washing of the feet of the Bride. In 13.10 it is interpreted to symbolize removal of post-baptismal sin, that all the Church's members may be sanctified, cleansed by the washing of water with the word." B. W. Bacon, "The Sacrament of Footwashing," Expository Times 43 (1931-32): 221.

²For Bultmann the footwashing is representative or symbolic. He says: "The footwashing represents . . . Jesus' service, which he performs, through the word, and as the word, on behalf of his own." Bultmann, 472f.

³Barrett, Boismard, Lightfoot, Hoskyns, to list a few. Most older scholars opted for the longer reading, however, some modern scholars also adapted the longer reading, such as Haenchen and Bruce. For a more comprehensive list of both groups, see Beasley-Murray, 229.

purpose.¹ Therefore, these commentators are convinced that a second washing is unacceptable.

J. A. T. Robinson is convinced that those who maintain that the shorter reading is the only acceptable option in vs. 10 are, perhaps, motivated by their anti-sacramental convictions, rather than the objective textual evidence.²

Even those who contend for the shorter reading admit that the longer reading makes better sense,³ and if read the way it stands, points to a perpetual post-baptismal

¹"A number of commentators have looked for internal support of the shorter reading. Several such considerations have been proposed for preferring the omission of εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας. Basically, they all are tied to the thesis that the footwashing prefigures the complete cleansing (v. 10) accomplished in Jesus' sacrificial death." Thomas, 20. "Therefore, in spite of its scanty external support, many scholars defend the shorter reading on the basis of internal consideration." Ibid., 22.

²"The shorter reading, which omits εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας, is, I am inclined to think, simply a mistake. If τοὺς πόδας alone were missing it would make sense to say that 'he who has had a bath only needs to wash', but to say that 'he has no need to wash' cannot be squared in the context with Jesus' insistence on the absolute necessity of the washing (v. 8). The longer reading has now the further support of P⁶⁶ (which makes the point even more strongly by adding μόνος, with D). It is evidence of the wishful thinking of those in the Bultmann tradition (who would like to excise all sacramental references in the fourth Gospel) that E. Lohse, 'Wort und Sakrament im Johannesevangelium', N.T.S. VII (1961), 113, can actually write, 'The addition εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας is also missing from P⁶⁶!'. John A. T. Robinson, "The Significance of the Foot-Washing," Neotestamentica et Patristica, Supplement to Novum Testamentum, 6 (1962): 146, n. 3.

³"It is easier to understand the addition of 'except for the feet' than its omission." Beasley-Murray, 229.

cleansing.¹

Bultmann also concurs with that interpretation when he says (speaking about the longer text):

Read that way, v. 10 speaks about two washings, a foregoing, comprehensive, the full bath, and one following, partial, the footwashing. The first was the decisive one, the second, although still necessary, only of secondary significance.²

But Bultmann does not think this is in harmony with Johannine thought, and, after all, he posed the question: "What is meant by two washings?" He then points to the most common interpretation of his day, where in his words: "λούεσθαι points to baptism as the 'general cleansing', the footwashing to the Lord's Supper, which forgives the new, unavoidable sins."³ It is unclear what is meant in Bultmann's reference when he says that the Lord's Supper forgives the new unavoidable sins.

Nevertheless, he is opposed to both interpretations, since they emphasize "two necessary cleansings," and he is

¹"If . . . the common reading be retained, the sense will be that the limited cleansing, as now symbolized, is all that is needed. He who is bathed needs, so to speak, only to remove the stains contracted in the walk of life; just as the guest, after the bath, needs only to have the dust washed from his feet when he reaches the house of his host." Westcott, 150.

²"Liest man es, so redet V. 10 von zwei Waschungen, einer vorausgehenden, umfassenden, dem Vollbad, und einer folgenden, partiellen, der Fußwaschung. Die erste wäre die entscheidende, the zweite, wenngleich noch notwendig, so doch zweiten Ranges." Bultmann, 357.

³Ibid.

stressing that in his understanding the text clearly teaches that λελουμενος is referring to καθαρος ολος, and according to Bultmann, the two are incompatible.¹

Another important question the exegete faces in vs. 10 is how to interpret λελουμενος and νιψασθαι. How one understands the meaning of these two verbs and expounds them is closely related to the question discussed above. For, if λελουμενος and νιψασθαι point to different washings (cleansings), then the longer text obviously is correct and the meaning is quite clear. If, however, λελουμενος and νιψασθαι are synonyms, then only one washing (cleansing) is referred to, and the shorter text would give a clearer meaning.

The meanings of the words are relatively easy to trace in the New Testament, as well as in secular society. Λελουμενος and various forms are used several times. "λελουμενος. . . part. perf. pass. . . λουω . . . to bathe the body, as distinguished from washing only the extremities, John. 13.10; to bath, wash, Ac. 9.37; 16.33; He. 10.22; 2 Pe. 2.22; met. to cleanse from sin, Re. 1.5."²

Bauer gives it the same meaning: "wash, as a rule of

¹Ibid., 358.

²The Analytical Greek Lexicon (1972), s.v. "λουω." "λουτρον" is closely related in meaning: "a bath, washing, ablution, Eph. 5.26; Tit. 3.5." Ibid.

the whole body, bathe."¹ In Kittel's it is made clear that λουω needs to be distinguished from νιπτειν, which refers to a partial washing like hands, feet, and face.²

λουω was a word clearly understood in everyday life as referring to bathing the whole body, which was customarily done before being a dinner guest at someone's home. Arriving there, only the feet, which became soiled in the sandaled feet, needed washing.³ The verb "to bathe" is often used as a synonym of baptism in the New Testament,⁴ and is closely associated with the cleansing that only the blood of Jesus Christ can accomplish.⁵

¹Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (1979), s.v. "λουω."

²"λουω: 'As distinct from πλυνειν for the washing of clothes and νιζειν or νιπτειν for washing the face, hands, or feet, λουειν is normally used for the complete cleansing of the body . . . in the sense 'to wash,' 'to bathe,' . . . 'to take a bath'." Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1975), s.v. "λουω."

³"ο λελουμενος . . . λουειν is frequently used of bathing the whole body. . . .Guests were accustomed to bathe before they went to a feast. . . ; when they arrived at the house where they were to have dinner or supper, it was only necessary that their feet should be washed." Bernard, 462.

⁴"The verb 'to bathe,' louein, and its cognates are standard NT vocabulary for Baptism. In Acts xxii 16 Ananias says to Saul: 'Rise and be baptized and wash away [apolouein] your sins, calling on his name.' Titus iii 5 proclaims: 'He saved us...by the bath [loutron] of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.' See also 1 Cor. vi 11; Eph. v 26; Heb. x 22; and the variant in Rev. i 5." Brown, 565f.

⁵"Cleansing by Baptism and by Jesus' blood are not mutually exclusive (cf. Heb. ix 22 with x 22; Titus ii 14 with iii 5). The fact that John does not explicitly mention

ὑΠΤΕΙΝ, on the other hand, refers to a partial washing.¹ The word was thus used throughout the Mediterranean world and the Near East, dating back hundreds of years² and was employed that way in Rome as well, as we can gather from a letter written by Seneca.³

Based on the above information we must therefore conclude that the longer text has by far the best textual support and is to be accepted as the original. In this way it lends support to the belief that the footwashing was

the cleansing aspect of Baptism does not necessarily mean that this aspect was unknown to the Johannine community. Indeed, cleansing from sin was so much a part of the Jewish expectation of the eschatological washing . . . that it could scarcely have been absent from any Christian understanding of Baptism." Ibid.

¹"ὑΠΤΩ. . . to wash; sac. to wash some part of the person, as distinguished from λουω, Mat. 6.17; Jon. 13.8." The Analytical Greek Lexicon (1972), s.v. "ὑΠΤΩ."

²"ὑΠΤΕΙΝ to the partial washing of living persons, and λουεῖν or λουεσθαι to full washing or bathing. . . .In the OT, too, washings are important, esp. to establish cultic purity. The LXX follows the Gk. use of ὑΠΤΕΙΝ for the partial washing of persons (Gn. 18:4; 19:2 ὑΠῶ), then for cultic washings. . . .The NT, too, uses ὑΠΤΕΙΝ in the Greek sense of partial washing. . . .In the foot-washing of Jn. 13 ὑΠΤΕΣΘΑΙ . . . too, . . . means partial washing." Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1975), s.v. "ὑΠΤΕΙΝ."

³"It is stated by those who have reported to us the old-time ways of Rome that the Romans washed only their arms and legs daily, because those were the members which gathered dirt in the daily toil and bathed all over only once a week." Seneca ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, vol. 2, trans. R. M. Gummerie (London: William Heinemann, 1920), 317.

practiced in the Johannine community.¹

λουω and νιπτειν are clearly defined words that were used in the Jewish, Roman, and Hellenistic culture to make a distinction between a partial washing and a full bath. Not one source has been cited by proponents advocating that these verbs be treated as synonyms to substantiate their view. It would be difficult to assume that John, who uses words and language so effectively to his advantage, would set these linguistically well-known verbs side by side as synonyms without antecedent, while being aware that his readers would not understand them as expressing one and the same thought.

The longer text, aside from having the better objective support, also fits in much better with the context and with the theology, as I hope to show below.²

Another observation is that once the longer text is accepted as the original, commentators, almost without fail, see two cleansings (washings) referred to here: The first, λουω, pointing to baptism; the second, νιπτω, to a required continuous perpetual cleansing that deals with the post-

¹On this point, see p. 19, n. 5.

²Another scholar who opts for the longer text is F. F. Segovia who lists three reasons: "a. The external attestation is much superior; b. The reading can be satisfactorily explained in the context of the Gospel narrative; c. The shorter reading can be readily explained as an attempt to smooth out what could be construed as an irreconcilable clash with the following." See, Thomas, 25, n. 2.

baptismal sins of God's people as they walk in this life.¹

Vs. 11

Vs. 11 serves as a constant reminder that the footwashing itself, even when performed by Jesus Himself, is no guarantee of heart cleansing and spiritual purity. It dissolves any false security an individual might have, based on church membership.² It also figures into the theological understanding of the footwashing. What is it to accomplish

¹"He that has been once cleansed needs only to wash off by acts of repentance and confession the sins of infirmity onto which he falls in the path of daily life. The application to the Apostles seems to be of this sort. By their acceptance of Christ and steadfast adherence to Him they were in a measure clean, but they had yet faults to be cleansed from; as, for instance, the desire of pre-eminence. It was from faults of this sort that this foot-washing by our Lord's hands was an outward cleansing typical of an inward one, and their humble and devout reception of it was the state of mind required on their part in order that it should not be to them a dead form." Sadler, 333. "Der Langtext den die EÜ bietet, bringet das Erfordernis der Fußwaschung ein, die aber dann noch aussteht und eigentlich nur als eine stets zu wiederholende gedacht sein kann. . . . Trotz unterschiedlichster Deutungen ist jetzt mit dem Bad vermutlich die Taufe gemeint . . . und mit der immer wieder zu gewährenden Fußwaschung die in den Gemeinden praktizierte Sündenvergebung." ET: "The long text, which the EÜ offers, demands the footwashing, which in that case is still outstanding and actually can only be thought of as a perpetually repeated one. . . . In spite of various interpretations, the bath, with all probability, points to baptism, and the perpetually repeated footwashing, to forgiveness of sins, practiced in the congregations." Joachim Gnllka, Johannesevangelium (Würzburg, Echter-Verlag, 1983), 106.

²"In v. 11 the Evangelist has inserted the comment that amongst the disciples there is one who is unclean: the betrayer. . . ; the intention is rather to destroy any false security of belief. . . . Even to belong to the circle of disciples whose feet have been washed by Jesus is no guarantee." Bultmann, 473.

or teach and what might be its effectiveness, if after participating in the rite, you may still be unacceptable in God's sight?

Many critical scholars believe that vss. 6-11 and vss. 12-20 are from different authors or were supposedly added at separate intervals, since one supposedly teaches a moral lesson, while the other expounds an ethical one. Not only have others seen a literary unit in John 13,¹ but there also exists theological unity. The person who is cleansed by Jesus now lives a new life in the Spirit, a life of Christ-likeness, of love, humility, and service for others. He who abides in Christ will bear fruit unto righteousness.²

It also reaffirms vss. 1-3, that Jesus is not unaware of Satan's activities and Judas's³ receptivity to betray his

¹Christoph Rau, Struktur und Rhythmus im Johannes-Evangelium (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag Urachhaus, 1972).

²"γινώσκετε τι πεποίηκα ὑμῖν; Cf. v. 7. The interpretation of the act of Jesus seems now to change. In the preceding verses it was a symbolical action (like those of the Old Testament prophets), indicative of the purification effected by Jesus in men's hearts. Here it becomes an example of humility. The two interpretations do not however exclude but rather imply each other. The purity which Jesus effects consists in an active and serviceable humility. Those who have been cleansed by him do in fact love and serve one another, and there is no other test of their having been cleansed than this (v. 35; cf. 1 John 3.16f., 23; 4.11 et. al.). The death of Christ is at once the means by which men are cleansed from sin, and the example of the new life which they must henceforth follow." Barrett, 369.

³"Betrayal. Literally 'the one who was handing him over,' a present participle suggesting that the betrayal was already in process. . . . However, EWJ, p. 179, thinks of it as an Aramaism, namely, a present used with a future

Lord. The certainty that Jesus is aware of His impending betrayal by one of His chosen will give faith to His disciples in the future.¹

Text and Comments on John 13:12-17

And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither one is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He Who Eats My Bread Has Lifted Up His Heel Against Me.' From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

Now, that the actual deed of washing His disciples² feet is completed,³ now, after the love and humility of meaning." Brown, 552.

¹"A year before, Jesus had told the disciples, that He had chosen twelve, and that one was a devil. Now His words to Judas, showing that his treachery was fully known to his Master, would strengthen the faith of Christ's true followers during His humiliation. And when Judas should have come to his dreadful end, they would remember the woe that Jesus had pronounced upon the betrayer." White, The Desire of Ages, 655.

²"ΟΤΕ. . . ΟΥΤΩΝ 'When then He had washed their feet,' ΟΥΤΩΝ indicating that he ministered to them all." Bernard, 465.

³"It becomes immediately clear from the use of ΟΥΤΩΝ that Jesus' exemplary action is not just an illustration, floating as it were in empty space; on the contrary, the disciples have actually experienced it performed on

Christ have caused a changed attitude and spirit in the hearts of the disciples, they are now prepared to receive instruction. Jesus, the Servant-King, now asks if His act has been comprehended, for His disciples must not only understand, but must become like Him;¹ and He is now ready to instruct His followers concerning the importance of community, and of how members in that community ought to act towards each other.²

Vs. 13

This verse stresses Christ's rightful position and therefore His relationship to His disciples. Perhaps Jeremias is correct, that this whole service of Jesus in the context of the Passover can only be understood in an eschatological sense,³ and we must later return to that

themselves." Bultmann, 474.

¹"Jesus is . . . among the disciples 'as one who serves' and, in the context (v. 20), the disciples are also invited to serve in the same way." Schnackenburg, 23.

²"The reader is skillfully invited to reflect once again on the meaning of Jesus' washing of his disciple's feet by the introductory question in this verse. What follows is an explanation that is directed towards the community and obliges its members to see it in this way." Ibid., 23.

³"The self-humiliation of Jesus in ministering to his disciples like a slave (John 13.1-17; Luke 22.27), can be seen in its true depth only when it is realized that this is the Messiah serving at the Messiah's meal. . . .After Peter's confession every act of eating and drinking with the master is table fellowship of the redeemed community with the redeemer, a wedding feast, a pledge of a share in the meal of the consummation." Jeremias, 205.

theme. However, the disciples need to understand that Jesus has reversed the socially acceptable norms,¹ and from now on the members and, perhaps especially, the leaders in Christ's community must remember that humility and service, springing forth out of love for the Master and fellow believers, must be pre-eminent.

Vs. 14

Here the implication is quite clear, "if I--then you," and is closely related to vs. 34, where the disciple is to be just like his Master.² This construction was not unfamiliar to the disciples³ and therefore clearly understood as mandatory. The obligation is that of a debt⁴

¹"διδασκαλος και ο κυριος . . . vocative. . . . A rabbi might expect his feet to be washed by his disciples . . . A κυριος, a potentate whether divine or human, might expect any service from his inferiors (the word correlative to κυριος is δουλος)." Barrett, 369.

²"What Jesus has done for the disciples (v. 12) is explained in terms of example: if he whom they acknowledge as 'Teacher' and 'Master' (revered terms) stooped to perform a slave's task for them, how much more readily should the disciples do the like for each other! The καθως εγω . . . και υμεις ("Just as I . . . you also") recalls the use of the formula in 13:34: Christlike, Christ-inspired love will enable fellow believers so to act toward one another." Beasley-Murray, 235f.

³"If I . . . you too. This type of argument, a *minori ad maius*, was frequently used by the rabbis." Barrett, 369.

⁴"Ye also ought. . . . The obligation is of a debt incurred (οφειλετε): . . . The interpretation given is thus that of the duty of mutual subjection and service, and specially with a view to mutual purifying." Westcott, 151.

that must be paid. Οφείλω means "to owe, be indebted, . . . to be bound or obliged by what is due or fitting or consequently necessary, Lu. 17.10; Jn. 13.14,"¹ It is evident from οφείλετε that each member of the community has an obligation resting upon himself, indeed, a moral obligation placed there by the Master, to serve each other by washing each other's feet.² It constitutes an essential duty on the part of each individual and, if executed in love, will maintain harmony and unity within the community.

Vs. 15

In vs. 15, Jesus reiterates the above obligation and underscores the necessity for each disciple to follow His example.³ Jesus' example is an objective truth that can and

¹The Analytical Greek Lexicon (1972), s.v. "οφείλω."

²"οφείλω. . . to owe someone something. . . Of other things owed, including spiritual: . . . οφείλω, then, reaches over from the legal sphere into the moral, and from this into the religious. The negative concept of payment becomes the positive one of moral indebtedness and obligation. The idea of obligation as a commitment." In the OT: "The main idea here is not that of inner obligation, but of the Law and the divine will, God's imperious statutes, to which man must render obedience, Mi. 6:8; Ex. 20; Dt. 4:1f. . . Philo . . . speaks of οφείλειν as a positive duty and obligation of man." Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1975), s.v. "οφείλω."

³"The exemplary nature of Jesus' action is also emphasized in v. 15. The word υποδειγμα is a late Greek synonym for παραδειγμα and occurs only once in the Johannine writings. It is, however, found with the same meaning in Jas. 5:10 (where the prophets are given as examples), and in a pejorative sense in Heb. 4:11 and 2 Pet. 2:6." Schnackenburg, 24.

is to be studied, comprehended, and followed by every believer. It is closely related to the new commandment, since Jesus' motive in washing His disciples' feet was His 'uttermost and complete' love for His own, which also permitted Him to lay down His life for them.¹ The example of Jesus, therefore, is a constant reminder, a call to love one's brother at any cost,² and serve him in whatever capacity is necessary. The love of Jesus, as illustrated in the footwashing, brought cleansing (forgiveness, purity), and a new attitude within them toward one another.³ Wherefore, this example was instituted by Christ as an object lesson and reminder of His effective love of cleansing and forgiveness and given to the Church as a gift by which to remember His love for them and a reminder that this love needs to be practiced among them, resulting in forgiveness and unity. Therefore, the practice is to be

¹"The evangelist's disciples also interpreted the example of the washing of the feet in the 'new commandment' as extreme love, the giving of one's life or at least the giving of one's possessions (1 Jn 3:16f.)." Schnackenburg, 24.

²"It will be observed that the example of Christ is always offered in connection with some form of self-sacrifice." Westcott, 152.

³"Their hearts must be cleansed. Pride and self-seeking created dissention and hatred, but all this Jesus washed away in washing their feet. A change of feeling was brought about." White, The Desire of Ages, 646.

continued¹ as an ordinance and religious rite.²

Vs. 16

In vs. 16 Jesus accents the relationship between Himself as Lord, Teacher, and Sender, and His disciples as His ambassadors, or messengers. Some distinctions need attention.

First, they must always remain conscious that they represent Him, not some abstract teaching or philosophy.³

¹"And in the course of the development the peculiarity inherent in the command of love will emerge: viz. that it is a command binding on the circle of those in discipleship, on the community. Admittedly in the source it would be hard to take the ἀλλήλων of v. 14 as referring to the limited circle of those in discipleship." Bultmann, 475.

²"The custom of 'feet-washing' has been continued in various forms in the Church. . By a decree (Can. 3) of the xviiiith Council of Toledo (694) it was made obligatory on the Thursday in Holy Week 'throughout the Churches of Spain and Gaul'. . In 1530 Wolsey washed, wiped and kissed the feet of 59 poor men at Petersborough. . . The practice was continued by English sovereigns till the reign of James II.; and as late as 1731 the Lord High Almoner washed the feet of the recipients of the royal gifts at Whitehall on 'Maundy Thursday.' The present custom of 'feet-washing' in St. Peter's is well known. The practice was retained by the Mennonites; and also by the United Brethren." Westcott, 152. "'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.' In these words Christ was not merely enjoining the practice of hospitality. More was meant than the washing of the feet of guests to remove the dust of travel. Christ was here instituting a religious service. By the act of our Lord this humiliating ceremony was made a consecrated ordinance." White, The Desire of Ages, 650. "The idea of the washing of feet as a 'sacrament' has also been suggested in modern times by Protestant exegetes." Schnackenburg, 24.

³"The second part, which compares one who is sent with one who sends him, is derived from the Jewish law relating to messengers and its article: 'the one sent by a

Therefore, they must live as He lived, and exercise authority the way He did--with love and compassion, with humility and tender-kindness.¹

Second, they must not live under the allusion that they will be treated differently from their Master.² After all, the footwashing is above all an example of Christ's love, Who bore with their sins, pride, and slowness of heart, and it is to be a constant reminder that they too must be loving. While the believer and unbeliever alike may not be able to grasp the great doctrines and principles of truth, they can and will respond to acts of love and compassion.³

man is like the man himself'. This legal article is variously reflected in the Christian tradition." Schnackenburg, 25.

¹"But His disciples must learn the nature of Christian authority, since they will have to exercise authority. As the slave is not greater than his master, so an Apostle of Jesus is not greater than He from whom he received his commission. The behaviour of the disciples of Jesus must be conditioned by His behaviour." Edwyn C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 440.

²"The meaning here is plain. The disciples are not to expect better treatment than their Lord received, nor are they to think themselves too important to perform the acts of service which he performed." Barrett, 370.

³"Humility and love are just the graces which the men of the world can understand, if they do not comprehend doctrines. They are graces about which there is no mystery, and they are within reach of all classes. The poorest and most ignorant Christian can find occasion for practicing love and humility every day." J. C. Ryle, John (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 253.

As to the question of ἀποστολος, there is some disagreement that it carries here the same force or technical meaning as in other parts of the New Testament,¹ or if it should be simply understood as "messenger."² Since the Gospel of John is one of the latest books included in the New Testament canon, it is likely that ἀποστολος in fact refers to the office (as it is used by the apostle Paul) and accompanying authority; however, it is more likely that in this context the character, attitude, and service of the individual are emphasized.

Vs. 17

With vs. 17 we come to the last verse in this chapter dealing directly with the footwashing. It lays emphasis on the footwashing in a final way by pronouncing a blessing upon the person who not only understands (οἶδατε), but also

¹"Messenger. The word apostolos has the meaning of emissary in the basic parabolic comparison, but it is not impossible that John is thinking of the disciples as 'apostles,' i.e., those sent to preach the resurrection." Brown, 553.

²"ἀποστολος is used here only in John, though the cognate verb ἀποστελλειν is common, as is πεμπειν. It is not here a technical term (as it often is in the New Testament), but is used simply as a verbal noun, almost equivalent to ἀποστολεις or ἀπεσταλμενος. The fact that it is used with του πεμψαντος αυτον shows clearly that John did not distinguish between the two roots and groups of words." Barrett, 370. "Αποστολος, within the sphere of the parabolic saying, means 'Messenger', not 'apostle'. . . . ποστ. only here in John." Bultmann, 477.

practices (ποιητε) it.¹ Μακαριοι is the blessing "that refers overwhelmingly to the distinctive religious joy which accrues to the man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God."² Therefore it might be that the blessing does not come as a result of washing one's brother's feet, but more likely when one experiences the spiritual blessing of the reality to which the footwashing points, forgiveness received and accepted from God, and extended to one's brother in Christ.³ In that scenario, cleansing, as a result of confession and reconciliation, results in communion with God and the believer is pronounced 'clean' by Christ and has the assurance of eternal life, that is,

¹ἵνα ταῦτα οἰδατε. . . .Probably the construction is *ad sentum* and John means, 'If you know that, in view of these considerations and of what you have seen, it is a good thing to wash one another's feet, happy are you if you do it.' V. 16 is almost parenthetical. John elsewhere (12.47 f.), emphasizes the necessity of doing as well as hearing the word of Jesus; so indeed does the New Testament as a whole, e.g. Matt. 7.21, 24-27." Barrett, 370.

²Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, (1975), s.v. "Μακαριοι."

³If, as we hope to show, the footwashing is a call to repent and forgive, then the blessing here may well refer to the result of what the footwashing is to accomplish; reconciliation with God and man. David says: "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered." Ps 32:1 (NASB). Then the blessing is not received by the actual washing of feet, but by what it symbolizes, and the resulting peace and communion experienced with God and within the community. It is thus used in Rom 4:6, 9.

eternal fellowship with God.¹

Also, a blessing will come to the one serving others, for "it is more blessed to give than to receive." This service extends past the parameter of the community of believers and reaches to the end of the earth, for the footwashing is also a call to serve, as Jesus served.

From vss. 12-17, in different ways, Jesus has admonished the group that His example must be put into action.² He is now accentuating the difference between the intellectual understanding of a spiritual truth or principle, and acting upon it. Only as it is practiced will the full knowledge of the truth be realized.³

¹"Here the exhortation becomes a promise, in the form of a beatitude. . . Μακάριοι does not refer to 'the blessing which true discipleship brings with it' . . . , but to the salvation which is given to the true disciple. . . Blessed is he who acts in accordance with what he has heard and known!" Bultmann, 476.

²"The beatitude follows on v 15 (v 16 is by way of parenthesis), it declares the (eschatological) happiness of those who not only *know* the significance of what Jesus has done for them, but who *live* in the light of it and in obedience to his call. The necessity of both knowing (hearing) and doing the will of God is emphasized throughout the Bible, not least by Jesus himself." Beasley-Murray, 236.

³"Another exhortation to action in the form of a blessing closes this moral interpretation of the washing of the feet. The evangelist insists on action as a condition for coming to a knowledge of the truth (cf. 3:21; 7:17; 8:31f.). What is involved here is a realization of the relationship among the disciples in the activity of love." Schnackenburg, 25.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Water is mentioned in at least twenty-three verses in John, compared with eighteen in the Synoptics. In addition, events and "signs" take place involving water, although water is not specifically mentioned. Water plays an important role in John's theology and Christology and consequently is important to the understanding and interpretation of the footwashing.

The Significance of Water in the Ministry of John the Baptist

The first mention of water in John is found in connection with John the Baptist, who was commissioned by God to baptize in water:¹

And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' (John 1:33)

Through John's divinely commissioned baptism, Israel's hidden Messiah was to be identified and to take up

¹In vss. 31 and 33 the Baptist emphasizes that his baptizing is done in water. Aside from calling attention to John's baptism, it distinguishes John's water baptism from the Messiah's Spirit baptism.

the role of the Lamb of God to bear the sins of all those who believe. There existed a belief that Elijah would anoint the Messiah and reveal his identity to Israel.¹ However, John, the second Elijah, was only to identify the Messiah. The Father Himself anointed Christ and prepared Him for the mission to save lost mankind. Immediately following Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him on the banks of the Jordan River.²

John's ministry, especially his baptizing of Jews and Gentiles alike, caught the attention of the Jewish leaders. An Israelite was never baptized; he was God's already. Baptism was reserved for proselytes, converts from other religions, and Gentiles in general who had accepted the Jewish faith.³ As a sign of cleansing from sin and idolatry, baptism became the door that admitted you into membership of the chosen people. However, John was teaching by his baptism that the elect, the chosen people, needed

¹Justin, Apology 35.1 as cited in Beasley-Murray, 24.

²Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11. The open heaven, the descending Spirit, and the Father's voice all identified Christ as the long-awaited Messiah who alone is able to baptize in the Spirit. This sets Him apart from every other person, He is the Spirit-man. He is filled with the Spirit and able to give the Spirit to His followers.

³"Baptism was a Jewish rite that was usually exercised upon proselytes. Since it was emblematic of the washing away of sins and of one's entrance into a new life, the performance of it evidently was regarded as a claim of authority. The Synoptics connect it with repentance (Matt. 3:11, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3)." Tenney, 79.

cleansing as well.¹ Although John did not answer the question directly (vs. 25), this is exactly what he believed--that all need cleansing. The Gospel of John teaches this identical principle. The believer, the elect of God, needs continual cleansing as taught by the footwashing. Post-baptismal sins need to be confessed and forgiven.²

When asked by the priests and Levites who he was and what he said about himself, John denied that he was the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet.³ The Pharisees conceivably asked John: "Why then are you baptizing if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" (vs. 25). In John's answer, he affirms His divine commission and ministry: "I baptize in water." The question was one of authority.⁴ Consequently, the Pharisees asked, Who gave you the right or the authority to baptize? He had made a religious change placing both Jews and Gentiles in the same category of

¹Beasley-Murray, 24.

²Although the Gospel of John does not mention forgiveness often, it is implied; however, many scholars believe that the footwashing in the Gospel stands in its place. See chapter 5, pp. 53-59. However, the letters of John are very explicit on this subject, 1 John 1:7-10; 2:1, 2, etc.

³Probably referring to Deut 18:15, 18, which emphasizes the prophetic ministry of the Messiah rather than His kingly, priestly, or sacrificial ministry. See Tenney, 78,79.

⁴Ibid.

needing to repent and be baptized.¹ In addition, there was the concern that John, the son of Zacharias, was a priest.² The impact of his ministry was felt by the whole nation. So powerful was John's impact that as late as A.D. 250 the Clementine Recognitions tell us that "there were some of John's disciples who preached about him as if their master was the Messiah."³ Hence the deputation from the Sanhedrin. Yet John's answer was clear. I have received authority from on high to baptize and through my baptism identify Israel's Messiah.

The Old Testament teaches that the cleansing of Israel and the nations would be the work of the Messiah and would include the use of water.

Three great Old Testament prophecies promise the cleansing of God's children through the use of water. These form the background for John's baptism, but more specifically, the ministry of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John.

Old Testament Prophecies Predicting the Messiah's Cleansing Work Using Water

The three Old Testament prophecies forming the framework for the cleansing of God's chosen people are found

¹Albert Barnes, Notes On The New Testament, Luke and John (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 184.

²Luke 1:5.

³William Barclay, The Gospel of John, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 58.

in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah.¹ It is appropriate to note these passages at this time.

Isa 52:10-15

In vs. 11 the Lord instructs His people to "go out from there, touch nothing unclean; . . . purify yourselves." The nation needed to be cleansed from idolatry and sin in order to serve God and be reestablished in the land and the leaders needed purification in order to "carry the vessels of the Lord" (vs. 11). However, man cannot cleanse himself from iniquity and sin, only God is able to provide the necessary remedy, in this case, God's servant. "Thus He [God's Servant the Messiah] will sprinkle many nations" (Isa 52:15). This passage follows the declaration of God's universal salvation as He bares His right arm as a warrior in battle, to deliver His people in triumph:

The LORD has bared His holy arm In the sight of
all nations; That all the ends of the earth may
see The salvation of our God (Isa 52:10).

Many feel that Isa 52:13ff. should really begin a new chapter, for it focuses on the ministry of God's suffering servant who will engage in a cleansing work. The verb "he shall sprinkle" was well known from the Mosaic law. It is a technical word used for the sprinkling of "oil, water or blood as a cleansing or purifying rite."²

¹Ibid., 61-62, 67.

²Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 338.

It was used to cleanse the leper (Lev 14:7), present a sin offering (Lev 4:6), and consecrate the priest (Lev 8:11). It was well understood that the outward material purification was symbolic of inner moral cleansing, pointing forward to the day when God through His Servant would bring about the purification of the heart and conscience (1 Pet 1:2; Heb 10:22; 12:24).

The sprinkling of water and oil always had as "their basis sprinkling with blood."¹ North also points out that only "water was sprinkled that contained ashes from the sin offering of the red heifer, Heb 9:13, 14 include both."²

The servant of God is portrayed as a priest in sprinkling the nations; a suffering priest whose travail and affliction must be expiatory (Isa 52:14, 15ff.).

Ezek 36:24-27

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land.

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh.

And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

The promise in these verses concerning Israel goes beyond what Isaiah promised. First, this section is found

¹C. R. North, as quoted in *ibid.*, n. 19.

²*Ibid.*

in a series of salvation oracles. Again, the "sprinkling of clean water" is used as the means of purification from sin and idolatry. Since the language employed is rooted in the Sanctuary, it identifies God's means of a substitutionary sacrifice (Lev 17:11) as the basis of all forgiveness and cleansing.¹ This "language of a purificatory rite" is employed "as a metaphor for forgiveness and spiritual cleansing (cf. Num 19:13, 20; Ps 51:9)."² But in addition to forgiveness (cleansing from all sin and idolatry), God promises to change the (give a new) heart and place His Spirit within them, enabling them to now keep His laws and statutes (vss. 25-27). This will restore Israel to her own land again (a second Exodus). Only this time, the people will be able to obey God and remain pure.

This was one of the great promises for which the Jews looked. Consequently, John's baptism brought vividly before their eyes the fact that the fulfillment was near. The question, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not . . ." was a recognition that Elijah or the Messiah was expected to cleanse Israel for which baptism was the symbol.

Certainly in Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus, this promise was realized in that "born again" equals "born of water and the Spirit" and is a reference to Ezekiel's

¹See the above discussion on the word "sprinkle," pp. 100-101.

²Leslie C. Allen, Ezekiel, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 29 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), 179.

prophecy (John 3:3, 5).

Zech 13:1

Speaking about God's great deliverance of Israel (i.e., the day of the Lord), the prophet promises "in that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity" (13:1).

David had said: "With thee is the fountain of life" (Ps 36:9), and Jeremiah added that Yahweh is the "fountain of living waters" (Jer 2:13).¹

The promise to Israel consisted of forgiveness, purity, and a land free from idolatry (vs. 2). "The problem of sin is the central problem in the Old Testament."² Unless Yahweh Himself will forgive and cleanse the people, there is no hope. Water, flowing from the fountain, is symbolic of God's cleansing grace, which results in complete forgiveness and restoration, hence, perfect life. Through God's cleansing, He and His people are reconciled and live together in harmony.

¹One is reminded of the river in Paradise (Gen 2:1ff.) and Ezekiel describes a river that flows from under the altar (Ezek 47:1-12). John saw the "river of the water of life" (Rev 22:1).

²Ralph L. Smith, Micah-Malachi, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 32 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1984), 280.

Summary

The great promise of God is the cleansing and purification from sin as a result of repentance and divine forgiveness, resulting in restoration and reconciliation. And since the removal and cleansing of sin is the "great problem"¹ in Scripture, the prophecy points to God as the One able to cleanse and purify His people and restore them to the land. Water is God's cleansing agent, symbolizing God's grace in forgiving His people. The ministry of John the Baptist, like a trumpet blast, called all men, including the nation of Israel, to repentance. His baptism was both a statement and an invitation of God, that all men need cleansing and forgiveness.²

John's ministry and preaching called Israel to repentance. His baptism of Jew and Gentile alike deeply stirred all of Israel. No doubt these Old Testament promises came to mind as the Jewish leaders confronted John concerning his authority. All this placed more attention on his ministry, especially when Jesus Himself was baptized and when John pointed to Him as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), who will "baptize in the Holy Spirit" (vs. 33), and whose blood alone can "cleanse us

¹See Allen, 179.

²"John's own baptism meant two things. (i) It meant cleansing. It meant that a man was being washed from the impurities that clung to him. (ii) It meant dedication. It meant that he went out to a new and a different and a better life." Barclay, 67-68.

from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

So immediately as the Gospel opens, great attention is focused on baptism, that is, forgiveness and repentance and the need to be cleansed from sin and defilement.

We can readily see why the Pharisees presumed that John the Baptist must either have been the Messiah, His immediate forerunner Elijah, or the prophet who would be like Moses (Deut 18:15, 18).

It is in this context that John affirms his authority to baptize by water, which was given to him by God (vs. 33). At the same time he calls attention not to himself, but to Jesus, the Lamb of God (this focused attention on the prophecies of Isa 53 and Zech 12:10) through whom a better baptism could be obtained, a baptism of the Spirit (vs. 33) administered by Christ, Who Himself was identified by the Spirit as "filled with the Spirit" who baptized by the Spirit. The ministry of the Baptist was to be preparatory to the coming of the Messiah and closely linked and eventually identified with water baptism (vs. 31). The baptism of John was not an end in itself nor final in its effectiveness. It needs to be followed by the gift of the Spirit, Who can change the inner man.

Water Turned into Wine

The next time water is mentioned in John is at the

wedding at Cana, where the Savior changes water into wine.¹

It is the first of seven "signs" (σημειων) that is recorded in John's gospel. He specifically points out that Jesus performed a host of other signs that His disciples witnessed, which have not been recorded. "But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."²

Each sign had a definite purpose in the writer's unfolding revelation of the Christ and was always performed in the "presence of the disciples." These were recorded "that you may believe." So "signs" are closely related to "believe," which leads to "life". Although Jesus was doing other signs in Jerusalem, causing people to believe in Him, they are not registered.

The chapter is linked in its opening verse with chap. 1: "And on the third day," while being bound with Christ's dialogue with Nicodemus by vss. 23-25,³ is then followed by the cleansing of the temple.

It is significant that the first "sign" of Jesus constitutes turning water into wine. The understanding of this first sign in connection with the cleansing of the

¹John 2:1-12.

²John 20:30-31.

³Beasley-Murray, 31.

temple may be the key to understanding the heart of this Gospel. As one author says: "Whoever understands the miracle of the wine and the cleansing of the temple has the key to the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and their outcome in the salvation in the kingdom and existence of the church."¹

Each sign in John is more than a miracle to show the power of Christ, instead, it is, so to speak, "a material witness to underlying spiritual truth."²

John is very detailed when he records that "there were six waterpots for the Jewish custom of purification." (2:4). John records "seven" signs of Jesus, the number of perfection and completeness, while six is the number of man that is "incomplete, unfinished and imperfect."³ Barclay comments: "The six stone waterpots stand for all the imperfections of the Jewish law, Jesus came to do away with the imperfections of the law."⁴ John had earlier said that "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (1:17), Who was "full" of the two great principles of which fallen man stands in constant need; and He alone had the Spirit without measure.

Jesus commanded the servants to "fill the waterpots

¹Ibid.

²Tenney, 29.

³Barclay, 89.

⁴Ibid.

with water," and "they filled them up to the brim."

This amounted to between 120 and 180 gallons of wine. No wedding party on earth could drink that amount of wine. However, this symbolizes that when God's grace comes to man there is enough to spare. This reminds the reader that Jesus can save to "the uttermost" (completely) (Heb 7:25), and where "sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20).

The old order, the insufficiency of the "law," was replaced by the new order of the boundless salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The first miracle of Moses, the redeemer and deliverer of Israel, was turning water into blood (Exod 6:9; 7:20). The beginning of Christ's miracles (signs) was turning water into wine.

It is said of Shiloh that "He washes his garments in wine; And his robes in the blood of grapes" (Gen 49:11).

Biblically, there is a close relationship between blood and wine. The early church was practicing communion in which "the blood of the grapes" was symbolic of the "blood of Christ, the blood of the covenant."¹

This theme of water and blood runs throughout the Gospel, as we shall see, and is a recurring theme of baptism and the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. It is the

¹Luke 22:17-20; Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; 1 Cor 11:23-25.

antitype of the altar and laver in the Sanctuary of the Old Testament. Both pointed forward to Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer. John has artfully woven these two themes throughout his book as the essential cleansing agents from sin and defilement. The pots were for "purification"; that is the essential point of this sign, that only Jesus Christ can cleanse you from the defilement and condemnation of sin. As Ellen G. White points out: "The gift of Christ to the marriage feast was a symbol. The water represents baptism into His death; the wine the shedding of His blood for the sins of the world."¹ The water and the wine are free and "without cost" to the seeking sinner.²

This first sign of Jesus is supplemented by the cleansing of the temple from the unholy traffic of commerce and monetary profit. Jesus came to cleanse people, and the temple was but an object lesson of the real temple cleansing the Savior wants to accomplish. Again, White comments: "In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,--from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul."³

This first sign also prepares the reader for the great pivotal event of the hour of Jesus when He gave His

¹White, Desire of Ages, 149.

²Isa 55:1.

³White, The Desire of Ages, 161.

life on Calvary. It was then that His side was pierced, "and immediately there came out blood and water" (19:34). From early on, the church has seen in this the two great emblems of the Christian church, the water of baptism and the sacrifice of Jesus. We must agree with Beasley-Murray, that "whoever understands the miracle of the wine and the cleansing of the temple has the key to the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and their outcome in the salvation of the Kingdom and existence of the church."¹

Christ's Dialogue with Nicodemus

The dialogue of Jesus with Nicodemus in chap. 3 in the Gospel of John resembles the speech concerning "the bread of life" in chap. 6.²

The theme in chap. 3 is the indispensable need to receive the eschatological gift of the Spirit, or, as John says, to be born out (ἐξ) of the Spirit. Concretely this takes place at or through the ordinance of baptism. The recipient of the new birth needs to be born of "water and the Spirit" (3:5), which makes this the foundational and primary text concerning the new birth and represents the fulfillment of Ezekiel (Ezek 18:31; 36:36, etc.).³ The precept of the new birth runs throughout the New Testament

¹Beasley-Murray, 31.

²Schnackenburg, 244.

³See Barclay, 120-121.

and is often directly connected with baptism. Titus speaks of the "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). The Christian is a new creation "in Christ" (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

Sometimes this idea is spoken of as a death, followed by a resurrection or a re-creation. Paul speaks of the Christian as dying with Christ and rising to life anew. According to Paul, you are "baptized into Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:3ff.).

In the Gospel of John the significant question is "How does a person inherit eternal life?" (20:30,31), which is synonymous with "seeing" or "entering" the kingdom of God (3:3, 5). In Christ's dialogue with Nicodemus, the question is answered of how a person receives a "part" or "share" in Christ's inheritance.¹ It is conditioned on "being born again" from "above" at baptism. Baptism is the next logical step of faith, for "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

The dialogue is carried on two planes: The flesh (σὰρξ) by Nicodemus and the Spirit (πνεῦμα) by Jesus. Man cannot raise himself by his own strength into God's kingdom nor grasp eternal life, but is dependent on the Spirit. But the Spirit is only available to him who believes in Jesus Christ (7:38, 39).

In this way John roots life and Spirit Christolo-

¹Josef Blank, Das Evangelium nach Johannes (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1977), 56.

gically.¹ All is centered in the incarnation (1:1-3, 14), death (glorification, 7:39), and ascension (3:13, 31; 13:1), of Jesus Christ.

Only after Jesus has been glorified and has returned to the Father will He send the Spirit (16:7), Who will convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

The gift of life and Spirit is only available through Him Who descended "from heaven" and will again "ascend into heaven" (3:13) after becoming man and laying down His life for His friends (15:13-15) and returning glorified to His Father. The gift of the Spirit and new birth are tied to belief, which issues in baptism. Since all of Israel were captivated and puzzled by the ministry of the Baptist, "Water" would recall to Nicodemus the ministry of John, "whose preaching of repentance and of baptism would be fresh in his mind."² The believer is "cleansed . . . by the washing of water with the word" (Eph 5:26). The gift of the Spirit and assurance of salvation are closely tied to baptism in the New Testament. As Paul writes: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

In this way, the believer follows in the footsteps of

¹"In effect, Jesus told Nicodemus that the new birth was a direct result of faith in His death and resurrection." Tenney, 89.

²Ibid.

Jesus Christ Himself, Who also received the Spirit at His baptism. "And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him" (Matt 3:16).

In the water of baptism the believer is cleansed from sin.¹ By connecting the water and the Spirit, Jesus expressed two great principles experienced by the believer. "Water and the Spirit stand for the cleansing and the strengthening power of Christ, which wipes out the past and which gives us victory in the future."² Therefore, when Jesus said to Peter, "He who has bathed, needs only to wash his feet," bathed can refer only to the believer's baptism (bath), while the footwashing signifies that the believer is in need of continuing cleansing for post-baptismal sins. Hence, His words to Peter, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me" (13:8). Only the repentant, forgiven believer remains in Christ, hence, has part in His kingdom.

Not everyone has interpreted "water" to mean baptism. Origen saw little or no difference between "water" and "Spirit."³ Calvin follows Origen's lead in that he thinks

¹"Water is the symbol of cleansing. . . . The sins of the past are forgiven and forgotten." Barclay, 119.

²Ibid.

³Origen, The Commentary of Origen on St. John's Gospel, trans. A. E. Brooke (Cambridge: University Press, 1896), 2:249.

that "water and Spirit" in John are comparable to "Spirit and fire" in the preaching of John the Baptist.¹ Some have seen in "water" a reference to human birth, either the semen or the water in the womb. Bultmann sees here the hand of an earlier copyist or a redactor to bring the Gospel more into harmony with the practice of the church.²

However, as Beasley-Murray so aptly points out:

The conjunction of water and Spirit in eschatological hope is deeply rooted in Jewish consciousness, as is attested by Ezek 36:25-27 and various apocalyptic writings (e.g. Jub. 1:33; Pss. Sol. 18:6; Test. Jud. 24:3), but above all the literature and practices of the Qumran sectaries, who sought to unite cleansing and the hope of the Spirit with actual immersion and repentance in a community beginning to "see" the kingdom of God (cf. 1QS 3:6-9; 1QH 11:12-14).³

The air was filled with the expectation of cleansing and renewing, especially in the wake of John the Baptist's ministry. The fact that John, immediately after concluding the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, recounts that Jesus, His disciples, and John the Baptist were "baptizing" (vss. 22-23) re-enforces his emphasis on this ordinance. As Beasley-Murray points out: "Pharisees like Nicodemus should not stand aloof from the call to repentance for the kingdom of God issued by John the Baptist and by Jesus, for 'all' stand in need of God's forgiveness and the recreating work

¹Jean Calvin, The Gospel According to St. John, vol. 1, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), 64-65.

²Bultmann, 139.

³Beasley-Murray, 49.

of the Holy Spirit."¹

Baptism: The Entrance to Discipleship

John is the only Gospel that records baptisms at the hand of Jesus and His disciples. John records:

After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He was spending time with them, and baptizing. (3:22)

And again in vs. 26 it says, referring to Christ "Behold, He is baptizing." The above seems to indicate that Jesus Himself was baptizing His new followers. But John also says "that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were)" (4:1b-2). While at one time scholars questioned the historicity of these passages, it is now generally believed to fit the context of Christ's ministry in conjunction with His own baptism at the hand of John, and John's ministry in general. As one commentator reminds us:

While at one time a number of scholars considered this a reflection back into the ministry of later rivalry between the Church and followers of John, most now see this as a remnant of primitive tradition unknown to the synoptists. We know that Jesus approved of John's baptism (Mark 11:30), and submitted to it himself. If, as many believe, Jesus was baptized expressing solidarity with his people as his first step of bringing the kingdom, it is not surprising that he called on them to be baptized with a view to their entering it.²

The real question is not if Jesus Himself baptized or

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 52.

not, but if He authorized His disciples to baptize and therefore placed His stamp of approval on this ordinance.

Jesus obviously pointed to baptism as the entrance to discipleship. This would be in harmony with His command to baptize those who, as a result of listening to the gospel invitation, accept Him as Lord and Savior.¹

Jesus made disciples and He "baptized those whom he made disciples, admitted them by washing them with water."²

The Gospel of John places great emphasis on baptism, especially in the first half (1-12). Baptism teaches the necessity of repentance, forgiveness, and of making the important decision of accepting Jesus as the Redeemer-King. In John baptism teaches the essential requirement of cleansing from sin and defilement as is evident by John placing the ministry of John the Baptist, with his emphasis on the baptism of repentance and confession, in chap. 1.

Baptism was well known in the Johannine community and practiced along with the footwashing.³

¹Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-16.

²Matthew B. Henry, Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 212.

³"Some of the fundamental themes of the Fourth Gospel appear in the Nicodemus discourse. . . . In this setting it is fitting that baptism should be treated, for baptism relates to the gospel and to faith's response to it. Nicodemus lived in a time of baptismal revival, and the Johannine churches were also acquainted with various baptisms. The Evangelist sets forth a baptism that links a person with the kingdom of God by relating it to the recreating Spirit, the Lord of the cross and the resurrection, and the faith which acknowledges Jesus as the

Jesus: The Source of Living Water

The next important dialogue of Jesus is with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Again, water takes on a significant role. Here, Jesus can give "living water" (John 4:4-10). This living water¹ given only by Christ gives everlasting satisfaction (vs. 13). In addition, it seems to multiply and become a well in the person who drinks it, resulting in eternal life (vs. 14).²

The close link between water and blood is again evident if we compare the water Jesus gives in chap. 4 and Christ's blood in chap. 6, which if drunk, has the same result: eternal life.

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:53, 54)

The result is the same, drinking the water Jesus gives or drinking His blood (and eating his flesh). The recipient receives eternal life.³

Revealer-Redeemer from God. No less than Paul, the Fourth Evangelist firmly sets baptism in the context of the gospel." Beasley-Murray, 54.

¹"The Jews used the expression living water to denote springs, fountains, or running streams, in opposition to dead and stagnant water." Barnes, 215.

²Water was symbolic of the Torah. Beasley-Murray, 59.

³"The 'gift of God' denotes the salvation of God in an inclusive sense. The 'living water' from Jesus is here virtually equated with it." Ibid., 60.

This close connection of water and blood in this Gospel has its roots in the Old Testament. There, water and blood mixed constitute the basis of reconciliation between man and his community, and man with his God.

The Old Testament Background of Living Water

Living water refers to water from a stream, fountain, or a well (Lev 14:50; 15:13; Gen 26:19; Num 19:17), water that has not been standing at all. Living water represents its life-giving power; it is not the source of death as is stagnant water. As water is the means by which ordinary impurities are removed, so water naturally became the symbol to remove spiritual impurities and ritual impurities from the believer.

This "living" or "running" water had to be used for all rites of purification from leprosy, uncleanness resulting from touching something contaminated, or some bodily discharge.

The Cleansing and Restoration of the Leper

Leprosy was an image of death. Because of its ability to decompose the skin and flesh of the body, it "introduced the same dissolution and destruction of life into the corporeal sphere which sin introduced into the spiritual."¹ For this reason, leprosy became a perfect type

¹Keil and Delitzsch, 2:384.

or symbol of sin.

The leper was not only shut out from the fellowship of the community but was also excluded from the sanctuary rituals, that is, he ceased to have fellowship with Yahweh.¹

Consequently, the purification of the leper was divided into two acts separated by seven days, as described in Leviticus 14:1ff.

The first act (vss. 2-8) "set forth the restoration of the man, who had been regarded as dead, into the fellowship of the living members of the covenant nation, and was therefore performed by the priest outside the camp."² The second act reconciled the leper to fellowship with Yahweh and his participation into the sanctuary rituals. It called for the sacrifice of two male lambs, flour, and oil, and had to be executed by a priest (vss. 10-20).

In the first cleansing ritual, two living birds had to be taken by the priest, along with cedar wood, two scarlet threads, and hyssop. The only qualification for the birds was that they had to be clean. Cedar wood, in addition to its antiseptic qualities and symbol of continuance of life,³ "suggested the fragrant incense that

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 386.

was used only in the sanctuary"¹ and is "very resistant to decay, symbolizing endurance."² The color red symbolizes blood and expiation, the victory of life over death (Isa 1:18).³ It is possible that the thread bound the cedar to the hyssop. Hyssop was a symbol of cleansing (Exod 12:22; Ps 51:7).⁴ This mixture of blood and fresh water is then sprinkled by the priest seven times⁵ upon the leper. The blood signified life, the water purification,⁶ and as a consequence the cleansed leper is restored to the covenant community.

The Purifying Water

Water was used in many instances to cleanse and purify from impurities and contamination, but also to cleanse from sin. In addition to cleansing and restoring

¹"Leviticus," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953-57), 1:766.

²John E. Hartley, Leviticus, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 194.

³Ibid.

⁴"The hyssop used in sprinkling the blood was a symbol of purification, being thus employed in the cleansing of the leper and of those defiled by contact with the dead." White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 277.

⁵Keil and Delitzsch believe that the water was sprinkled seven times, "because it referred to a readmission into the covenant, the stamp of which was seven," Keil and Delitzsch, 2:386.

⁶Ibid.

the leper,¹ it was used to cleanse the Levites,² and all other defilement that rendered an Israelite unclean. The most severe uncleanness that could befall an Israelite was the uncleanness of death.³ All who came out of necessity or accidentally in contact with the dead became ceremonially unclean. Unless the individual was cleansed, he would defile "the tabernacle of the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from Israel."⁴

Since death is a "representative of sin,"⁵ pure water alone was not sufficient to cleanse, but had to be mixed with the ashes of a red heifer. Red is the symbol of blood,⁶ and a heifer was chosen probably because the female is the "bearer of life (Gen. iii.20)."⁷ The red heifer is called a sin-offering in vss. 9 and 17.

The red heifer was a symbol of Christ.⁸ Her blood was sprinkled toward the sanctuary and was then burned

¹See p. 118, above.

²See Num 8:7, where it is called "water of sin."

³Keil and Delitzsch, 3:122.

⁴Num 19:13.

⁵Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1948), 120.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Keil and Delitzsch, 3:122.

⁸"The one heifer, the one ark, the one brazen serpent, impressively point to the one great offering, the sacrifice of Christ." White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, 120.

outside the camp, pointing to the future when the world's Redeemer would die outside the gates of Jerusalem, signifying that He died for the whole world.¹ Keil and Delitzsch believe that the bull (Lev 4:1ff.) and the red heifer (Num 19:1ff.) were burned outside the camp for similar reasons.

The flesh of the bull could not be eaten by the priest since sin had been imputed to the sacrifice by the laying on of hands, and therefore "it was necessary that it should be given up to the effect of sin, viz. to death or destruction by fire, and that outside the camp."²

Just as the water that was sprinkled on the leper had to be mixed with the ashes of cedarwood, hyssop, and red wool in order to become effective, so the "water to remove impurity; it is purification from sin (Num 19:9) (or, sin offering, see margin)," only became effectual after the ashes of the red heifer were added.³ Only then was the living water able to cleanse from sin and restore the lost person to life again. So waters of baptism and footwashing

¹Ibid., 121. This is also reminiscent of the bull, the sin offering, that was burned outside the camp in "a clean place" (Lev 4:12).

²Keil and Delitzsch, 2:307. "Moreover, the idea that sin was imputed to the sin-offering, that it was made sin by the laying on of the hand, has a firm basis in the sacrifice of the red cow (Num. xix.)." Ibid., n. 1.

³For a more detailed analysis of the word, see Philip J. Budd, Numbers, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 5 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 213.

only become efficacious through the blood of Jesus Christ.

The living water that Jesus promised to the Samaritan woman was the water of life, eternal life. For it is the water that can cleanse from all sin and impurity and reconciles the sinner to God. As White says, Jesus was "offering the woman something better than she possessed, even living water, the joy and hope of the gospel."¹

John, who introduces Jesus as "the lamb of God," was very conscious of the Old Testament and in particular of the sanctuary and its services.² Consequently, if we take into consideration the Old Testament teaching of the "lamb" and the "living water," we can see the full significance of Christ's words and the intended purpose of John, that water and blood are essential in the cleansing of the sinner. If you are not "bathed" and "washed" by Jesus, you can have no part in His kingdom; you are separated from the covenant community..

¹Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1942), 156, 157.

²The fact that the Gospel is grouped around the great feasts connected with the Sanctuary service; that Jesus is "the Lamb"; that John quotes, refers, or alludes to the Old Testament over thirty times (see John A. T. Robinson, A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ [New York: Harper & Row, 1922], 300-301], all seem to distinctly support that John writes against the background of the Old Testament and particularly the Sanctuary service. One also needs to be conscious of the fact that the Revelation introduces Jesus dressed as the High Priest on the day of Atonement standing in the mists of the candlestick located in the Holy Place; and the central role the "Lamb" plays in that book.

However, the concept of water in the Gospel of John is more complex. In contemporary Judaism, water was a symbol of the Torah as well as of the Spirit.

Water as a Symbol of Torah

In Judaism water was often associated with the words of the law. "As water is life for the world, so are the words of the Torah life for the world (SDt 11,22,48 [84a])."¹ The words of Jesus are the Father's words (14:24), they must abide in the true believer. The word of Jesus makes His disciples clean (15:3); if you reject His word, you reject Him and will be judged by it (12:48).

We should remember the close relationship in the Gospel of John between Jesus and that which He offers. Jesus is the living bread that came down from heaven, and yet He also "gives" the bread (6:51). He is the word (1:1-3, 14), but also speaks the word. In this sense it is very clear that Jesus "is" the water of life, while at the same time He "gives" the water. Jesus as the new "Moses" gives the words of life to those who believe. His words are the new Torah.

Water as a Symbol of the Holy Spirit

However, more importantly, in the Old Testament water applies to God, "the fountain of living waters" (Jer 2:13;

¹Beasley-Murray, 60.

17:13), as well as the Holy Spirit. In Revelation, the lamb is to lead them to fountains of living waters (Rev 7:17), and it is written that Jesus "will give unto him who is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev 21:6).

**Water and the Spirit
in Isa 44:3**

A number of Old Testament texts that promise the gift of the Spirit: Isa 12:3; 44:3; 55:1; Ps 42:1; Jer 2:13; Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 13:1; 14:8. Because of limitations, we will only briefly look at Isa 44:3.

In this verse, water, Spirit, and salvation are synonymous. The prophet writes:

For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring. And My blessings on your descendants.

The prophet uses water and mountain streams as a "symbol, or rather anagogical type"¹ of spiritual blessings that descend from above when the Spirit of God falls upon His people.

Miraculous new (creative) spiritual life is promised to Israel by the metaphor of the sudden and surprising growth of plants in the desert when water and rain descend.

The word "thirst" is masculine, and "probably refers to an individual rather than to a thirsty land."²

¹Keil and Delitzsch, 7:203.

²Young, 167.

This text is to remind Israel of the time water flowed from the Rock and preserved physical life for God's people. Paul interprets the text in 1 Cor 10:4:

And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ.

Water was a complex term that had many spiritual applications. As Barclay reminds us: "Sometimes the Rabbis identified this living water with the wisdom of the law; sometimes they identified it with nothing less than the Holy Spirit of God."¹

Water, Blood, and the Spirit

So far John has intertwined these concepts that ultimately culminate in the statement found in 1 John 5:8: "For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three are in agreement."

When Jesus offered "living water" to the Samaritan woman, He was offering nothing less than Himself, the Source of all life and salvation. He was offering her salvation full and complete. In the term "living water" was embodied the promise of cleansing from all sin and unrighteousness, sanctification and purification, and the eschatological gift of the Spirit.

The fact that Jesus pointed out to this woman that she was living in sexual sin (4:16-18) is important because

¹Barclay, 146.

it again points out that Jesus was interested in cleansing people from sin. In order for sin to be forgiven, it must be exposed. Later, when the Spirit is given (20:22), Jesus says to His disciples, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven, if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (20:23).

As one commentator writes: "The narrative assumes a close connection between baptism in the Spirit and the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mark 1:4-8; Acts 2:38)."¹

It is Jesus, "the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," who baptizes in the Spirit. Blood cleanses, water purifies, the Spirit empowers.

Jesus, the Water of Salvation

The next passage where we find Jesus mentioning water connects water with the Spirit in a very interesting way. Although the direct words of Jesus are not recorded here, the author inserted an explanation of Christ's words.

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

This saying of Jesus has specific relation to the words he spoke to the Samaritan woman concerning water. At the well, Jesus said that if the woman would have known Who

¹J. Ramsey Michaels, John, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 71.

He was and asked Him for a drink, "He would have given you living water."¹ Later in vs. 14 Jesus spoke about the results of drinking this living water and said: "But the water that I shall give Him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." Here in chap. 7 the thought is very similar, for the one who comes to Jesus to drink (vs. 37) is the one who believes in Him as the promised Messiah (vs. 38a); "rivers of living water" will flow from him. He, therefor, becomes the "source" or "well" from which others in turn will drink.

This feast of Booths or Tabernacles was one of three feasts that required all adult male Jews who lived within twenty miles of Jerusalem to be present, although Jews normally pilgrimaged to Jerusalem from all the then-known world.

The feast of Booths commemorated the wanderings of Israel in the desert on their way to Canaan. However, not only did it remind successive generations of the Israelites that their ancestors at one time had been homeless wanderers, coming to inherit the land because of God's promise and providence, but it also was a harvest-thanksgiving Festival. It was sometimes called the Festival of the Ingathering.² For the Jews, it was the most popular

¹John 4:10.

²Exod 23:16.

feast¹ because the barley, wheat, and the grape harvest had all been safely gathered in. Consequently, it was not limited to give thanks and praise to God for the harvests, but for "all the bounty of nature which made life possible and which made living happy."²

Josephus called it "the holiest and the greatest festival among the Jews" (Antiquities of the Jews, 3:, 10:4). On the last day (the great day of the feast) of the feast,³ Jesus invited the participants to believe in Him and "drink," presumably water, that will multiply and bring life to others.

Each day a priest drew water from the pool of Shiloam and offered it upon the altar as an offering to God. As Barclay reminds us: "The whole dramatic ceremony was a vivid thanksgiving for God's good gift of water, and an acted prayer for rain, and a memory of the water which sprang from

¹"To the Jews it was the most popular Festival of all. For that reason it was sometimes called simply The Feast (1 Kings 8:2), and sometimes The Festival of the Lord (Leviticus 23:39). It stood out above all other Festivals. The people called it "the season of our gladness." Barclay, 261.

²Ibid.

³There is controversy as to whether this refers to the 7th or 8th day of the feast. See, "John," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1972), 5:981.

the rock when they traveled through the wilderness."¹

So impressive was this ceremony that the Talmud said: "He who has not seen the joy of the water-drawing has not seen joy in his whole lifetime."²

This water was offered to God in connection with the daily drink-offering of wine.³

This passage links together with 6:35 where Jesus says: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."

The believer shall not only find full satisfaction, but he in turn will become a fountain of healing and salvation to others (vs. 38). This was a promise and a prophecy concerning the outpouring and ministry of the Holy Spirit, to be realized subsequent to Christ's death and resurrection.

This may be a reference to John 19:34 where blood and water flow from Christ's side after being speared by the Roman soldiers. This foreshadows the twofold healing, life, and forgiveness that flow "from His belly" as well as the power of the Spirit.

The importance of baptism is evident as one views it

¹Barclay, 262; Beasley-Murray, 116; Exod 17:1-6; the Rock was a type of Christ (1 Cor 10:4).

²Sukh 5:1, as quoted in Beasley-Murray, 113.

³Ibid.

in connection with Christ's revelation as the Messiah. It was immediately after Christ's baptism at the hand of John¹ that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him,² and only subsequent to His baptism was He identified as the Lamb of God.³

John whose ministry was to culminate in the arrival of the Son of God bore witness that Jesus was and is the Messiah. He clearly recognized Jesus as the superior One: "for He existed before me."⁴

The reader might be led to believe that just as the ministry of the Baptist was replaced by the ministry of Jesus, so water baptism might be replaced by the superior baptism of the Spirit. However, instead of the Spirit-baptism replacing water-baptism, the two will forever be linked together in the believer's experience.

Water purifies from past pollution and sins, but the Spirit will change the human nature of God's people. Their

¹John 1:31.

²John 1:33, Matt 3:16.

³The lamb figure is well known in Jewish apocalyptic literature. See Testament of Joseph 19:8 f., where a lion and a lamb appear together, the former the Messiah of Judah, the latter the Messiah from Aaron. See also the Testament of Benjamin 3. This concept finds its peak in Rev 5, the Lamb with seven horns, signifying great power and strength; however, the source of His strength is found in His sacrificial death, through which Christ achieves salvation for the world.

⁴John 1:30.

response will not be rebellion and dissatisfaction, but willing obedience and ready service.

The symbolism of water indicates the divine forgiveness that will cleanse the people of faith, only receivable through Christ. His pardon is universal. His promise to Israel is that God will forgive them for their past sins and will give them a new heart (mind), enabling them to understand and execute His will.

The Gospel of John: Chaps. 5 and 9

Chaps. 5 and 9 of John both mention water and contain many similarities. In both, a man is healed after suffering for nearly all of his life from an illness that no human physician was able to heal. One was ill¹ for thirty-eight years, the other blind since birth. Both healings took place at a pool, both on the Sabbath, and in each instance, the healing provoked a discussion between Jesus and the Jewish leaders.

The Healing of the Lame Man

This chapter is interpreted in three ways: The allegorical, historical, and liturgical.²

In the allegorical, the man stands for the people of

¹ἰηρῶν the meaning here is "crippled" or "paralyzed." See Beasley-Murray, 70.

²Barclay, 176.

Israel, the five porches for the Pentateuch, The thirty-eight years stand for Israel's wilderness experience. The five porches gave shelter and instruction to Israel, but could not heal. The law could point out sin but could not restore.

However, the story is told so vividly that it bears the stamp of truth and historicity. Yet, John, while using historical events, obviously chooses them very carefully for specific reasons. While Barclay follows the historical interpretation, he nevertheless points out that John 5 has always been closely associated with baptism, especially in the early church. He writes:

The stirring of the water stands for baptism. In point of fact in early Christian art a man is often depicted as rising from the baptismal waters carrying a bed upon his back.¹

According to Cullmann,² John selected this story of healing out of several familiar and similar ones from the Synoptics because it favored Christological meanings and pointed the reader to the necessity and blessing of baptism.

The healing took place by the pool of Bethesda,³ which means "house of mercy." Some miracles must have taken

¹Ibid., 176.

²Oscar Cullmann, Early Christian Worship (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 86.

³John obviously emphasizes the fact that in the "Hebrew" Bethesda means "House of Mercy" while the Aramaic means "Place of poured-out water." See Beasley-Murray, 70.

place here in the past, but Jesus is not restricted to any locality. He is able to heal anywhere and, in John's Christological emphasis, Christ is the merciful healer. We should note, as is also the case in the Synoptics, that Christ's healing act is closely connected with the forgiveness of sin. It is possible that the sickness was a result of the man's sinful ways, since *μηκετι αμαρτανε* should read, "Do not continue sinning any longer" (vs. 14).¹ If not heeded, a worse fate, eternal death, would be his fate.

This pool became a favorite place of Christian baptism, both in Jewish and pagan Jerusalem. Baptism is the focus here as Jesus brings healing, forgiveness, and hope of eternal life. As Cullmann so well says:

Christ in person now performs the healing--and along with healing he grants forgiveness of sin. The interrelation of healing and *forgiveness of sins*, as in verses 14-16, is a regular characteristic of the synoptic writers. Here, however in connection with the water miracle, it gains special significance which again points to Baptism. The evangelist has undoubtedly in mind that other water in which forgiveness of sins is gained through Christ. In that act of Baptism the miracle of forgiveness of sins takes place. *Christ's miracles of healing are continued in Baptism*. Jesus emphatically bids the healed to sin no more, 'lest a worse thing befall thee' (v. 14). We are reminded of the fact that, in early Christianity, forgiveness of sins which is gained in Baptism, includes the demand to sin no more (Rom. 6) and that sins committed after Baptism have worse

¹See *ibid.*, 74. Ellen White states that the man's condition was "the result of his own sin." White, Desire of Ages, 202.

consequences (Heb. 6.4 ff and 10.26).¹

As mentioned above, healing miracles are often closely connected with the forgiveness of sin. This story echoes the synoptic story of the paralytic, in which healing and the forgiveness of sins are virtually equated (Mark 2:5-11). Jesus warns the man to stop sinning, which is also spoken to the adulterous woman in 8:11.

Does this miracle point to baptism? It seems that the early church interpreted it in that fashion.² And since John is the last Gospel that was written and baptism was universally practiced, and in the light of John's great emphasis on baptism, it is very likely. It is well to remember that Scripture is deep and complex. As one scholar points out; "any Bible story has in it far more than fact. There are deeper truths below the surface and even the simple stories are meant to leave us face to face with eternal things."³

The Healing of the Blind Man

Like in the healing of the paralytic, there is a

¹Cullmann, 87.

²The healing at Bethesda from early on was directly linked with baptism. See Paul Niewalda, Sakramentssymbolik Im Johannesevangelium? (Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1958), 38, 59. Niewalda lists over fifteen biblical events that were interpreted as pointing to baptism in the early church. The healing at Bethesda was always included. Ibid., 60.

³Barclay, 177.

strong association in the healing of the blind man with baptism that was evident in the early church. Cullmann comments:

In the history of exegesis the association of this story with Baptism is very old. It is quite the regular interpretation in the Fathers. We find it in Irenaeus, and later on it appears repeatedly, e.g. in Ambrose and Augustine. E. C. Hoskyns directs attention particularly to the ancient Christian lectionaries, according to which this pericope and also the story of the healing at Bethesda and that of the Samaritan woman were used specially for the Baptism liturgy.¹

Besides Hoskyns, some other more recent exegetes, especially M. J. Lagrange and A. Omodeo, see in the miracle here narrated a quite intentional reference by the evangelist to that other miracle, "which takes place in each Baptism."²

In the previous chapter (chap. 8) Jesus stresses that He is "the light of the world" and whoever follows Him "shall not walk in darkness" (John 8:12). Darkness is here associated with sin and lostness. Those who do not come to Christ and refuse to follow Him "shall die" in their "sin" (vs. 21).

In the early church, baptism was "designated by the Greek word φωτισμος (enlightenment)," and according to Michel, "in the Epistle to the Hebrews the verb φωτισθηναι

¹Cullmann, 102-103.

²Ibid., 103.

(to be enlightened) is a synonym for βαπτισθῆναι (to be baptized)."¹

Jesus is the source of light² that brings knowledge of sin. As people come to the light they have the opportunity to believe (1:7) and belief issues faith, and faith--eternal life (20:31). However, people rejected the light because they loved darkness and enjoyed a life of sin (3:19).

The one who comes to the light, and believes, receives his sight and is healed in baptism by the One who is "sent."³ There is little question that both pools play on baptism and that their names have significant Christological meaning.⁴

Those who think they see, remain blind. The blind who come to Jesus believing receive their sight as they believe and are baptized. As one commentator puts it: "As

¹See Otto Michel, Der Brief an die Hebraer (Kritisches Exegetisches Kommentar über das Neue Testament) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 147.

²John introduces Jesus as "the light that shines in the darkness"; and John the Baptist came, "to bear witness to the light" (John 1:5, 7).

³Siloam=Send (9:7).

⁴The Sent One has mercy on those afflicted by sin. The word mercy (ἐλεος) is not used in John; however, Christ's actions are full of mercy and compassion. In the Synoptics, Jesus is often asked to have mercy on those afflicted by sickness and disease (Matt 9:27, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30, 31; Luke 17:13, 18:38, 39).

the blind man receives his sight through the water of Siloam, so the candidate for Baptism receives in the water of Baptism 'enlightenment' through Christ the Sent."¹

We should note that he has to wash (ἰψαῖ) first before he receives sight. Washing in John is closely connected with being "clean" and having your sins forgiven, as we have seen above. This obviously supports the fact that the footwashing was instituted by Christ to cleanse His people from their sins in order to heal them (Ps 103:1-3), both physically and spiritually.

Another important point Cullmann makes emphasizes the fact that both of these chapters focus on Christ's healing power, effected by faith in baptism, since "the dialogue between Jesus and the healed man in vss. 35-37 is so constructed as to call immediately to mind the liturgical questions and answers of the oldest baptismal ritual."²

Those who are conscious of their sins, who come to Jesus, find forgiveness, cleansing, healing, the gift of the Spirit, and can now "see" (3:3) the kingdom and "enter into the kingdom of God" (3:5) through faith in Christ.

We have noticed then again the close relationship between faith, healing, and cleansing associated with

¹Cullmann, 104.

²Ibid., 105.

baptism and discipleship.

The Footwashing

Water (ὕδωρ) is next mentioned in chap. 13 in connection with the footwashing. Three times washing (ἵπνω) is used in chap. 9 in connection with the healing of the blind man¹ and now it is used six times in connection with the footwashing.

After his extensive research into the worship of the early church, Cullmann has no question that vss. 9-10 are a clear allusion to baptism.² There were those who, in spite of Paul's demand that there is only one baptism (Eph. 4:5), were baptized repeatedly and some as often as daily.³

So Jesus' response to Peter affirms that the bath (baptism) cleanses a sinner of all sin; the post-baptismal sins are all taken care of by the repeated footwashing.

In light of all the above there can be little or no

¹John 9:7, 11, 15.

²"These words can surely have only this meaning; he who has received Baptism, even when he sins afresh, needs no second Baptism, for one cannot be twice baptized. The reference of the word 'bathed' to Baptism is the more convincing that Baptism in early Christianity did actually consist of dipping the whole body into the water." Cullmann, 108.

³"We know, of course, that within early Christianity there were tendencies towards a repetition of Baptism. There were sects such as the Hemerobaptists who were baptized daily." Ibid., 109.

doubt that "bathed" must refer to baptism. And in that case, since baptism in the Christian community is synonymous with repentance and the removal and cleansing from sin,¹ then the footwashing must have the same purpose and effect.

We have already seen that Cullman is absolutely convinced that "bathed" refers to baptism and has argued just as strongly for the longer text.² However, he believes that the footwashing refers to the "celebrating (of) the Eucharist."³ He comes to this conclusion on the following basis: First, he sees two sacraments set forth in John 13, baptism and the footwashing. Second, baptism cleansed a person from all his sins and could not be repeated as taught in Heb. 6:6, where, "it is founded on the fact that Christ could not be twice crucified."⁴ Third, the problem of post-baptismal sins is being dealt with by the footwashing, which points to the Eucharist. In his words:

According to this story, however, one thing is necessary, and that is for sins committed after Baptism the disciples should go on celebrating the Eucharist in fellowship with Christ and the Brethren. That is the meaning of the words 'save to wash his feet' εἰ μὴ τοὺς ποδοῦς in v. 10.⁵

¹The New Testament is consistent in this.

²Cullmann, 105.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 108.

⁵Ibid., 109.

I can agree with every point Cullmann makes except one--the footwashing does not point to nor is it a synonym for the Eucharist, but it is a separate sacrament instituted here to deal with post-baptismal sins and is a constant reminder to the community of faith of its need to be reconciled with God and man.

After the footwashing, Christ pronounced His disciples clean (καθαρος); and since the concept of baptism and footwashing are intricately connected to cleansing from sin and impurity, it may be profitable at this time to trace the word καθαρος in religious thought, including Scripture.

Καθαρος in General

In general καθαρος is used of physical, religious, and moral purity and is closely connected with religious thought.¹ "Already in the classic Greek usage, both elements are present, the literal as well as the figurative. It is used by Homer to be 'morally clean' from stain, shame, etc."²

In the Septuagint, it is used most often to translate קָדָשׁ for ritual (Lev 7:19; 10:10) and moral purity (Ps 51:10; Hab 1:13). It can be translated as innocent from

¹Hauck, "ΚΑΘΑΡΟΣ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1976), 3:414.

²Ibid.

ethical wrong-doing.¹

Kαθαρός in the Old Testament

While the Pagans worshipped gods that were arbitrary and beset with human weaknesses, Yahweh was just, righteous, and true. He was the covenant God who exercised unbiased love and steadfastness towards His covenant people and they, in turn, were challenged and commanded to be pure and holy. However, because of sin, man was always defiled and in need of cleansing. Consequently, an elaborate system of cleansing ceremonies was instituted of which the washing was "of particular importance." Since Yahweh demanded holiness and righteousness of His people, "the ritual purity demanded of believers becomes a symbol of inner moral purity."²

Kαθαρός in Hellenistic Judaism

In later Judaism, the ritualism, although still retained as a form, depreciated "in favor of the ethical and spiritual."³ And by common consent it was agreed that the "true value of purity is within."⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 417.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

This is especially noted in Philo where there is a "complete ethical spiritualizing of the concept of purity" because "inward moral purity is God's demand."¹

Καθαροῦς in the New Testament

The New Testament teaches purity of the heart (Matt 5:18) and rejects the cultic purity sought by the Jews.

The Christian is cleansed and sanctified by Christ. This cleansing (καθαροῦς) is accomplished in the washing away of his sins and impurities in the "bath" of baptism and the Word (Eph 5:26), and henceforth obeying the truth (1 Pet 1:22). The focus has now shifted to what God does in the life of the believer: the behavior and lifestyle changes. To Jesus "Redeemed" means to "purify (καθαρίσῃ) for Himself a people for His own possession" (Titus 2:14). This purification is closely connected to the confession of sins (1 John 1:7, 9) for God demands a "pure heart (1 Tim 1:5, 2; 2:22) and conscience (1 Tim 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3), i.e., the inward life of believers is cleansed from past sin and wholeheartedly diverted to God."²

Hauck succinctly catches the essence and meaning of John's emphasis concerning the footwashing:

In the Johannine writings, too, the concept of purity

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 425.

is a leading motif (Jn 3:25, 13:10 f.; 15:2 f.; 1 Jn. 1:7, 9). It is a basic thesis that the disciples of Jesus are clean (15:3; 13:10). The question arises what is the basis of this purity, whether it is absolutely valid, and whether it can be restored. . . . In 1 Jn. the death of Christ has power to wash away sin (1:7). In both Jn. and 1 Jn. the question of the full purity of Christians is discussed. It is affirmed absolutely in theory (Jn. 15:3; 1 Jn. 2:10; 3:6), but it is denied in relative and practical reality (1 Jn. 1:7 ff.; 2:1 ff.; Jn. 13:10 f.). In Jn. 13 the foot-washing has two meanings. On the one hand it is a parabolic action (6-11), on the other an example (12-17). The former sense expresses the fact that the full bath (φ λελουμενος, v.10) of baptism accomplishes full cleansing. He who is baptized is clean (v. 10, ct. 3:6). In distinction from other washing, baptism need not and cannot be repeated. The foot-washing (νιπτεισθαι of partial washing), however, symbolizes the loving service which Jesus performs for His own by the daily forgiveness of minor offenses (cf. 1 Jn. 5:16: αμαρτια μη προς θανατον). The link with Jesus must be upheld if the disciple is to receive this service from his Master.¹

And we might add, pass it on to his believing brother to keep the community pure and reconciled, since water in John is the means of regeneration.²

Kαθαρος in the Writings of John³

The word Καθαρος is first used in the Gospel of John

¹Ibid., 426.

²"Further, the attentive reader of the Book of Signs will be aware that 'water' is the instrument of regeneration (iii. 5), the vehicle of eternal life (iv. 13-14)." Dodd, 147, n. 3.

³I accept the authorship of the apostle John for the gospel and letters called by his name, as well as the Revelation. Having considered all the alternatives, it seems that what the early church affirmed is still the best option.

in 13:10 in connection with λελουμενος. "Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean (καθαρος); and you are clean (καθαρος), but not all of you."

The last phrase of vs. 10 is repeated in vs. 11, where Jesus reemphasizes the fact that "not all of you are clean."

If λελουμενος refers to baptism, and there is little if any doubt, then the believer is "cleansed" in the water of baptism and, in the context of chap. 13, cannot be baptized again but only needs "partial" cleansing or "repeated" cleansing from post-baptismal sins, signified by the footwashing. This is also supported by the fact that λελουμενος is in the perfect tense, which denotes a past action with enduring consequence. In the light of Christ's performance in washing Peter's feet, the tense cannot be ascribed to accident but rather purposeful design.

The cleansing in baptism is the cleansing and purification from sin as is evident not only in John but throughout the New Testament.

While λελουμενος was primarily understood as referring to baptism (bath), it may also have been understood as referring to Christ's death in general and His blood in particular. "Certainly, the crucifixion is that event which accomplishes the cleansing, but it is baptism

which signifies the cleansing."¹ 1 John 1:7 clearly connects the cleansing from sin with the blood of Jesus: "But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses (καθαρίζει) us from all sin."

Nevertheless, there needs to be little or no tension between these two verses, since it was well established in the early church that the water of baptism was only efficacious because of Christ's death on the cross. Water and blood were not seen as mutually exclusive concepts or terms, but rather complementary. No doubt the reader was at least aware that water in the Old Testament drew its power and effectiveness from the blood of the sacrificial offering.

In John 15:3 Jesus tells the disciples, "You are already clean (καθαροί) because of the word which I have spoken to you."

We could simply suggest that τοῦ λόγου in John 15:3 is but a reference back to Christ's pronouncement in 13:10; however, that would not exhaust the meaning contextually, since John 15 is referring to the cleansing in the disciples' life in terms of pruning, which will result in

¹Thomas, 103.

good fruit rather than cleansing from sin and defilement.¹

Bultmann, whose burden it is to rid the Gospel of John of all traces of sacramentalism, interprets 13:10 in the light of 15:3. In this way the believer is bathed in the word of Jesus, and consequently cleansed. Therefore, cleansed by water, as suggested in 13:10, is at best secondary.²

Nonetheless, as is often the case in John, both may be true and one does not detract from the other but in fact they are analogous. As C. H. Dodd points out:

The disciples are Καθαροί through washing with water: they are Καθαροί, also, διὰ τὸν λόγον. Similarly, eternal life comes by eating the flesh and blood of the Son of Man (VI 54) and also, Τα ρήματα α λελαληκα υμιν are ζωη. The treatment of the two sacraments seems analogous.³

And as Brown reminds us:

A dichotomy between the salvific action of Jesus and his salvific word is not true to John. Nor was there any necessary dichotomy in the mind of the Johannine writer between Baptism and the working of the word of Jesus through the Paraclete. The Christian to whom this *mashal* was addressed would have become branched in Jesus through Baptism. This would make them fruit bearing because it would give them life begotten from above and would make them clean according to the symbolism of XIII 10.⁴

In the Gospel of John the disciple is cleansed in the

¹Schnackenburg, 3:48; see also, 57, n. 2.

²Bultmann, 472, 534.

³Dodd, 402, n. 1.

⁴Brown, 677.

water of baptism as well as the word (the comprehensive teaching) of Jesus, and both are dependent on the cleansing power that issues from the death of Christ on Calvary.

John 19:34

This is one of those unique texts in John not found outside the Johannine writings. Here John lays great emphasis on the fact that it happened and that "he who has seen has borne witness . . . so that you also may believe" (vs. 35).

This truth should lead to belief in Christ as the Messiah and Savior of mankind.

Over the centuries various interpretations have been given. The one most readily accepted dealt with what I shall refer to as the physical interpretation, one that seems to lie on the surface.

It dispels any doubt that Jesus died. We realize the importance of this in the light of the Old Testament sacrifices. If He had not actually expired there would be no sacrifice at all. The true essence of the sacrifice is the actual death of the victim.¹

The second flows from the first, in that the actual physical death of Jesus would do away with the idea or rumor

¹This is the only point John is trying to make, says Barnes, "that he was truly dead. On this depends the doctrine of the atonement, of the resurrection, and all the prominent doctrines of religion." Barnes, 374.

that Jesus only fainted and revived in the tomb rather than having risen from the dead.

Third, it refuted the Gnostic's belief that Jesus only "appeared" human, but was not actually flesh and blood. Therefore, John destroyed the docetist doctrine.¹

Fourth, many commentators have taken the water and blood to point to the two sacraments: to baptism and the communion service. This view is very appealing and is often set forth as the symbolic meaning. The difficulty this view faces is "that the term 'blood' is never used by itself in the New Testament as a designation of the Lord's Supper."² It would focus only on one half of the Eucharist, which is difficult to accept since John in chap. 6 lays such emphasis on "flesh and the blood" as "food and drink" (vss. 53-56).

However, few if any refute the strong allusion of water to baptism, although they disagree to see the blood alluding to the Lord's Supper. As Beasley-Murray writes: "The statement about birth from water and the Spirit in 3:5, set in juxtaposition with a discourse on the baptism of John and Jesus (3:22-30), makes the reference to baptism transparent."³

¹Ellen White affirms both point 2 and 3 in Desire of Ages, 772. The last point is also heavily favored by Beasley Murray, 356-357.

²Beasley-Murray, 357.

³Ibid.

As I have pointed out above, water, blood, and Spirit share a close association in John. I believe that both Dodd and Schnackenburg are very close to the correct understanding when one says: "The blood is, presumably, a sign of Jesus' saving death (cf 1 John 1:7) and the water is symbolic of Spirit and life (cf. John 4:14; 7:38) but both are most intimately connected."¹

Schnackenburg is certainly correct in seeing the relationship between water, Spirit, and life and the bond between water and blood.

Dodd sees the flowing of blood and water from the side of Jesus as a "sign" of the life that flows from the crucified and risen Christ.²

Ellen White, in Early Writings, comments that the blood and water represent forgiveness and the gift of life.³

Again I would like to point out that these two cleansing agents were used in the sanctuary to cleanse the sinner/priest from sin and symbolize the necessity of a sanctified life. The same principles are present in the

¹Schnackenburg, 294.

²Dodd, 428.

³"The blood was to wash away the sins of those who should believe in His name, and the water was to represent that living water which is obtained from Jesus to give life to the believer." Ellen G. White, Early Writings (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 209.

Gospel of John. It was at baptism that by faith the believer publicly proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, Who alone can save. It was at baptism that the individual was cleansed from sin and received the Spirit. The footwashing was a constant reminder that each disciple needs daily forgiveness and purification and needs the power of the Spirit to lead a sanctified life. As another commentator writes concerning vs. 34: "It was an emblem of the expiatory and purifying virtue of His sacrifices. . . . In all languages water has been employed as an emblem of moral cleansing while the universal problem of sacrifice has made blood the proper symbol of expiation."¹

1 John 5:6-8²

These verses like the previous have caused much discussion among Bible scholars, and much of the thinking runs in the same vein.

There is the "sacramental" view as outlined above and the view that John emphasizes that Jesus truly died. The first must be rejected on the same basis that the use of the word "blood" as a synonym for the Lord's Supper is unusual

¹J. Johnston, The Biblical Illustrator, ed. Joseph S. Exell, John III (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1963), 339.

²The text as it appears in 1 John 5:7 in the Authorized Version concerning the Trinity has no textual support and does not appear in any Greek manuscript until the 15th and 16th centuries.

and not supportive in the New Testament. Also the language and tense employed (ο ελθων) seem to point to the historical event of Christ's coming--"the One who came"; that is, it points to His historical presence, not His continued presence in the communion service.

The most consistent interpretation with my understanding of John is the one advanced by Barclay. It seems consistent with the repeated connection of water, blood, and Spirit in the Gospel.¹

The water and blood "can refer only to two events of His life. The water must refer to His baptism; the blood must refer to His cross."²

These were the outstanding events in Christ's life that identified Him as the Messiah.

It was at His baptism that the Spirit descended upon Him and the voice of God identified Him as "My beloved Son" (Matt 3:16, 17). Jesus was recognized at His baptism as the Messiah, the Son of God, and is the only One Who can baptize "in the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33).

The blood can only point to the cross, for at the

¹Most scholars believe that the Letters of John were written consequent to the writing of the Gospel. See Stephen Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1984), XXIII.

²William Barclay, The Letters of John and Jude (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 127.

cross the great atonement was made and "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22).

So again we see the close relationship and interaction of water, blood, and Spirit in John's writings.

John points us to the necessity of complete cleansing and purification from inward and outward defilement represented by the water, Spirit, and the blood. In this context of being cleansed, Matthew Henry brings together the symbol of the footwashing with the saying of John in these texts and expresses, in my opinion, the essence of the Christological interpretation of water, blood, and Spirit:

At and upon the death of Jesus Christ, his side being pierced with a soldier's spear, out of the wound there immediately issued water and blood. . . . Now this water and blood are comprehensive of all that is necessary and effectual to our salvation. By the water our souls are washed and purified for heaven and the region of saints in light. By the blood God is glorified, his law is honored, and his vindictive excellences are illustrated and displayed. . . . The water and the blood then comprehend all things that can be requisite to our salvation. They will consecrate and sanctify to that purpose all that God shall appoint or make use of in order to that great end.¹

The combination of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, offers a comprehensive demonstration of Christ's perfect work of salvation, which is available only through Him. What the Old Testament law foreshadowed is fully completed in and through Christ Jesus alone. John testifies

¹Matthew Henry, Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 141, 142.

that this is conclusive "proof" "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31), and "He who has the Son has the life" (1 John 5:12).

Summary

The emphasis on cleansing and purification from sin in John is unmistakable. In harmony with the rest of the New Testament, this cleansing is accomplished in baptism.

While the Synoptics clearly identify John the Baptist's baptism as a baptism of repentance, forgiveness, and cleansing from sin,¹ John, assuming that the reader is familiar with this New Testament significance, places a new focus on baptism, thereby elevating it to preeminence.

Following is a summary of how John accomplishes this re-focus:

1. Only in John does the Baptist confess that his baptism is divinely commanded.

2. The Gospel of John is singular in pointing out that Israel's hidden Messiah will be revealed at John's baptism.

3. In John, Jesus identifies and connects baptism and the reception of the Spirit as two necessary events in order to enter His kingdom (John 3:5).

¹Matt 3:11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3.

4. John alone mentions that Jesus authorized His disciples to baptize with water. This is not only unique but in fact startling, since the emphasis points to Christ baptizing His followers with the Spirit. This is a very important point and did not go unnoticed by Michaels, who comments:

Theologically, the notion that Jesus, who was supposed to baptize in the Holy Spirit (1:33), also baptized in water as John did is surprising and without parallel in the other Gospels. To the writer of this Gospel, it appears to have been a firmly fixed tradition that he felt compelled to acknowledge.¹

5. Baptism is either mentioned or implied in chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 13, and 19. No other Gospel or New Testament book, for that matter, places such a great emphasis on cleansing, purification, and forgiveness through baptism.

With the force of the Old Testament prophecies of cleansing and purification from sin and idolatry through water by the Messiah of Israel and the nations, and in the light of the Qumram community that lived in the expectation of the eschatological realization of the conjunction of water and Spirit, which is deeply rooted in the Old Testament and therefore in Jewish consciousness, John's baptism could only be understood against that background. Therefore, cleansing, purification, and forgiveness of sins

¹Michaels, 68, 69.

were all identified, that is, synonymous with baptism and the reception of the Spirit.

Water, Blood, and Spirit

It is reserved for the Gospel of John to intimately connect water and Spirit in a significant salvific way. Many have seen this as a direct fulfillment of Ezek 36:26-27. Jesus connects these important notions in His dialogue with Nicodemus and presents Himself as the One Who is the Source of it all.

Although water is a symbol of Torah, it is also a symbol of the Spirit. This has obvious Christological significance, since Jesus is the Torah (the *λογος*, the living Word), His words give life and power, that is, eternal life, yet He also gives the Spirit.

As the Giver of water, He is the Giver and Source of all salvation and eternal life. Water, then, is a significant and key concept in John that has sweeping implications for Christological interpretations that impact the understanding of the footwashing in chap. 13.

It teaches us that Christ, through the symbolism of water, cleanses and purifies the believer from all sin. It teaches us that water is closely associated and quite synonymous with the concept of repentance and forgiveness. These two truths result in restoration and reconciliation

vertically and horizontally. The close connection of water, Spirit, and blood in John combine to demonstrate Christ's perfect work of salvation. Therefore, water carries great significance, both Christologically and theologically. It is one of the central concepts in John that elevates the footwashing to a primary position and explains why it is positioned at the beginning of the second "book" of John, in a juxtaposition with the $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\sigma\sigma$ passage in chap. 1.

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CHAPTER FIVE

A SURVEY OF THE INTERPRETATION AND PRACTICE OF FOOTWASHING IN CHURCH HISTORY

A survey of the practice of footwashing in the Christian Church shows that the command of Jesus recorded in John 13:14 was not only well known but taken very seriously by Christians throughout the centuries.

This study focused primarily on the Western Church, since it was in Western Europe that the Protestant Reformation occurred, to which Seventh-day Adventists trace their roots. It was the radical wing of the Reformation that drew new attention to the study of footwashing, which has become such an important part of our worship service and heritage.

Footwashing in the New Testament

Since the Gospel of John was written at the end of the first century it comprises one of the last books included in the New Testament canon. Therefore, the earliest reference to footwashing, chronologically, is not

found in the Gospel of John but in First Timothy.¹

1 Tim 5:10

Commentators are divided on the interpretation of the phrase "if she has washed the saints feet, "depending on their understanding of John 13 and their view of ordinances in general.

Paul's letter to his colleague in ministry, concerning the admittance of widows to receive assistance, includes the above phrase and is by some interpreted in conjunction with the preceding phrase "if she has shown hospitality to strangers."

Many of those convinced that footwashing does not constitute a church ordinance, combine the two, thus interpreting footwashing as one important ingredient of showing hospitality to both strangers and saints.

Combining these two phrases seems contextually difficult since each addresses a different group of people to which service is rendered.

Usually guests would wash their own feet unless the host provided a servant, or, he himself, as a gesture of honor, would wash his special guests' feet.²

Paul restricts the "washing of feet" to the saints

¹There is considerable debate concerning the date when the Pastoral Epistles were written; however, it is fair to say that most commentators would place their final composition somewhere between A.D. 60 and A.D. 90.

²See chapter 1 in this study.

(αγίων), which leaves no doubt that he is speaking about fellow believers.¹ Besides being redundant by combining the two phrases, the above interpretation missed the important point that hospitality is offered at home, while "washing" the saints' feet is done in church. "If the washing of feet is merely an act of hospitality, she would have washed the feet of all, even as she used hospitality to all. But, if it was a church ordinance, then it was properly confined to the saints alone."²

There is no question that footwashing had a great impact on the early Christians and it is apparent from 1 Timothy that the words of Jesus were taken in earnest. Brown, in commenting on the footwashing in the Gospel of John, says:

That the practice was taken seriously is attested in I Tim. V.10 where one of the qualifications for a woman to be enrolled as a widow is that she has shown hospitality and has 'washed the feet of the saints'.³

The language here closely parallels John 13. There would be no reason for widows to perform this service for the community unless it had been prompted by Jesus' action. But Jesus washed the feet of believers, and His command

¹Paul's use of "αγίων" always refers to believers, Rom 1:2, 7, 12:13, 16:2, 15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1-2; 2 Cor 1:1; 9:2; Eph 1:1, 2:19; 3:8, 1 8; Phil 1:1; 4:21, 22; 2 Thess 1:10; this list is only partial.

²L. S. Bauman, The Faith: Once Delivered for All unto the Saints (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1960), 70-71.

³Brown, 2:569.

specifies that it be practiced among believers as a spiritual ministry.

Behind the "good deeds" required of widows stand the words of Jesus: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). The "real widows" will be expected to follow the example of humble service set by Christ. They will be to the church what the woman with the ointment was to Jesus in Luke 7:36-50.¹

Barrett also sees here a direct reference to John 13: "The allusion here [to footwashing] makes it very probable that the author either had read John 13.14, or had heard some oral tradition to the same effect."²

There are other serious objections to combining the two phrases and reading hospitality into "washing the feet of the saints." First, as was noted above in the historical study in chapter 1, washing a stranger's feet was not the duty of a woman per se. For a woman to wash another woman's feet in the Orient, she would have to be a slave,³ and there is no evidence that it was carried out by the lady of the house.⁴ This is one of the reasons Thomas so strongly

¹B. B. Thurston, The Widows: A Woman's Ministry in the Early Church (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 49.

²C. K. Barrett, The Pastoral Epistle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 76.

³See R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publ. House, 1961), 669.

⁴Homer A. Kent, Jr., The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in I and II Timothy and Titus (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 173.

argues that a Christian rite is mentioned here. He comments:

Such language implies that the footwashing performed by the widow was a distinctively Christian rite. If this practice was a religious act of the community, it is likely that it was based upon knowledge of the tradition upon which John 13 is based. There is little evidence that women who were not slaves washed the feet of guests. . . . Since few would argue that the widows were slaves of the community, what accounts for their action unless it has been prompted by Jesus' own example?¹

Second, as was mentioned earlier, the action is restricted to saints, which could better be explained by a church ordinance:

Since the action is restricted to the saints, and is considered an important indication of a widow's godliness, it is best understood as a reference to the ordinance of washing the saints' feet, as given by Jesus himself, (John 13). Her participation in this ordinance would indicate her devotion to Christ and her desire to obey His commands (John 13:14,17).²

There is of course always the "spiritual" or "figurative" interpretation that some advance.³ It seems strange that some commentators would argue that out of seven requirements listed, one is to be understood as figurative, while the other six are to be taken literally. There is little or nothing that recommends the acceptance of this

¹Thomas, 136.

²Kent, 175.

³R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, and to Philemon (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publ. House, 1964), 609.

interpretation.

However, some see a significant reason for listing only the footwashing from among the ordinances, for this ordinance more than the other two elicits a deeper commitment to Jesus:

Perhaps this one ordinance was picked by the apostle because it most clearly demonstrates the individual's willingness to follow unreservedly the Lord's commands, even to the point of personal inconvenience, and thus reveals her spiritual nature (John 13:17).¹

Ellen White emphasizes a similar point when she says: "This ordinance of feet-washing was made a religious service. . . . It was given as something to *test and prove* [italics mine] the loyalty of the children of God."² Elsewhere she says: "The ordinance of feet-washing was a revealer of character, and always will be."³

Another commentator thinks along the same lines:

The author believes that this refers to the ordinance established by the Lord described in John 13 and is singled out by Paul as a demonstration to the Lord and His commands.⁴

Holtz also sees a cultic act here when he comments:

But should a cultic act perhaps be thought of? After

¹Kent, 174.

²Ellen G. White, The Faith I Live By (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 299.

³Ellen G. White, "The Lord's Supper and the Ordinance of Feet-Washing--No. 5," Review and Herald, 28 June 1898, 7.

⁴Dean Fetterhoff, The Making of a Man of God: Studies in I and II Timothy (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1982), 73.

John 13.15 the footwashing is conceivably, with the Lord's Supper, an early custom. A connection is often made between the rite and baptism.¹

Holtz also suggests that a woman's participation at the footwashing was equal to her service at baptism and the Lord's Supper; however, he gives no references. Perhaps, in the light of Tertullian's statement that women washed the saints feet,² we may indeed have the practice of an ordinance. Perhaps it was practiced in some regions and not in others, as was later the case when footwashing was practiced in Milan and Spain but not in Rome. A number of scholars would agree that the footwashing was practiced in the Johannine community. It is possible that 1 Timothy is reflecting that practice because those congregations were part of the Johannine community. There are some who believe that 1 Timothy and the Fourth Gospel share a close geographical and temporal proximity. They teach that the Pastoral Epistles were composed around the latter part of the first century, as was John.³

An important question we have to ask is this: Do we have concrete evidence that footwashing was practiced in the

¹G. Holtz, Die Pastoralbriefe (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972), 118.

²See pp. 172-173 below, where he uses the same language as is found in 1 Tim 5:10.

³P. N. Harrison, The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles (London: Oxford University Press, 1921). See p. 159, n. 1, above. See also Barrett's quote on p. 161, n. 2.

Early Church? And if so, is there any documentation found in the writings of the church fathers?

Tracing Footwashing in the Early Church

At least one commentator is quite adamant that the footwashing was not practiced in the Early Church, he says:

The early church is said quite boldly to have faithfully observed this rite. Yet not one shred of evidence from history is given. Neither Acts, nor the Didache, nor I or II Clements, nor Ignatius, nor Polycarp, nor Justin Martyr, nor Irenaeus can be produced in favor of this rite.¹

This is a rash statement, arguing from partial silence. To begin with, it ought to be mentioned that as far as the Scriptures are concerned only 1 Cor 11 mentions the Lord's Supper outside the Gospels (unless Acts 2:42 is a reference to this service). If 1 Tim 5:10 indeed refers to a church ordinance, as many believe it does, then we would have at least a second "witness" in Scripture. And none of the ordinances have a clearer or more precise command of Jesus for perpetuity and permanence. If such an important institution as the Lord's Supper is mentioned only one time outside the Gospels, perhaps we should not be surprised if footwashing is not found more abundantly in the writings of Scripture, although it may well have been practiced.

¹Arthur L. Farstad, "Historical and Exegetical Considerations of New Testament Church Meetings" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972), 97.

Polycarp

Perhaps one of the earliest references to the footwashing is contained in the account of Polycarp's martyrdom:

When the fire was ready, and he had divested himself of all his clothes and unfastened his belt, he tried to take off his shoes, though he was not heretofore in the habit of doing this because the faithful always vied with one another as to which of them would be first to touch (αψηται) his body (his skin = του χρωτος αυτου). For he had always been honored, even before his martyrdom for his holy life.¹

Thomas makes the following comment concerning the above quote:

Several factors suggest that this passage may allude to the practice of footwashing. First, only the description of the removal of the shoes prompts the comment about the competition of the faithful to touch Polycarp's skin, not the description of the removal of his clothes nor the unfastening of the belt. Second, the author specifically states that Polycarp went to great length to avoid taking off his shoes because so many wanted to touch his skin. Third, there is philological evidence to suggest that in certain contexts απτω means 'to wash'. Homer (Odyssey 19, 344,348) twice describes foot-washing as 'to touch my foot'. Odysseus responds to Penelope's offer of hospitality by saying: 'Aya, and baths for the feet give my heart no pleasure, nor shall any woman touch (αψηται) my foot of all those who are serving--women in thy hall, unless there is some old, true-hearted dame who has suffered in her heart as many woes as I; such a one I would not grudge to touch (αψασθαι) my feet.'²

In Homer, the "touching" of feet and the "washing" of

¹C. C. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 154.

²Thomas, 138. See also p. 139, n. 1.

feet are obviously synonymous.

This may be true of Scripture as well, as may be evident from Luke's account of an immoral woman washing and anointing Christ's feet.¹ The host questioned in his mind if Jesus could be a prophet, since He permitted this woman to touch Him (vs. 39). Perhaps touching and anointing (washing) are here used interchangeably as well.

Clement

Another early reference to footwashing may be found in Clement of Alexandria: "So it is said that we ought to go washed to sacrifices and prayers, clean and bright; and that this external adornment and purification are practiced for a sign."²

Here "sacrifices and prayers" most likely refer to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.³ His reference to "purification . . . for a sign," may very well point to the footwashing since, a little later, Clement also alludes to baptism when he says: "Further, there is the image of baptism, which also [*italics mine*] was handed down."⁴

¹Luke 7:36-39.

²Clement, The Stomata, book 4, "Description of the Perfect Man, or Gnostic" (ANF, 2:435).

³Phillip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publ. Company, 1955-58), 245.

⁴Ibid.

As Stallter correctly analyzed:

The argument by some that this refers to bathing or washing at home before going to the assembly to celebrate the eucharist is undercut by the fact that this washing was practiced "for a sign." At home it would be a sign to no one.¹

That confession of sins and reconciliation with fellow believers was practiced in the early church as preparation for the Lord's Supper is evident from the instructions given in the Didache:

And when you gather together . . . each Lord's Day, break bread and give thanks. But first confess your transgressions so that your "sacrifices" may be pure [see 4:14]. (2) And let no one who has a quarrel with his friend join you until they are reconciled, lest your "sacrifice" be profaned [see Matt. 5:23 f.]. (3) For this is what the Lord was referring to.²

It is quite certain that this passage is referring to the Lord's Supper and specifically calls for confession and repentance before communion, as well as reconciliation between believers. It certainly seems to give validity to the claim that Clement here is alluding to footwashing.³

¹T. M. Stallter, "The Significance Of Feetwashing in John 13 as to Its Pictures and Pattern" (B.D. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979), 68.

²Robert A. Kraft, Barnabas and the Didache, vol. 3 (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965), 173.

³Kraft cautions us against jumping "to the conclusion that 'sacrifices' in 14:1-2 necessarily indicates the Eucharistic "sacrament." He adds: "Prayers and praise often were called "sacrifices" in this period, both in Judaism and in Christianity (see Barn. 2:10; Justin, Dial. 117:2b, etc.)." Kraft, 173, 174. However, I am not aware that confession and reconciliation were ever taught as a preparation to offer up prayers and praise.

The Didache does not mention footwashing expressly; however, that may be because that document probably represents an abridged version of existing material that had been in circulation for some time, in either oral or written form, which was probably well known. The Didache is not much interested in explaining the meaning and theology of Christian practices, but finds its purpose in giving specific instructions on how to perform certain functions and rites in the community of faith.¹

Philo, in his interpretation of footwashing, saw it as a preparation of entering God's presence for "purification" from sin. We may be sure that Clement would have been familiar with Philo's writings, and to some degree, been influenced by him.

In the historical study in chapter 1 we found unanimous agreement between Philo, Levi the priest, and the Mishnah that footwashing was an absolute necessity to enter the temple, that is, the presence of God. Weiss states, based upon the statements of Philo, that footwashing was practiced in the Hellenistic Synagogue for the same reason.² The Early Church had close connections with the Synagogue

¹For instance, the section dealing with baptism does not discuss the purpose of baptism but gives only the instruction concerning the mode of baptism. Yet, from the New Testament and Early Church documents, baptism and the washing away of sins was synonymous.

²See chapter 1, 27-33.

and adapted many of the Jewish practices, as is evident, for instance, in the case of fasting.

The Didache gives the following instructions concerning fasting: "But do not let your fasts fall on the same days as 'the hypocrites', who fast on Monday and Thursday. Rather, you should fast on Wednesday and Friday."¹

The practice is the same, only the days are changed, to make a distinction between a Jew and a Christian.

Since footwashing was so important in Judaism as a preparation to meet God, it may have given impetus to footwashing, in addition to John 13, to be practiced before the Lord's Supper as a preparation, for the believer to be cleansed from sin and defilement.²

Although it is impossible to prove that it refers here with certainty to a church ordinance, it can be safely surmised that it refers here to some religious and/or spiritual service practiced in the Church based on John 13.

Tertullian

A very clear reference to the continued practice of footwashing is found in Tertullian, which is evidence that the command of Jesus in John 13 was taken seriously and

¹Kraft, 165.

²John 13 connects footwashing contextually with baptism (13:18) and chronologically with the Lord's Supper.

practiced literally:

I must recognize Christ, both as He reclines on a couch, and when He presents a basin for the feet of His disciples, and when He pours water into it from a ewer, and when He is girt about with a linen towel. It is thus in general I reply upon the point, admitting indeed that we use along with others these articles.¹

Tertullian refers here directly to the footwashing scene as found in John 13, and indicates that footwashing was regularly practiced as part of the Christian worship. He quotes John 13:10 (De Baptismo 12) to prove that the apostles had been baptized and that baptism cannot be repeated.

More evidence for the practice of footwashing is provided by Tertullian when he speaks about the difficulty an unbelieving husband endures in having a Christian wife. This passage also gives us insight into Christian behavior at the end of the second century:

Who, finally, will without anxiety endure her absence all the night long at the paschal solemnities? Who will, without some suspicion of his own, dismiss her to attend the Lord's Supper which they defame? Who will suffer her to creep into prison to kiss a martyr's bonds? Nay, truly, to meet any one of the brethren to exchange the kiss? to offer water for the saints' feet? to snatch (somewhat for them) from her food, from her cup? to yearn (after them)? to have (them) in her mind? If a pilgrim brother arrive, what hospitality for him in an alien home?²

This would perhaps suggest that women washed the

¹Tertullian, The Chaplet (ANF, 3:98).

²Ibid., 4:46.

saints' feet¹ at the agape feast. But while we may not be sure of the occasion, it definitely confirms that footwashing was widely practiced in the Early Church and it confirms that John 13 was taken literally.

Another reference to footwashing may be related to the agape feast. In this passage Tertullian refers to "manual ablution," which may explain the meaning and function of footwashing in that setting. After describing the modest and chaste behavior of the feast, he continues,

As an act of religious service, it permits no vileness or immodesty. The participants before reclining, taste first of prayer to God. . . . They talk as those who know that the Lord is one of their auditors. After manual ablution, and the bringing in of the lights, each is asked to stand forth and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from holy Scripture, or one of his own composing a proof of the measure of our drinking.²

It seems from this passage that after the meal a regular worship service was conducted, before which footwashing may have occurred as a symbol of confession, cleansing, and reconciliation and would be reminiscent of the instruction given in the Didache.³ As Thomas comments: "It is just possible that 'manual ablution' refers to footwashing, for manual may mean 'by hand' rather than 'of

¹These are the same words used in 1 Tim 5:10.

²Tertullian, 3:47.

³See p. 168 above.

the hand', in this context."¹ If this were the case, then Tertullian would have used similar language as did Augustine, who insisted that footwashing was to be carried out by hand.²

Summary

There is sufficient data to believe that the footwashing was practiced before the Lord's Supper as a rite when sins were confessed and believers were reconciled to each other. This is especially made plausible by the fact that the Council of Toledo in A.D. 694 mandated that the footwashing was to be practiced on Thursday of Holy Week as a preparation for the Lord's Supper, and as a rite when, perhaps, sins were to be confessed and reconciliation with fellow believers was accomplished--giving evidence that the footwashing was thought of by many as a "little baptism" to wash away the sins of believers, and was closely connected with the Lord's Supper.³

Chrysostom

The great preacher, John Chrysostom, wants the bishops to wash the feet of their subordinates as a result

¹Thomas, 140.

²Faraq also is convinced that Tertullian here refers to footwashing, 73.

³See p. 21 above.

of Christ's command.¹

'Let us wash one another's feet,' He said. 'Those of slaves, too?' And what great thing is it, even if we wash the feet of slaves? For He Himself was Lord by nature, while we were slaves, yet He did not beg off from doing even this. . . . Yet what shall we then say, we who have received the example of such great forbearance, but do not initiate it even slightly. . . . He Himself, to be sure, was Lord, whereas if we perform an act of humility we do it to our fellow slaves. Accordingly, He made an indirect reference to this very thing, also, by saying: 'If, therefore, I the Lord and Master', and again: 'So you also'. Indeed, it would have followed logically for us to say: 'How much rather we slaves', and He left this conclusion to the conscience of His hearers.²

Athanasius

In the Canons of Athanasius (ca. 366-73), the bishop was to wash the feet of those under his authority several times a year. In this way, he exhibited a spirit of service:

This bishop shall eat often with the priests in the Church, that he may see their behavior, whether they do eat in quiet and in the fear of God. And he shall stand there and serve them; and if they be weak (if he can), shall wash their feet with his own hands. And if he is not able to do this, he shall cause the archpriest or him that is after him to wash their feet. Suffer not the commandment of the Savior to depart from you, for all this shall ye be answerable, that they likewise may see the lowliness of the Savior in you.³

¹Again, John 13 was taken literally and followed even at the time of Chrysostom.

²T. A. Goggin, Saint John Chrysostom: Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist, Homilies 48-88 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1960), 261.

³W. Riedeland and W. E. Crum, The Canons of Athanasius (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904), 43, 131.

From Athanasius's reference to "the commandment of the Savior," it is clear he must be referring to John 13:14-17. Chrysostom, as well as Tertullian, as is referred to above, also believed that this command of Christ called for a literal fulfillment of footwashing. Athanasius's counsel, perhaps command, raised an interesting question. Is the practice of footwashing especially encouraged for Church leaders? There seems to be some evidence that this may be true. Peter, addressing the elders of the church, points out how they should not lead the flock of God by compulsion, and not for sordid gain (1 Pet 5:2). Nor should they lord it over them. He encourages the younger men to be "subject to their elders" (vs. 5), and counsels them to "clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" (vs. 5). What was Peter thinking about here? Many think Peter was thinking of the upper chamber where Jesus clothed Himself with the apron of a slave to serve His flock.¹ Footwashing may be in Peter's mind when he says: "clothe yourselves with humility towards one another" (vs. 5).² Surely, of all the

¹J. Ramsey Michaels, 1 Peter, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publishers, 1988), 290. See also Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scriptures, vol. 16 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 135-136.

²Referring to footwashing, Ellen White writes: "Christ knew that His disciples would never forget the lesson of Humility given them at the Last Supper." Ellen G. White, Reflecting Christ, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 261.

apostles, Peter remembered when Jesus bowed before him as a servant in complete humility, and later said, "You also ought to wash one another's feet."¹ Peter, like Chrysostom, knew perhaps that Church leaders, above all, ought to manifest humility in service, and that footwashing serves as a constant reminder of the Master's attitude toward His people. Through the footwashing service, the under-shepherds are reminded to manifest the same spirit and attitude of the Master.

Ambrose

Ambrose, who became the bishop of Milan in A.D. 374, also practiced footwashing, literally in fulfillment of John 13:

I, then wish also myself to wash the feet of my brethren, I wish to fulfill the commandment of my Lord. I will not be ashamed in myself, nor disdain what He Himself did first.²

Ambrose believed that footwashing cleansed the believer from original sin. It was practiced in the Milan churches as a liturgical act by the deacons as they washed the feet of those who were just baptized.

He defended the practice of footwashing in his

¹John 13:14.

²Ambrose, The Gospel of St. Matthew, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church, vol. 10, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Company, 1987), 95.

parishes against Rome where it was not part of the worship service.¹ Hoskyns thinks that "on account of the numbers"² means that "the ceremony took too much time."³ Perhaps from Hoskyn's remarks, two reasons can be cited as to why footwashing began to be discontinued: (1) because footwashing can be cumbersome and take some time, especially in larger congregations, and (2) perhaps people began to lose the real significance of this ordinance.

According to Ambrose, Jesus washed the disciples' feet in order to "wash off the poison of the Serpent."⁴ He taught that footwashing cleansed the believer from the curse of original sin. He writes:

There is also a certain water which we put into the basin of our soul Wash the heel of my soul, that I may be able to efface the curse, that I feel not the serpent's bite on the foot of my soul, but, as Thou Thyself hast bidden those who follow Thee, may tread on

¹Sacr. 3,1,4-7, as referred to in Lohse, "Die Fusswaschung (Joh 13,1-20) Eine Geschichte ihrer Deutung," 27.

²"The author of *De Sacr.* (iii. I. 4, 5) . . . states that the Church in Rome did not have this custom, and suggests that this was 'on account of the numbers'. Presumably the ceremony took too much time." Hoskyns, 444.

³"We are not unaware of the fact that the Church in Rome does not have this custom, whose character and form we follow in all things. Yet it does not have the custom of washing the feet. So note: Perhaps on account of the multitude this practice declined." Ambrose, "The Sacraments, Book III," I:4-7, The Fathers of the Church, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1963), 291-292.

⁴Richter, 29, is quoting De Mysteriis liber, vi, 32.

serpents and scorpions with uninjured foot.¹

Ambrose was convinced that footwashing has soteriological significance when he says: "The words of Jesus 'if I do not wash you . . . ' is not only addressed to Peter, but to every one of us."²

The execution of Christ's command, to wash one another's feet, is beneficial not only to the recipient but also the servant. "Well (blessed) is the mystery of humiliation, when I wash off the dirt of others, I wash off my own."³

In his commentary on Luke, he cites footwashing as a means of cleansing and purifying from sin in general.⁴

Ambrose followed the command of Jesus found in John 13, literally teaching that footwashing cleansed from original sin as well as sin in general. Footwashing was practiced literally as the feet of the newly baptized believers were washed as a liturgical act, and Ambrose himself washed feet in harmony with Jesus' command. Moreover, he defended the practice in his churches against

¹Ambrose, The Gospel of St. Matthew, 95.

²Ambrose, De Spiritu Sancto libri tres ad Gratianum Augustum, I.

³Richter's translation of bonum mysterium humilitatis quia, Richter, 30.

⁴Expositio evangelii secundum Lucan, vi, 67, quoted in Richter, 30.

the authority of Rome, where this sacrament was not practiced.

Augustine

Augustine, heavily influenced by Ambrose, also had much to say concerning footwashing. And like most of his comments, his teachings concerning footwashing have permeated the thinking of the Church, especially in the West, for many centuries, even up to the present day.

He interpreted John 13:4ff. as referring to Christ's incarnation as pictured by Paul in Phil 2:5-7.

Interestingly, even as Ambrose, who saw behind Rom 10:15 the footwashing where Jesus prepared and commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel by washing their feet, so Augustine perceived in Jesus' drying the feet of the apostles the commission to preach.¹ He taught that John 13:10 speaks about baptism, while the washing of feet teaches the cleansing of those sins committed after baptism, which includes the unavoidable daily sins.²

The meaning of Jesus' words to wash each other's feet

¹Clement also seems to indicate that footwashing prepared the disciples to carry the Gospel to the world. He says: "And the Saviour Himself washing the feet of the disciples, and dispatching them to do good deeds, pointed out their pilgrimage for the benefit of the nations, making them beforehand fair and pure by His power." Clement, "Paedagogus" (ANF, 2:247).

²Richter, 31-33.

is realized when believers forgive each other their sins; as additional support, he quoted Jas 5:16 and Col 3:13.¹ In addition, during footwashing, the believers must pray for each other's sins.² According to Augustine, footwashing is also an example of humility and service as believers wash each other's feet. The actual, literal act of washing someone's feet results in a blessing.³ He continues,

But it is far better, and beyond all dispute more accordant with the truth, that it should also be done with the hands; nor should the Christian think it beneath him to do what was done by Christ. For when the body is bent at a brother's feet, the feeling of such humility is either awakened in the heart itself, or is strengthened if already present.⁴

Augustine's premise was that footwashing taught the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins and that it illustrated Christ's incarnation.⁵ Many objected to connecting footwashing with baptism and so a controversy arose as to at what time footwashing ought to be practiced. Some simply avoided the controversy by dropping footwashing altogether, while Augustine argued in favor of retaining it.

There is valuable insight into the controversy over

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Augustine, Lactantius, The Divine Unstitutes (ANF, 7:306).

⁵Richter, 31-33.

the practice of footwashing during this time from a letter Augustine wrote (ca. A.D. 400).

As to the feet . . . the question has arisen at what time it is best, by literal performance of this work, to give public instruction in the important duty which it illustrates, and this time (of Lent) was suggested in order that the lesson taught by it might make a deeper and more serious impression. Many, however, have not accepted this as a custom, lest it should be thought to belong to the ordinance of baptism; and some have not hesitated to deny it any place among our ceremonies. Some, however, in order to connect its observance with the more sacred association of this solemn season, and at the same time to prevent its being confounded with baptism in any way, have selected for this ceremony either the eighth day itself, or that on which the third eighth day occurs, because of the great significance of the number three in many holy mysteries.¹

Footwashing obviously was looked upon as the occasion to publicly instruct the new converts (and the congregation as a whole) that confession and cleansing of post-baptismal sins were both a privilege and necessity, since "the important duty which it illustrates," most probably refers to the forgiveness of daily sins.

The Councils of Elvira and Toledo

That footwashing caused a controversy in the Early Church and was vehemently debated is obvious from the writings of Ambrose and Augustine. The controversy also seems to be substantiated by the fact that footwashing by the clergy was abolished by the forty-eighth canon of the Council of Elvira, A.D. 305, which reads: "Nor are the feet

¹Schaff and Wace, 10:314.

of the baptized to be washed by the priests or by any of the clergy."¹ This declaration discloses two obvious facts:

(1) that footwashing must have been practiced very early in Spain, certainly not later than the third century; (2) that footwashing had caused a controversy that was ultimately settled at the Council of Elvira and resulted in the prohibition of that practice. The reason for its prohibition is not clear, but speculation is that it was either abused or prohibited because it caused a doctrinal difficulty due to its apparent connection with the sacrament of baptism.

Interestingly, another Council, almost four hundred years later, also dealt with the *pedilavium*. Hoskyns informs his readers as follows:

In the third canon of the seventeenth Council of Toledo (A.D. 694), the non-observance of the practice of the washing of the feet on the Thursday in Holy Week was censured, and a strict performance of the ceremony was enforced both as an example of humility and as an act of preparation for the Supper of the Lord, with which the ceremony was closely associated. Disobedient priests were ordered to be excluded from Communion for two months. Further, since the penitents were publicly reconciled at the Paschal season, the liturgy of the *Pedilavium* had special reference to the remission of sin after baptism. There is some evidence to show that the reconciliation of penitents took place on Maundy Thursday (Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 437).²

Two principles of footwashing mentioned here are

¹Hoskyns, 444.

²Ibid., 446.

indeed very difficult to separate or even distinguish, that is, the "example of humility" and the "act of preparation for the Supper of the Lord."

Concerning the close relationship of humility and preparation for communion, the author continues,

The *Pedilavium* was, therefore, originally both an example of Christian humility and a means of post-baptismal sanctification. The two elements were so closely interwoven that the one was never entirely dissociated from the other.¹

Hoskyns also mentions here that the "Pedilavium had special reference to the remission of sin after [*italics mine*] baptism."

The Apostolic Constitution

Footwashing is also mentioned as one of the deacons' duties in the Apostolic Constitution (3:19):

We ought therefore also to serve the brethren, in imitation of Christ. . . .If, therefore, our Lord and Master so humbled Himself, how can you, the labourers of the truth, and administrators of piety, be ashamed to do the same to such of the brethren as are weak and infirm.²

Caesarius of Arles

Saint Caesarius of Arles encouraged the Christians of his time to be vigilant in doing good and to wash the feet of those who are sick by saying,

Moreover, according to our strength we ought to

¹Ibid.

²Roberts and Donaldson, 7:432.

engage frequently in fasting, vigils, and prayers with perfect charity, visit the sick and seek those washing their feet but also generally supplying their necessities as far as we can.¹

The same author believed in the literal performance of footwashing and condemned the nobles of his day for not washing the feet of common Christians. He states,

For if, perchance, we disdain to wash the feet of the saints, we will not merit to have a share with them. Let us rather bend down the feet of the saints or of strangers; because when we fulfill the service with holy humility indeed we are not merely touching their feet with our hands, but we are cleansing the meanness and filth or our souls through faith and humility, and we are clearing not only the smallest, but even the most serious of our sins.²

In this context, Caesarius speaks not only of following the command and example of Jesus to break down prejudice in the congregations but also sees footwashing as cleansing from all sin those who wash the feet of fellow believers. It is obvious that he advocated the literal performance of footwashing. These words seem to echo the teachings of Ambrose on this subject and give evidence that footwashing was discussed and practiced widely. It is not clear if confession in connection with the cleansing of sin was advocated by him.

The fact that Jesus had mentioned baptism in

¹M. M. Mueller, Saint Caesarius of Arles: Sermons vol. 1 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1956), 299.

²M. M. Mueller, Saint Caesarius of Arles: Sermons vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1973), 65-66.

connection with footwashing¹ joined these two sacraments forever in the minds of many Church leaders and believers, especially in the early centuries. Giving instruction concerning the newly baptized, Caesarius writes: "Let them receive strangers and, in accord with what was done for themselves in baptism, wash the feet of their guests."²

It is not clear what the author means in respect to "was done for . . . in baptism." Is he alluding to cleansing from sin, being helped by others? Or should they treat their guests like God treated sinners--serving them in spite of their shortcomings.

The Practice of Footwashing in Gaul and Ireland

Footwashing was in certain aspects not only closely connected with baptism but also with the Lord's Supper.³ As the Western Church expanded, carrying the saving message of Christ to the outer regions, it also carried the deed of Christ washing the feet of His disciples and the command to do likewise. We find much evidence that footwashing was practiced in Gaul and Ireland. In the Stowe Missal, footwashing followed baptism (the giving of the white robe

¹John 13:10.

²Mueller, 3:73-74.

³See p. 171, n. 1, above.

"chrisom") and preceded the communion of the newly baptized.¹

The Bobbio Missal placed footwashing at the same place and the following was read: "I wash thy feet as our Lord Jesus Christ did to his disciples. Thus do thou to guests and to strangers."²

In the Missal Gothicum, footwashing "follows the anointing with the Chrism and precedes the vesting with the Chrisom."³

The question concerning the meaning of footwashing was of far greater regard than the literal practice of the same. Much was written about the above issue that cannot be included in this study. Many writers questioned if footwashing was a sacrament or just an object lesson in humility. This occupied the author of *De Sacramentis*. He comments that some assert it is not a work of sanctification but an act of humility "and that it ought to be performed not at baptism, not at the regeneration; but only as we should wash the feet of a guest." He himself is convinced otherwise: "Learn," he says, "how it is a sacrament and a means of sanctification." He thus explains that in baptism

¹Frederick Warren, Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), 217-218.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

all guilt is washed away, but since the Devil trapped Adam, footwashing is necessary to deal with the post-baptismal sins of believers when the Devil trips them up as well. Further, he comments: "At the point where the serpent made his treacherous attack a stronger reinforcement may be applied that he may not be able to trip thee up afterwards."¹

Footwashing in the Middle Ages

Bernard of Clairvaux

Others were equally convinced that the Pedilavium was a sacrament. For Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), footwashing was a sacrament of equal importance to baptism and the Eucharist. He deals with this subject in a sermon he presented Maundy Thursday.²

Bernard's focal point is that footwashing was commanded and instituted by Jesus as a sacrament to remind His followers that there is forgiveness for sins we commit daily since our feet walk in the dust of this life and we cannot remain perfectly clean.

Arnold von Bonneral

So also Arnold von Bonneral, who refers to

¹De Sacramentis, iii. i. 7. See Hoskyns, 444.

²Jacques Paul Migne, Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina, 189. See also Richter, 79.

footwashing as a service of complete humility and a symbol of daily atonement (expiato). According to him, Jesus teaches, in John 13, that baptism cannot be repeated and points to footwashing as a means to be cleansed from the sticky dirt that is washed away in the footwashing service. This act can be practiced at any time and is to be repeated as often as necessary. The command to wash each other's feet is fulfilled in that we forgive others their sins, strengthen the weak, and identify with the needs of others.¹

Zacharias Chryssopolitanus

Zacharias Chryssopolitanus also interprets John 13:10 as referring to baptism and sees in footwashing a cleansing from daily sins. In this interpretation he follows Augustine, Bede, and Alcuin.²

Peter Cantor

Peter Cantor (ca. 1130-1197), who taught at Notre Dame, also sees in footwashing a reminder to all believers to forgive each other their sins.³

Martin von Leon

Martin Legionensis (Martin von Leon, d. 1203), sees

¹Richter, 79.

²Ibid., 80.

³Ibid.

in footwashing an example of love and humility. Brotherly love is a prerequisite to receive the Lord's Supper.¹

During the Christian age many have seen in footwashing a sacrament or at least a strong reminder that there is forgiveness and cleansing from post-baptismal sins and a command to forgive each other's sins.²

According to Hoskyns: "With the spread of the Roman liturgy the custom of the washing of the feet at baptism disappeared in the West," and Warren suggests that Augustine's demand that the Celtic bishops should conform to the Roman method of administering the sacrament of baptism was, 'in point of fact, a demand for the abolition of the Pedilavium'."³

Two Landmark Studies

George Richter

Two landmark studies on the history of the exegesis of John 13:1-20 and 13:10 have made a major contribution to modern scholarship.

The first, by Richter, is more comprehensive and has already been referred to several times in this study. The other focuses almost exclusively on the interpretation of

¹Ibid., 84.

²Ibid.

³Hoskyns, 445.

John 13:10 in the Latin Church, and was executed by Haring.¹

One of the key benefits of Richter's study is the correction it brought about in the often repeated statement that the Latin Fathers equated footwashing to baptism, while the Greek Fathers saw it as an act of humility. This view, in the light of Richter's research, needs drastic modification.

As his investigation demonstrates, the great majority of the Latin Fathers saw in 13:10 a reference to baptism: "The man who has *bathed* has no need to wash except for his feet"; however, they distinguish the baptismal bathing from the footwashing. The bathing referred to the baptism of the disciples that had taken place earlier (e.g. by John the Baptist), while footwashing was a symbol of the forgiveness of subsequent sin.

N. M. Haring

The identical point is ascertained even more precisely by Haring's investigation. He discloses that the above-mentioned interpretation was almost unanimous for centuries, that footwashing was symbolic of the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins, or daily sins.

Nevertheless, Haring not only verifies Richter's

¹N. M. Haring, "Historical Notes on the Interpretation of John 13:10," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 13 Oct. 1951, 355-380.

findings but makes one more significant point. He indicates that, about the middle of the sixteenth century, among Catholic scholars, suddenly a new interpretation of footwashing surfaced that ultimately affected the interpretation of 13:10 altogether.

Where before there was almost unanimous agreement that "bath" referred to baptism and footwashing to the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins, all of a sudden the idea emerges that the disciples were clean through the word of Christ (John 15:3), and that 13:10 probably speaks of a "spiritual cleansing."¹

In this new scheme of interpretation, footwashing, instead of representing a symbol of cleansing from daily sins, is now interpreted as pointing to penance. In Haring's words:

Although neither Maldonatus nor Jansenius indicate the origin of this approach to John 13:10, the more intensive study of the verse probably resulted from the reaction against the Anabaptist error that the *pedilavium* is a Christian sacrament.²

However, many continued to interpret 13:10 the "orthodox way." Not a few found support for the ancient interpretation in "St. Augustine, . . . St. Thomas Aquinas, Rupert of Deutz, St. Bernard, Estius (d. 1612), and Tirinus

¹See Haring's comments concerning the question: "Could this new orientation be harmonized with the patristic teaching?" Ibid., 372.

²Ibid., 371.

(d. 1636)."¹

This division within Catholicism on the interpretation of 13:10 has continued to the present day, as it is traced briefly by the author.² Yet, in 1918, Trench³ could still paraphrase 13:10 as follows:

Thou has been already wholly bathed in the waters of Baptism and they that have been once baptized need only to have from time to time removed those defilements which will inevitably attach to all in their passage through life.⁴

To this Haring adds: "St. Augustine himself may have written these lines." This is even more remarkable when one realizes that Trench was willing to make such a strong statement concerning this passage, at a time when Wellhausen had discarded John 13:6-11 as spurious.⁵

The new emphasis on footwashing generated by the Anabaptists did not go unnoticed in the emerging Protestant movement either. Haring adds this statement pertaining to the attitude of the Reformers toward this new understanding:

The Reformers were, of course, little inclined to accept this increase in the number of sacraments and they may in fact be responsible for the excess censured by Maldonatus

¹Ibid., 373.

²Ibid., see especially 372.

³G. H. Trench, A Study of St. John's Gospel (London: John Murray, 1918).

⁴Ibid., 307.

⁵J. Wellhausen, Das Evangelium Johannis (Berlin: George Reimer, 1903), 59.

that the feet washing had no spiritual significance whatever.¹

Summary

It is apparent that footwashing has had a powerful influence in the Church throughout the centuries and that there was, at least in the Latin Church, a consensus that John 13:10 referred to baptism (bath) and the continued need of cleansing from post-baptismal sin, symbolized by footwashing.

With the new emphasis of the emerging radical wing of the Reformation, that footwashing constitutes a Christian sacrament, a sudden shift of interpreting John 13:10 developed, not only among Catholic scholars, but also among Protestant scholars, that suddenly tended to understand 13:10 in "spiritual" ways, did not teach a cleansing from guilt and sin, either in baptism or footwashing. Others, like Wellhausen, reasoned that the passage was not original anyway and therefore not that important. After all, it only represented the view of one of the many "editors."

Therefore, in spite of the force of the new interpretation among Catholic and Protestant commentators, the fresh emphasis on this ordinance among the Anabaptists caused many to take another look at John 13. Many Christians have come to agree with their interpretation that

¹Haring, 371.

footwashing is not only important but should be practiced today in harmony with Christ's command and, indeed, may constitute a Christian ordinance.

Modern Days

In 1985, there were approximately 110 denominations in North America that were regularly washing feet liturgically.¹ Many of those denominations are presently in the process of giving up the practice of footwashing.

The footwashing service is being abandoned by those who at one time championed this sacrament, such as the Mennonites and Moravians. So important was this ordinance at one time that significant controversy arose over minor differences in practice. For instance, congregations split over "whether one foot or both feet should be washed at liturgy."² And a new denomination was created because John Herr believed his fellow Mennonites were "not liturgically kissing and washing feet often enough."³

It is estimated that in 1985 3 percent of the Mennonite Brethren congregations were washing feet. The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference gradually

¹T. W. Goodhue, "Do We Have to Lose Our Uniqueness When We Merge?" Journal of Ecumenical Studies (Winter 1985), 127-130.

²Ibid., 128.

³Ibid.

abandoned the practice altogether.¹ Perhaps Seventh-day Adventists can glean some important lessons from these fellow Christians that will help them find new meaning and greater blessings in this ordinance.

¹Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MEANING OF FOOTWASHING

After conducting the above study, tracing footwashing in secular as well as sacred history, exegeting John 13:1-17, pursuing the significance of water as to its Christological and theological significance in the Gospel of John, and tracing the interpretation and practice of footwashing in the Church, I am now prepared to set forth an interpretation of the meaning of footwashing. Based on the above study, the first principle that emerges, is that footwashing is almost always a preparation for something.

Footwashing as a Means of Preparation

So common was footwashing a means of preparation that any person who hastened into making a decision without proper contemplation and reflection was said to do so "with unwashed feet."¹ This axiom, that footwashing is almost always a means of preparation, was also recognized by Thomas who states, "In the vast majority of texts and artistic representations consulted, footwashing serves to prepare one

¹See chapter 2, p. 49.

for a specific task, experience, or relationship."¹

This principle proves to be very valuable in the understanding and interpretation of John 13.

Footwashing as a Preparation for Social Events

Footwashing was a basic elementary practice that prepared a person to rest, enter a house, spend the night, or partake of a meal. It was customary for the host to provide the water for his guests to wash their feet. It was not unusual for a slave to be commanded to wash the feet of an honored guest, or, as a special sign of affection, the host himself might have done.

So important was footwashing that, if it was neglected, special mention is made. Jesus rebuked Simon the Pharisee for not providing water to wash His feet.² Or, as in Jacob's case, when Leah urgently insisted that he enter her tent, it was mentioned that she did not allow "him time to wash his feet."³

It is evident from Plutarch's account of Pompey's behavior that footwashing was a standard preparation to partake of a meal.⁴

¹Thomas, 58-59.

²Luke 7:44.

³See chapter 2, p. 33.

⁴See chapter 2, p. 47.

Footwashing as a Preparation for Religious Functions

In antiquity, ritual washing abounded in almost all religions, since water was looked upon as a universal cleansing agent.

One of the important cultic cleansings was footwashing. It carried social significance since the feet inevitably came in contact with dirt and dust and needed continual cleansing. Therefore, the feet became representative of the human need for continual cleansing from uncleanness and, in particular, sin.

In the Sanctuary Service

It was in the sanctuary that God "dwelled," and it was in the Most Holy Place that the Shekinah was revealed above the mercy seat between the cherubim.

The priest, before he could function as a mediator, had to wash his feet (and hands) in the laver that stood in the courtyard. The fourfold command to wash his hands and feet before entering the sanctuary or before serving at the altar, at the threat of death to the disobedient by God, all served to focus on the importance of that cleansing ritual. It stood as a perpetual reminder that sin is deadly and must be dealt with by the believer before entering His presence.¹

¹See chapter 2, pp. 22-26.

As a Cultic Cleansing in Pagan Religions

There is evidence that footwashing was part of the ritual purification that a priest may have engaged in on a regular basis, preparatory for ministry.¹

It is apparent from Pliny's account² that footwashing accomplished ritual purification. It may even have cleansed those who committed capital crimes.³

As a Preparation to Enter God's Presence

Based on the command for the priests to wash their hands and feet in the laver before entering the sanctuary, and therefore the presence of God, it appears that the practice of footwashing became established in the Hellenistic synagogue, as a preparation to enter and worship God, and as a sign of sanctification.⁴

Philo mentions footwashing as a preparation to enter the temple grounds, which is also supported by the Mishnah.⁵ This practice is mentioned also in Christ's dialogue with the Pharisaic chief priest Levi.⁶

¹See chapter 2, p. 43.

²See chapter 2, p. 44.

³See chapter 2, p. 44.

⁴See chapter 2, pp. 29-31.

⁵See chapter 2, pp. 33-36.

⁶See chapter 2, pp. 36-38.

Based on the above observation, footwashing was an essential preparation to enter the temple proper, which symbolized entering the presence of God.

As a Preparation for Prayer and Forgiveness of Sins in Islam

Footwashing is part of the wudoo (the feet are the last parts of the body to be washed) before prayer can be offered and petition for forgiveness is presented. Once the left foot has been washed, the petition for pardon and forgiveness commences.¹

Footwashing as a Means of Preparation for Marriage and Intimacy

There is evidence that in antiquity the bridegroom washed the feet of his bride before the nuptial agreement was ratified.² This practice of washing the bride's feet followed by anointing is still practiced in Egypt today.³ A closely related practice, washing his wife's feet before conjugal relations by the husband, is a custom among Jewish people living in Europe and is believed to date back to biblical times, perhaps throwing light on David's command to Uriah to go home and wash his feet.⁴ The two practices became so closely associated that footwashing became a

¹See chapter 2, pp. 50-56.

²See chapter 2, pp. 18-20.

³See chapter 2, p. 56.

⁴See chapter 2, pp. 15-21.

euphemism for conjugal relations.¹

Footwashing as a Means of Preparation for Burial

Oranga has pointed out that washing and anointing are often synonyms. He says: "to wash one's feet can be understood as to anoint them as well."² That the "removing of shoes" and "anointing" are synonyms may be inferred from Plutarch's account of Favonius's willingness to become Pompey's voluntary slave.³

Since shoes were always removed before footwashing, and this act almost always preceded anointing, it is very conceivable that these terms were used interchangeably.

There exists a close relationship between the anointing at Bethany and the footwashing. Most scholars believe that John's account of the event is mentioned in all the Synoptics.⁴ If that is supported, then the tears of Mary provided the water to wash Christ's feet, and her hair

¹See chapter 2, pp. 15-21.

²Owanga-Welo, 242. "There is another important aspect which has received little attention in the previous treatment of the footwashing, namely, the possibility of a synonymous use of washing and anointing and their related elements, water and oil. This possibility is attested in Matt. 6:17ff. and par., by Billerbeck, and is perhaps suggested by Plutarch's parallel use of the two terms. This meaning is even proposed by Louis Marin who, by the use of structural analysis, pointed out the correlation between the footwashing and the anointing at Bethany." Ibid., 20.

³Ibid., 42.

⁴Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:37-39.

was used to dry them.

In both--the anointing at Bethany and the footwashing--a meal is in progress. The feet are the object in both and the washing and anointing have spiritual qualities that affect salvation.

In one, Mary interprets the future (consciously or subconsciously); in the other, the future holds the full revelation of Christ's deed. The villain is exposed in both accounts. In each, Mary and Peter provide opportunity for Jesus to interpret and clarify.

Footwashing as a Means of Preparation for the Lord's Supper

While John 13 connects footwashing with baptism both contextually and philologically, it connects it chronologically with the Communion service. Several scholars have seen in footwashing the ordinance that prepares the suppliant for the Lord's Supper.¹ Moreover, (chapter 4) Council of Toledo enforced footwashing as an act of preparation for the Lord's Supper.²

Footwashing as a Preparation to Ready the Disciples to Absorb the Words of Jesus before His Hour

By locating footwashing at the pivotal point of introducing the second section of John, the book of glory,

¹See pp. 248-253, below.

²See chapter 5, pp. 182-184.

John has forever guaranteed a unique prominence to this singular action of Jesus.

Historically, footwashing separated the disciples into "clean" and "not clean." The "clean" were now prepared to listen and absorb the words of Jesus spoken to them in His farewell discourses. Although the full meaning of these words would not bloom forth into full understanding until after His death, burial, resurrection, and pentecost, they bore fruit in the formation of the Early Church and have brought peace and comfort to millions throughout the ages as they were recorded in the Scriptures.

Ellen White has this insightful statement concerning the changed attitude footwashing brought about in the Eleven that caused the Master to pronounce them "clean":

Christ acknowledged them as His. But temptation had led them into evil, and they still needed His grace. When Jesus girded Himself with a towel to wash the dust from their feet, He desired by that very act to wash the alienation, jealousy, and pride from their hearts. . . . With the spirit they then had, not one of them was prepared for communion with Christ. Until brought into a state of humility and love, they were not prepared to partake of the paschal supper, or to share in the memorial service which Christ was about to institute. Their hearts must be cleansed. Pride and self-seeking create dissension and hatred, but all this Jesus washed away in washing their feet. A change of feeling was brought about. Looking upon them, Jesus could say, "Ye are clean." Now there was union of heart, love for one another. They had become humble and teachable.¹

A few pages later she adds these words, "We are not prepared for communion with Him unless cleansed by His

¹White, Desire of Ages, 646.

efficacy."¹ Jesus knew His disciples would be assailed by the devil and needed strength and courage as well as instruction to deal with the utter disappointment of the Cross. Footwashing was the turning point that prepared them for the hour of trial and temptation.

The one obstacle was Judas. He obstructed the communion that must exist before free and meaningful communion can occur. Jesus longed to have open communion with His disciples, but "while Judas was there He could not express His feelings. His utterances revealed His restraint." But as soon as the aspiring traitor left

the restraint was removed. . . . Christ's face seemed radiant, so clearly was divinity seen. He spoke to His disciples with the tenderest affection. He wasted no words over the traitor's departure. . . . The disciples looked upon Christ with admiration and love. Divinity was seen in humanity. He was transfigured, and exalted above everything earthly.²

Footwashing as a Preparation for Preaching and Ministry

Some scholars have seen in footwashing an anointing or commissioning of the apostles. It prepared the disciples for preaching and ministry. These scholars connect the footwashing of John 13 with Rom 10:15, where Paul quoting from Isaiah speaks about the feet of those who bear good news or good tidings.

Since the preaching of the gospel can only be

¹Ibid., 649.

²Ellen G. White, "If Ye Know These Things, Happy Are Ye If Do Them," Review and Herald, Nov. 4, 1902, 4.

properly carried out by those who know God and believe in Him with abiding trust, one can see in the footwashing the point not only of separation between the real and false disciples, but also the commissioning and anointing of those sent by Christ.

This thesis is based on the following principles: First, cleansing must precede reception of the Holy Spirit. Second, feet were used as a metonymy for the body. This same metonymic relationship is found in the anointing at Bethany. There Jesus interprets the anointing of His feet as the anointing of His body for burial. Third, before the priests could minister on behalf of others in the sanctuary, they had to wash their hands and feet continuously. Footwashing initially prepared the disciples for ministry and the continued practice of the same in harmony with Christ's command kept them in close relations with Him, filled with the Spirit, and in union and harmony with one another.

Footwashing as a Means of Reconciliation with God and Man

It is evident from the previous four chapters that many of the great commentators throughout the centuries have seen in footwashing, in one way or another, a second cleansing from sin.¹ Since sin separates us from God (Isa

¹"The feet-washing symbolized the forgiveness of sins assured through Christ." Clark's Foreign Theological Library, Fourth Series, vol. 7, Hengstenberg's Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1865), 150. For righteousness to take effect, sin must be

59:2), sin must be removed. Only confessed sins are forgiven (1 John 1:9); therefore, in order to be reconciled to God, the believer must confess his sins. It is the thesis of this dissertation that footwashing is the ideal time to confess our sins before God and be reconciled.

Footwashing as a Symbol of Cleansing from Sin and Reconciliation with God

Above all, the footwashing stands as a symbol of cleansing from sin and defilement that separate the sinner from God and as a symbol of reconciliation within the community of God. We may come to this conclusion on the following basis:

1. Water and blood were the two universal cleansing agents used in religious rites to cleanse believers from sin. This was especially true of the Old Testament and particularly in the sanctuary service.¹

2. We have seen in chapter 3 the close relationship between water, blood, and Spirit in the Gospel of John. This Gospel is uniquely concerned with cleansing and purification.² Perhaps this is one reason footwashing is

removed from the sinner, and with sin the condemnation and guilt are removed, as well as the feeling of condemnation thereof.

¹See chapters 1 and 3. "That the basis of the doctrine of the water of forgiveness is the blood of the atonement, we learn from ch. xix.34; 1 John v.6." Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 148.

²See chapter 3.

mentioned only in John.

3. Footwashing is intimately tied to baptism. Not only is this the case, in general, in John but the key verse, 13:10, has once and for all tied these two ordinances together. Baptism, in the New Testament, is almost synonymous with the washing away of sins and divine forgiveness. Footwashing, therefore, must cleanse from sin.

It is acknowledged by most commentators in Church history that baptism was once and for all, and therefore could not be repeated. Footwashing was instituted to give hope and assurance to believers that there is forgiveness and cleansing from sin after conversion and baptism.

4. John 13:8 is very definite that footwashing has soteriological significance. Peter needed cleansing at Jesus' hand, otherwise he would lose his eternal inheritance in Christ's kingdom.¹

It is important to remember the words of Jesus, "If I do not wash you" (vs. 8). The emphasis here is clearly on Jesus' action, not on Peter's. The believer must be willing to receive the cleansing, but it is Christ Who forgives and cleanses His people from sin through His substitutionary death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:17).

5. Footwashing cleansed the disciples of sin, so that Jesus could say, "you are clean" (vs. 10). The only one not cleansed of his sins was Judas; he remained unclean

¹See chapter 2.

(remained in his sin) and, therefore, lost.

6. Footwashing was a type and symbol of Christ's death on Calvary, where He gave His life in order to save sinners. Therefore, every time footwashing is practiced, it serves as a reminder that Jesus is the great Servant Whose ultimate service for us is that He gave His life in order to forgive us our sins and clothe us in His righteousness. Ultimately, forgiveness and cleansing come only through the blood of Jesus that He shed on Calvary, to which footwashing is a powerful witness.

7. The Sitz im Leben of footwashing reflected in 13:10 is of a person who took a bath at home and soiled his feet on the way to his destination. At his arrival, all that needed to be done was to wash his feet in order to be completely clean.

Consequently, footwashing illustrates the believer's continuous need of cleansing on his spiritual journey from earth to heaven.¹ The believer is cleansed in baptism through faith in Christ's blood. All his sins are washed away, and he is completely clean. But in the walk of life, his feet become inadvertently dusty and dirty, and need

¹"So the believer by the bath of his first regeneration is kept pure till he enters his Father's house on high, whilst a daily application of the Spirit in sanctification is needed to remove the impurities that come from daily contact with earth and earthly things." T. D. Witherspoon, The Biblical Illustrator, ed. Joseph S. Exell, John II (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1963), 389.

cleansing.¹

Therefore, footwashing ever reminds the community of faith that Jesus is ever ready to forgive. As the First Epistle of John testifies, the community of faith needs to be reminded that present sins are dealt with in the same way as when the believer first comes to Christ, through the blood of Jesus.

The believer should also remember that bathed (λελουμενος), is in the perfect tense, which denotes a past action with enduring consequence.

Forgiveness of Sins in the Johannine Writings

It is important to ask the question of whether the theme of forgiveness of sins is present in the Johannine writings in order to evaluate the relationship of footwashing to that subject.

The forgiveness of sins in the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John itself does not use the word "forgiveness" in connection with sins except in one passage. Here the resurrected Christ suddenly appears among the

¹"The washing of the feet, ever, coming into contact with the dust and soil of earth, corresponds in the spiritual domain to the forgiveness of sins to which the man in a state of grace is liable, from the fact that he, by nature a sinner, dwells among a people of unclean lips--such sins as result from the mere daily walk in a corrupted world." Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 149.

assembled disciples saying: "Peace be with you, as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (20:21b). Then after breathing on them, He continues: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained" (20:22b, 23).

In this passage, Jesus is commissioning His apostles to carry the gospel to the world. The question is, Why is the forgiveness of sins mentioned in this context?

It appears that the meaning and purpose of "I also send you" flows from a proper understanding of "as the Father has sent Me" (20:21), which will then give meaning and understanding to vs. 23. Consequently it is important to understand Christ's mission in the Gospel of John. Four passages have been chosen to briefly investigate this theme.

The mission of Jesus in the Gospel of John

There are at least twenty-five verses in the Gospel of John that contain a direct reference that Jesus was sent by the Father. As we look at all these texts, one unifying thought emerges: Jesus was sent to save sinners. This thought is expressed in different ways but it all culminates in the saving of sinners, or, in Johannine terms, gives them life eternal.

John 3:14-21. This passage is anchored in vs. 14, that takes the reader back to Num. 21, where the people were

bitten by the "fiery serpents" (vs. 6) because they had sinned. "So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned . . . intercede with the Lord. . . . And Moses interceded for the people."

Those who looked at the bronze serpent in faith, lived. But now God has done a far greater thing to save His people from sin. He has given His Son. Eternal life comes through belief in the Son (15, 16, 17, 18).¹ The struggle is between light and darkness (19, 20, 21). Darkness is defined as doing evil (sin), "their deeds were evil" (19). Those who do evil "hate the light," for light exposes their evil deeds (20). They that practice the truth come to the light (21).²

Belief in the Son gives eternal life; that is the reason the Son was sent. However, believing also implies forgiveness.³ Therefore, having been forgiven, he who

¹"A confessional summary of the Gospel follows: it originates in the love of God for a disobedient world, it centers in the giving of the only Son to and for the world, and its end is that people may not be lost but live under the saving sovereignty of God." Beasley-Murray, 51.

²"The Redeemer has come into the world as Light in a dark place, clearly to bring the "light" of salvation. But before that Light men separate themselves; they either approach it or move away from it. The former move into the light of salvation, the latter depart from it into deeper darkness." Ibid.

³"There is the phrase which speaks of *believing in Jesus*. . . .It means believing that God loves us, believing that God cares for us, believing that God wants nothing more than to forgive us, believing that God is love." Barclay, 1:125.

believes is not judged or condemned. Those who reject belief in the Son love darkness (sin, evil deeds), which is the reason they do not believe in the first place.

John 5:21-24. Eternal life includes the resurrection from the dead (21). The Son judges everyone (22). Belief in the Son gives assurance of eternal life, because the believer "does not come into judgement," but has "passed out of death into life" (24).

Here again, belief in Christ keeps you from judgement (condemnation). Those who believe, even if they die, will be resurrected.

John 6:38-40, 44. In this passage the will of the Father is most clearly expressed. Jesus did not come to do His will but the express will of the Father (38). The will of the Father is the salvation of those "given" to the Son, and these will be resurrected (39). The will of God is to give eternal life to sinners who accept the Son; they will be raised (40, 44).

The express will of the Father is the salvation of men through the Son. Eternal life includes the sure hope of the resurrection.

John 8:21, 24, 26, 29. This passage defines the difference between eternal life and judgment. The person who has forfeited eternal life and must face judgment is the one who remains in his sins; Jesus said, you "shall die in

your sin" (21). Belief in Christ is the great watershed that separates all men into saved and lost, for anyone who refuses to believe in Him will die in his sins: "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (24).

Again, belief in the Son causes the believer not to pass into judgment or condemnation, because his sins have obviously been forgiven. The one who refuses to accept Jesus is condemned already, because he remains in his sins. Belief in Christ is, therefore, directly related to forgiveness of sins. The unbeliever remains in his sins and therefore will be condemned in the judgment.

The Holy Spirit is sent to "convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgement" (16:8). We are reminded that the great problem in Scripture is sin. Only God can deliver from sin and death, through Jesus Christ.

In John, the reason Jesus was sent by the Father is to save sinners, and the only way a sinner can be saved is for Jesus to cleanse him from sins.¹ Consequently, when Jesus commissioned His disciples, their mission was "the

¹"Something has gone wrong. What is that something? It is sin. It is sin which separated the world from God; it is sin which blinds the world to God; it is sin which is fundamentally hostile to God. Now into this world which has gone wrong comes Christ; and Christ comes with the cure. He brings forgiveness for sin; He brings cleansing from sin." Barclay, 2:22.

forgiveness of sins," just like it was Christ's mission that He had received from His Father.¹

This point is also clearly illustrated in the footwashing pericope and specifically articulated by Jesus in vs. 8: "If I do not wash you, you have no part (μερος) with me." In the light of the above discussion, one may paraphrase Jesus' words as follows: "Peter, if I do not cleanse you from your sins, you cannot be part of my kingdom, for whoever remains in his sins, will be condemned and will die."

That the Gospel of John is concerned with sin is clear from the sacrificial language it employs, beginning with the introduction of Christ as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29). This sacrificial language implicitly implies not only a sin offering, but confession and forgiveness.²

And since John was written after the Synoptics and Pauline Epistles had been in circulation for decades, there is reason to believe that most of his readers were familiar with the central truth of Christ's atoning death that gave the assurance of the forgiveness and cleansing from sin. That the concept of the cleansing of sins through the atoning blood of Christ and the forgiveness of sins was well

¹Beasley-Murray, 370.

²See chapter 3.

known in the Johannine community is evident from the First Epistle of John.¹

Summary

One can observe that although the word forgiveness, as such, is not mentioned often in this Gospel, it is implied and central to John's theology and Christology, and climaxes in 13:8, 10.²

Forgiveness of sins in 1 John

There can be no doubt that the Johannine community was concerned with post-baptismal sins, according to the First Epistle of John. There are three passages that very specifically mention or allude to this problem.

1 John 1:6-10. Some in the community obviously claimed to be perfect, or sinless. This could mean that they claimed not to be responsible for sins they committed, or, in fact, claimed not to commit sin. John makes four definite statements concerning sin: (1) that everyone who claims not to have sin (perhaps referring here to our sinful nature, since he uses the same word concerning Christ [3:5] when he says, "in Him there is no sin", is a liar (vs. 8); (2) only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us of any and all

¹In this epistle, John develops the "sacrificial description of Christ's death" to help the readers in their understanding of the "atonement in the Fourth Gospel." Smalley, 25-26.

²See chapter 3.

sin; (3) confessed sins will be forgiven; the righteousness of God is our guarantee; and (4) everyone sins ("we" must include the author and everyone else in the community), even those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior (John 1:12, 13) and were born again (John 3:5).

It is obvious that these individuals were either members of the community or perhaps heretical teachers or teachings that were threatening the community from outside.

1 John 2:1-2

While John strongly maintains that Christians ought to live sinless lives, that is, walk in the light, he acknowledges that post-conversion or post-baptismal sins are a reality in the Christian live, and by implication in the community, and that through Jesus we can be "forgiven" (although this is implied here but clearly articulated in 1:9).

It is interesting that Brown sees in this passage a possible reference to footwashing:

Possibly the author found GJohn support for this in the washing of the feet by Jesus at the Last Supper, an action symbolic of the cleansing power of Jesus' death (13:8, 10; . . .) which has been interpreted on a secondary level as referring to the effects of baptism. There Jesus instructs his disciples that, if he has washed their feet, they must wash 'one another's feet' (13.14). Thus communion with one another is a context for cleansing by Christ.¹

¹Raymond E. Brown, The Epistle of John (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 239. In a footnote, Brown points out that if the longer reading of 13:10 is accepted a few scholars believe that footwashing was instituted to deal

From the above passage, we may assume that post-baptismal sin was a reality and had to be dealt with the same way sins had been dealt with that were committed before conversion: the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. However, I should emphasize that only confessed sins were forgiven (1:9).

1 John 5:16-18

This section is framed by passages that exude confidence and assurance (vss. 13-15; 18-20). Faith in Christ brings assurance of eternal life (13); this confident relationship with Christ assures us that He hears us (14); and knowing that God hears us, He will bring answers to our requests (15).

Couched in between are some important points. First, there are Christians who are committing sin, although, this "sin" does not lead to death (vs. 16). Second, those who have knowledge of their fellow believers' sinning, should immediately intercede for them, engaging in a ministry of intercession and reconciliation. (Based on vs. 15, if their faith in God is real, they will be heard.)

Third, all "unrighteousness is sin"; however, there is a particular sin that leads to death: John seems to imply that intercession on behalf of those committing this sin is with post-baptismal sins.

in vain.¹

Primarily, there is within the community a reality that begs to be dealt with. Besides, members are each other's keepers and are called upon to engage in a ministry of intercession and to manifest the same attitude that Jesus manifested towards the disciples when He washed their feet. Christ manifested a non-judgmental, non-condemnatory attitude of love, forgiveness, and service, which His disciples must imitate. Furthermore, sin in the Johannine community was serious, and if persisted in, could affect a believer's standing, reminding us of John 13:8, where Jesus warns Peter that unless he is cleansed by Christ, he will have no inheritance (μερος) with Him. And, finally, the only way sin can effectively be dealt with is through the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Summary. Without a doubt, post-baptismal sin plays a key element in 1 John; consequently forgiveness, both vertically and horizontally, is of great importance. We can easily see that footwashing played a significant role in the Johannine community as a means of reconciliation with God and with man.

¹Scholars are divided as to whether or not this sin was actually a danger to the Johannine community. Smalley, 292-310.

Forgiveness of Sins in the New Testament

Divine forgiveness is at the heart and essence of God's message to man, first, because it is the most essential message man needs,¹ since he stands under divine condemnation and eternal death, and second, because the plan of redemption contains and reveals the great love God has for man, which makes forgiveness possible.

The relationship of the Gospel to forgiveness

The substance of the gospel is that man can receive pardon, that is, complete forgiveness of all his sins. The first sermon preached on Pentecost ended with the invitation to "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).

Again, after his second sermon, Peter appealed to the people: "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away" (Acts 3:19). As soon as Peter was miraculously released from prison and commissioned by the angel to return to the temple and preach, they again were brought before the Council, where Peter stated the reason for his urgent preaching: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus. . . . He

¹"When here (John 13:8) the being washed by Christ is made the fundamental condition of all fellowship with him, we are thereby assured that the knowledge of sin, and the desire to be washed from it by Christ, are the first principles of all Christianity." Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 148.

is the one . . . a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."¹ In Peter's preaching, he reveals the ultimate benefit of Christ's deeds--that man has the assurance of forgiveness of sins and therefore can be reconciled with God and saved in His kingdom.

Paul's preaching of the gospel (the gospel can be essentially defined as Christ's death, burial, and resurrection)² to the Corinthians was of "first importance" (vs. 3), because it "saved" those who heard, believed, and hold fast (vss. 1,2). The extract is that "Christ died for our sins" (vs. 3), and if Christ has not been raised, then the Corinthian's faith is "worthless," because, Paul says, "you are still in your sins" (vs. 17).

The removal of sins is essential for the Creator and His creatures to be reconciled and fellowship. For sin forms a barrier between God and man that denies reconciliation and fellowship. The only way to remove sins is through divine forgiveness.

This was the great blessing of the Messianic age (e.g., Isa 43:25; Jer 31:34; 33:8; 50:20; Mic 7:18-19), realized in Jesus Christ. Paul says: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor 5:19). God accomplished this by making the sinless One sin, thereby, accounting the

¹Acts 5:30-31.

²1 Cor 15:3, 4.

unrighteous righteous (vs. 21).

Jesus had "to give his life a ransom for many," because "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). Christ, in the Gospel of John, is pointed out as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29): Paul writes that "Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed (1 Cor 5:7), and Peter adds that we were "redeemed . . . with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:18-19). He adds that Christ "Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Pet 2:24).

The language used in these and other New Testament verses is sacrificial language¹ that finds its roots in the Old Testament and more specifically in the sanctuary rites.

Nowhere is that more transparently expressed than in Hebrews. The writer, speaking about Christ, says: "He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (9:26), and again, "so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many" (9:28).²

Forgiveness and justification

The truth of justification by faith was the triumphal banner Luther and the other Reformers raised in the Reformation.

¹Rom 5:9; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:20; Heb 9:12-14; 13:12.

²See also 10:12, 14.

These men re-discovered the great central truth of the New Testament, set forth most distinctively in the writings of the apostle Paul.

The term in its fundamental definition is closely identified with a forensic and judicial meaning and can be understood to mean "acquittal" over against "condemnation," and emphasizes a saving reality rather than retributive justice.¹

Forgiveness, or pardon, is very closely related to justification and in many ways synonymous: "Pardon and justification are one and the same thing."² Jeremias agrees when he says: "Justification is forgiveness, nothing but forgiveness for Christ's sake."³

Justification means that the sin has been removed from the sinner through forgiveness. Consequently, guilt and condemnation disappear, and the sinner has peace with God (Rom 5:1); for he has passed from death to life and no judgment (guilty verdict) awaits him.

Scripture uses different terms to convey the concept of forgiveness; hence, justification, such as:

¹Ivan T. Blazen, "Justification And Righteousness," Manuscript 4. I am indebted to Dr. Blazen for many of my thoughts in the above section.

²Ellen G. White, "This Is Justification by Faith," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1972), 4:1070.

³Joachim Jeremias, The Central Message of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 57.

sending away (salah, Lev. 4:20, 26; Ps. 85:5); *covering* (kapat, Exod. 29:36; Lev. 8:15 and kasa, Neh. 4:5; Ps. 32:1); *wiping away* (malah, Ps. 51:1,7); and *lifting away* or *removing* (nasa, Gen. 50:17; Lev. 5:1, 7). The concept of atonement is associated especially with kapar, but also with nasa.¹

Blazen also states:

In the Greek New Testament forgiveness is portrayed as a *sending away* (the verb *aphiemi*, Matt 6:12, 14, 15; Rom. 4:7, and the noun *aphesis*, Matt. 26:28; Acts 5:31; Col. 1:14); *passing over* (*paresis*, most probably a synonym for *aphesis* in Rom 3:25), *being gracious to* (*charizomai*, Luke 7:43; 2 Cor. 2:7; Col. 2:13; *being merciful to* (*hilaskomai*, Luke 18:13 and *hileos*, Heb. 8:12); *covering* (*kalypto*, Jas. 5:20; 1 Pet. 4:8 and *epikalypto*, Rom. 4:7); *loosing away* (*apolyo*, Luke 6:37); and *wiping away* (*exaleipho*, Col. 2:14, which stands in intimate connection with "having forgiven us all our trespasses" at the end of Col. 2:13). The idea of atonement is found in the *hilaskomai* words."²

When Paul puts his "proof" argument on his presentation of justification in Rom. 3, he turns to the Old Testament to quote from two well-known witnesses from the Law and the Prophets.

Abraham was declared just through faith and not works, and David was freely forgiven (Ps 32:1-2, 5), therefore justified through faith also (Rom 5:1ff.). In both Old Testament passages the word "reckon" appears, a word Paul used tactically.

Scripture teaches that the gospel declares the believing sinner just or righteous in God's sight, because God does not "reckon" the man's sins or transgressions

¹Blazen, 4.

²Ibid.

against him because they have been forgiven, removed from his account. He has been cleansed through the blood of Christ and forgiven.

Divine forgiveness of sins is fundamental to any relationship and fellowship with God. The prerequisite for reconciliation with God is the removal of sins through forgiveness.

Summary

It is apparent from this survey of the New Testament that forgiveness is central. It is the great need that every sinner feels. For as long as a person remains in his sins, the conscience is oppressed with guilt and condemnation, and the person remains in a lost state.

Forgiveness and cleansing are God's response to confession and repentance. At the heart of the gospel stands the assurance that Jesus died for our sins and that through faith in Him we are forgiven, that is, justified.

Consequently, we have peace with God and are liberated from guilt and condemnation.

Footwashing is the ordinance instituted to remind the believers of the necessity to confess our sins before God, and at the same time, reminds the body that God is only too anxious to forgive and purify His people, giving them the assurance of salvation.

While we can receive forgiveness of sins anywhere and any time, footwashing is a periodic reminder and an ideal

time to make things right between God and ourselves.

Confession and forgiveness

Forgiveness and cleansing are God's response to confession and repentance (1 John 1:9; Ps 51). Paul reminds the Corinthians of their conversion and cleansing of sin through baptism: "And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11).

Jesus forgave sins even though there was apparently no confession or repentance. Examples are found in Mark 2:1-12; Luke 7:47; and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:11).

Although, we know from footwashing that no verbal confession took place, yet, there was true repentance and change of attitude towards Christ and one another, so that Christ could pronounce them clean. Christ can read the heart, and true confession takes place when the sinner feels convicted of his sins and acknowledges them in his heart before God; then forgiveness is immediately received.¹

¹Ellen White tells us that the woman who washed Christ's feet and anointed them, and who was forgiven by Christ of her sins, did indeed repent with these words: "But with tears of repentance, prompted by love, she hath washed my feet, and hath wiped them with the hairs of her head. Ellen G. White, "The Love of Christ For His People," Signs of the Times, May 9, 1900, 12. The same is true of the woman mentioned in John 8, "sobbing out her grateful love, and with bitter tears confessing her sins." White, The Desire of Ages, 462.

The great desire of God to forgive is voiced in Jesus' last prayer, "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34), and in the parable of the prodigal son. As soon as the father saw the son, although "he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him " (Luke 15:20). The son said: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight" (vs. 21).

This parable illustrates the love and compassion that God feels towards the lost sinner that compels Him to forgive and embrace him, and the proper attitude required to receive forgiveness.¹

Monsma says there are at least two conditions to receive forgiveness and retain it: (1) repentance and confession; and (2) the willingness for the forgiven to forgive.²

This profuse and infinite forgiveness brings with it the imperative that the recipient of such divine favor ought to have the same attitude that God manifested toward him, to his neighbor and brother.

Summary. Divine forgiveness is central in the New

¹See p. 34, n. 1, above.

²P. H. Monsma, "Forgiveness," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (1975), 2:596-600.

Testament¹ and synonymous with justification by faith; it represents the essence of the gospel. As mentioned above, forgiveness and cleansing are God's response to confession and repentance.²

Footwashing as a Time of Confession Leading to Divine Forgiveness and Cleansing

We have seen the importance of divine forgiveness in the sinner's life. The person whose sins are not forgiven "shall die in your [his] sin" (John 8:21).

Footwashing was instituted as a reminder that believers need to confess their sins, and, second, to remind them of God's willingness to forgive.

While a person can ask God anywhere and any time to be forgiven, footwashing may be the ideal time and place.

Ellen White writes:

And the ceremony of feet washing was instituted just prior to the Lord's supper. As we celebrate these ordinances, we are to remember that Christ is present, making the occasion one of great interest. Thus it will be to all who have a true sense of the situation. We should search our hearts, and confess the sins that we have cherished. If we are guided by the Holy Spirit, our thoughts will not be thoughts of self-exaltation, but of severe self-censure and humiliation. Selfishness, evil speaking, and evil thinking will be put away.³

¹This is, of course, true of the Old Testament as well.

²It is understood that repentance is not a work, but also comes to us as a gift of God; nevertheless, it must be exercised as it is received.

³White, "If Ye Know These Things, Happy Are Ye If Do Them," 4.

We can see from such references why footwashing is the ideal time for repentance and reconciliation with God. It is because He is present at the ordinance He instituted to accomplish the work of drawing forgiven sinners to Himself. In another place, White tells us that the Holy Spirit is present to convict of sin.

The Holy Spirit is present on such occasions to convict of sin, and the heart is touched and made contrite. The penitential confession clears the moral atmosphere of the soul, and awakens holy principles. The subduing grace of Christ comes into the heart, and the love of Christ draws hearts together in a blessed unity. Sins are seen in the light in which God views them. They are confessed, they are forgiven.¹

It has been established above that forgiveness and justification are not only closely related but that some look upon them as one and the same event. White connects the experience of forgiveness directly with justification in the following paragraph:

To all who receive him, Christ is an inexhaustible treasure-house of supply for all spiritual necessities. Then let us take in all the blessedness of the provision made, that when we shall engage in the ordinance of feet-washing, we may take in all its significance. The Holy Watcher is present from heaven to make this season one of soul-searching, one of conviction of sin, and of the blessed assurance of sins forgiven. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." They have the blessed assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."²

¹White, "The Lord's Supper and the Ordinance of Feet-Washing--No. 5," 7.

²Ibid., 12.

Footwashing as a Means of Reconciliation with
Man Through Confession of Sins
and Forgiveness

Sin, aside from bringing death, destroys relationships. First, sin brought about a separation between God and man (Isa 59:2), as well as between men, evident from the foundation of the world. It brings about alienation, brokenness, and separation between individuals, families, and society in general.

Sin causes men to be proud, selfish, and haughty. The desire to think better of one's self than of others is a constant danger to Christians.

Jesus was aware that although these men had accepted Him, they would have to continue to deal with a sinful nature. He also knew that they would be treated no different than He had been treated by the world. In order for the Church to be strong and survive, it needed to be united and live in harmony.

This was possible only if the love of Jesus permeated each disciple. Therefore, Christ's desire for His disciples (Church) was perfect unity in love (John 17:22, 23), for that is the only unity that will last and bring true peace and happiness.

Shortly after the footwashing (a demonstration of His infinite love for His own [13:1]), and only hours before His crucifixion (the greatest demonstration of His love for them), and just after Judas had left the group, Jesus said:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (13:34). This Christ-like love is the badge identifying people as disciples of Christ; it is the most powerful witness for it testifies of their intimate union with Him (vs. 35).

The "new" of the commandment is that of quality, as demonstrated in Christ's whole life and ministry, beginning with His incarnation (Phil 2:5-8) and ending with His death on the cross.

But in the immediate context it can refer only to the footwashing, which had occurred just a very short time before and was still on the mind of everyone in that upper room. Up until that moment, footwashing constituted the greatest single act of love Jesus had performed for His disciples. The comprehension of the other two events were yet future.

The Power of Sin Makes Reconciliation Between Men Necessary

Because of the power of sin (Rom 7:14-25), this unity of love is continuously threatened. According to White,

there is in man a disposition to esteem himself more highly than his brother, to work for self, to seek the highest place; and often this results in evil surmisings and bitterness of spirit.¹

¹Ellen G. White, Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1977), 277.

White also says: Pride and self-seeking create dissension and hatred.¹

The apostle Paul, writing to the Philippians, was concerned about the same attitude of self-exaltation when he advised his fellow believers to do "nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (Phil 2:3). The believers were to look out for others' interests as well as their own (vs. 4).

Paul reflected the same burden Jesus carried. He says, "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, unity in spirit, intent on one purpose (vs. 2).

Then the apostle points the Philippians to the self-emptying love of Christ (2:5-8) as their supreme example. This passage is very closely related to the footwashing. (More is said on this subject below).

But let us now look at the role of footwashing in the community of love, and how it ought to reflect the love that Jesus had for His own. After all, His command said, "Even as I have loved you."

**How Jesus, Moved by Love, Employed
the Footwashing to Reconcile
His Disciples to Himself
and to One Another**

A host of scholars have seen Luke 22:24-27 as the

¹White, Desire of Ages, 646.

background against which footwashing occurred.¹ This was not the first time this argument had been discussed,² but for the first time the quarrel had erupted in the presence of Jesus.

The disciples truly believed that the kingdom was at hand, yet Jesus seemingly did not care to nominate His cabinet, so they must care for themselves. Each must now contend for his place of honor.³

The seating arrangements at a Jewish feast were very definite, as Barclay informs us:

The table was arranged like a square with one side left open. At the top side of the square, in the centre, sat the host. On his right sat the guest of first honour; on his left the second guest; second on his right, the third guest; second on his left the fourth guest; and so on round the table.⁴

Obviously, Jesus had not assigned seats and the disciples were arguing where they should be seated. "Judas, in choosing his position at table, had tried to place

¹"Peter had but recently, in contention, found how mighty sin was still in him." Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 148.

²Luke 9:46-48; Mark 9:33-37; Matt 18:1-5.

³There is no reason to believe, in spite of Christ's efforts in the past, that they had any inkling of a suffering Messiah. The temporal nature of Christ's kingdom was so deeply ingrained in their minds, that even after the resurrection they asked Jesus: "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

⁴William Barclay, Luke (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 278-279.

himself first"¹

The attitude of the disciples

The dispute or contention² concerning who was the greatest had filled their hearts with pride, jealousy, and anger.

Since they were filled with selfishness and greed, their hearts were Satan's playground. Even Christ's sorrowful words, "pointing to His own suffering's had made little impressions."³

The attitude of Jesus

Jesus had looked forward with great anticipation to share with His disciples in the Passover and hopefully give them insight that all the Passovers of the past had anticipated His coming and sacrifice (Luke 22:15, 16).

However, the disciples were filled with self and unable to comprehend this awesome moment. Jesus was pained by their lack of interest and selfish attitude. "This contention, carried on in the presence of Christ, grieved and wounded Him."⁴

¹White, Desire of Ages, 645.

²φιλονεικία can be translated as, disputatious (as in 1 Cor 11:16), contentious, rivalry, a love of contention. The Analytical Greek Lexicon (1972), s.v. "φιλονεικία."

³White, Desire of Ages, 643.

⁴Ibid., 643.

In addition He knew of the traitor in their midst. It was at this moment, when Satan seemed to gain the upper hand in the hearts of the Savior's disciples, that Jesus was fully conscious of Who He was and where He came from and where He was about to go. The measureless love for His disciples prompted Him to illustrate His spoken words (Luke 22:25-27) by humbling Himself and washing their feet. "Jesus repeated His teaching by an illustration that impressed it forever on their minds and hearts."¹

It was the act of His humbling love that rescued the disciples out of Satan's power and the power of sin:

He desired by that very act to wash the alienation, jealousy, and pride from their hearts. This was of far more consequence than the washing of their dusty feet . . . Their hearts must be cleansed. Pride and self-seeking create dissension and hatred, but all this Jesus washed away in washing their feet.²

*The Disciples are cleansed by
the footwashing*

It was not the footwashing in itself that accomplished the cleansing of their hearts through divine forgiveness, but rather, the spontaneous exhibition of Christ's divine and boundless love that was able to overcome His own personal disappointment and affliction, and reach

¹Ibid., 642.

²Ibid., 646.

out to save His people.¹

As a result of their repentance and changed attitude² that occurred because of Christ's action "they had become humble and teachable. Except for Judas, each was ready to concede to another the highest place."³ A complete reversal of attitude and feeling had taken place. "Now there was union of heart, love for one another. They had become humble and teachable."⁴

It is important to understand this love of Christ that moved Him to wash their feet, since we are to love each other the same way that He loved us.

First, it came just days before His great exaltation of being enthroned as King of the Universe; just at the moment of great glory, He became the Servant of servants (John 13:1, 2; Phil 2:9). Second, all power was given Him and He could do as He pleased (13:3). What pleased Him, what gave Him joy, was to save His people from the power of sin, here at the footwashing and ultimately at the cross

¹"They were led thereby [the footwashing] to repentance and faith; and their faith led to forgiveness of sins, Acts x. 43, and the purification of the heart that rests upon forgiveness, Acts xv. 9." Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 149.

²"Purity appears here as the consequence of the washing; and as, according to vs. 8, the bestowment of forgiveness of sins was signified by that washing, so purity must consist in the possession of forgiveness." Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 149.

³White, Desire of Ages, 646.

⁴Ibid.

(Heb 12:2; Isa 53:10, 12). Christ's whole life was defined by serving others (Phil 2:7, 8). Third, while one of His own disciples plotted to betray Him, instead of feeling self-pity or anger, His love burst forth to save the lost, even the one about to betray Him. Fourth, in the light of the disciples' selfishness and indifference (although they had spend quality time in His presence, exposed to His deeds of love and kindness, as well as His teachings; they nevertheless were filled with self to the point that His words could not reach them anymore), His *other-centered* love found a way to reach them by becoming their servant. Last, Jesus knew that the hour had come, when, even forsaken by His Father He had to drink the cup that would trembled in His hand.¹ But Jesus, instead of being held hostage by concern about His person or future, moved into action to save them from certain destruction.

*Christ hates sin but
loves the sinner*

Christ understands the power of sin in the lives of men, therefore, He "hates nothing but sin."² Only in Him does there exist perfect division between hating the sin and loving the sinner. Only Christ is able to love the sinner

¹"In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer." Ibid., 693. But Christ had already made His decision, "He will save man at any cost to Himself." Ibid.

²White, "The Lord's Supper and the Ordinance of Feet-Washing--No. 2," 7.

in the very moment when he is controlled by sin, as was the case with Judas.

It was this same love for sinners, when He suffered the "terrible . . . temptation to let the human race bear the consequence of its own guilt, while He stood innocent before God,"¹ that caused Him to make His final decision to "save man at any cost to Himself . . . that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life."²

It was in the full consciousness of all this that Jesus manifested His love and compassion for His disciples. This moment they would never forget,³ it was chiseled on their memory banks forever.

The footwashing had an immediate effect on the disciples; however, it was only after the crucifixion and Pentecost that they began to comprehend the full significance of that act. As they meditated on their association with Christ, His life of service and love, His sacrifice, His words and promises, and as they continually discovered new revelations of Him in the Scriptures, they were filled with awe at the knowledge of Who He really is, God in the Flesh, Who knelled down before them as the least slave to wash their feet. This truth provided for them an inoculation against pride and jealousy for the rest of their

¹White, Desire of Ages, 688.

²Ibid., 693.

³Ibid., 642.

lives.

*The greatest display of
Christ's love*

Yet, the greatest display of Christ's love was not demonstrated in washing the feet of the eleven who repented, but in washing the feet of Judas, the traitor.

As mentioned above, Christ's love was demonstrated in spite of His knowledge that one of His disciples was about to betray Him. It would have been an awesome demonstration of love to take the initiative and wash the feet of the eleven; however, the tender and loving way Jesus dealt with Judas has forever sealed the fact that Christ will do whatever is necessary to save a sinner, regardless of that person's action or state of mind; at the same time it places the urgency upon Christ's followers to do likewise.

In washing the feet of His disciples, Christ gave evidence that He would do any service, however humble, that would make them heirs with Him of the eternal wealth of heaven's treasure. His disciples, in performing the same rite, pledge themselves in like manner to serve their brethren.¹

Ellen White gives us some valuable insight into Christ's motive for washing Judas's feet and the ensuing struggle Judas experienced at the exposure of Christ's magnificent love to save him and Satan's desire to use him: Christ knew the heart of Judas, yet he washed his feet. Infinite love could do no more to bring Judas to

¹Ibid., 651.

repentance, and save him from taking this fatal step.¹

We see here that Christ's sole concern was to save Judas. Regardless of the condition of his heart, if he was willing to repent, all would be forgiven and there would have been rejoicing in Christ's heart and in the presence of God. White continues:

If this service of his Master, in humbling himself to wash the feet of the worst sinner, did not break his heart, what more could be done? It was the last act of love that Jesus could evidence in behalf of Judas. Infinite love could not compel Judas to repent, confess his sin, and be saved. Every opportunity was granted him. Nothing was left undone, that could be done to save him from the snare of Satan.²

In this paragraph certain principles of salvation emerge. First, Jesus did all He could; nothing more could have been done to save Judas. Second, reasoning with Judas, exposing him, threatening him, all would have been in vain. Divine love, made visible in the person of Jesus Christ washing Judas's feet, was the paramount expression of love possible to provoke Judas to repent. Third, each person must choose salvation for himself; no one will be forced. When compelled by the love of God under the conviction of the Holy Spirit a person must act; if he fails to accept to offer of pardon, that person is lost.

Nevertheless, there was a great struggle in Judas's heart to repent and confess:

¹White, "The Lord's Supper and the Ordinance of Feet-Washing--No. 3," 10.

²Ibid.

Jesus hungered for his soul. . . . The constraining power of that love was felt by Judas. When the Saviour's hands were bathing those soiled feet, and wiping them with the towel, the heart of Judas thrilled through and through with the impulse then and there to confess his sin. But he would not humble himself, he hardened his heart against repentance; and the old impulses, for the moment put aside, again controlled him.¹

This hunger for the soul of Judas was felt also by the Eleven, and later, when they were able to decode Christ's words and became knowledgeable of His foreknowledge concerning Judas's intentions that night, Christ's demonstration of saving grace permeated their mind and consequently their dealings with all men, for they became more and more like their Master.

Peter's counsel to the elders reflects this same attitude that had taken possession of his character (1 Pet 5:1-5).

From that day on, every believer ought to love "as I have loved you." (13:34).

**The Love Jesus Demonstrated
at The Footwashing Ought to
be Demonstrated by Each
of His Disciples**

As we analyze the love that Jesus demonstrated in the footwashing and is to be practiced by His followers we find the following points.

1. Regardless of a person's position or station in the Church or society, he is called to serve his brother or

¹White, Desire of Ages, 645.

sister under all circumstances. A person is only placed in positions of leadership and influence to practice the servant-leadership demonstrated by Christ.

2. This love is to be practiced in spite of personal loss or pain, or upcoming trials and difficulty, and focuses on saving men and woman from sin. Like Jesus, we must serve in humility in spite of actions others may take or are planning to take against us. Above all, every Christian must always be ready to forgive.

3. Even when a brother is living in sin, we are to enter into a ministry of intercession (1 John 5:16-18) and place our whole focus on the salvation of that individual.

It was this knowledge of Christ and His attitude towards sinners that allowed Paul and Silas, although in great pain from the beating they had received and while fastened in stocks, to rejoice in Christ and sing hymns of praise to God. This witness of divine power in the lives of these men brought people face to face with God and caused them to repent and be saved.

The way Jesus treated Judas made it forever mandatory for Christians to treat sinners with love and compassion.

Again, the footwashing makes it clear how Christians ought to relate to each other within the Church, loving each other manifested in forgiveness and reconciliation.

*How clean were the disciples after
Jesus washed their feet*

Although pronounced clean by Jesus, the disciples were still men "with a nature like ours" (Jas 5:17), and showed their weakness quickly.

Peter, only hours after being cleansed by Jesus, denied Him three times, even with cursing and swearing (Mark 14:71). All forsook Him, and Thomas doubted the resurrection.

Noah was "perfect" in God's eyes, but he got drunk and cursed his own son. Jacob longed to be a spiritual leader and serve God, but he lied and deceived his father to gain the birthright. David was a person after God's own heart, yet, he murdered and committed adultery.

Paul summed it all up by saying: "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

Jesus looks at people differently, He knows the weaknesses of each person and the power of sin, yet, He loves them and wants to save each person. The footwashing is a constant reminder to His people that we must look upon each other the way Jesus does. We should find no fault in others, nor judge them, but have an ever-forgiving spirit towards all: the same attitude as Christ's, that is willing to forgive "seventy times seven" (Matt 18:2).

*Confession resulting in
reconciliation*

The disciples had just experienced forgiveness and

reconciliation with Jesus and one another. Their heart had been changed, a new mind or attitude was now present. Then they heard the words of Jesus: "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).

They knew in their heart that this was necessary, when Jesus continued and said:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34, 35)

There is no reason to believe that the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant. They had just experienced forgiveness, reconciliation, and serving one another in humility, and looked upon a fellow believer not as a rival, but a brother, and someone equal or better than themselves. Then they remembered the words Jesus had just finished saying before He washed their feet: "But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant" (Luke 22:26).

No wonder Jesus had said: "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (13:15).

Let us now look at what Ellen White contributes to this subject.

The ordinance of feet washing is an ordinance of service. This is the lesson the Lord would have all learn and practice. When this ordinance is rightly celebrated, the children of God are brought into holy relationship with each other, to help and bless each

other.¹

What does she mean by "rightly celebrated"? The results would be that the Church is brought into "holy relationship" and "help and bless each other." We might conjecture that "holy" means "sanctified," which could certainly connote the absence of sin.

In her next statement she is very precise when she states the purpose of footwashing--that it is for reconciliation, which of course means the putting away of sins.

Reconciliation one with another is the work for which the ordinance of feet washing was instituted. By the example of our Lord and Master, this humiliating ceremony has been made a sacred ordinance. Whenever it is celebrated, Christ is present by his Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit that brings conviction to hearts. . . . So we shall be convicted as Christ speaks to our hearts. The fountains of the soul will be broken up. The mind will be energized, and, springing into activity and life, will break down every barrier that has caused disunion and alienation. Sins that have been committed will appear with more distinctness than [sic] ever before; for the Holy Spirit will bring them to our remembrance. The words of Christ, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." will be clothed with new power.²

This represents the most comprehensive statement on reconciliation.³ Here White tells us the main purpose of

¹White, The Faith I live By, 297.

²White, "If Ye Know These Things, Happy are Ye If Do Them," 10.

³It seems that portions of this statement have been printed in other publications. See Ellen G. White, Evangelism (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1946), 275, and White, The Faith I Live By, 298.

the footwashing. It was instituted by Christ for reconciliation. Second, that Christ through the Spirit is present to bring conviction of sin. Under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, sins will appear in their true light, and if confessed (implied), will "break down every barrier that has caused disunion and alienation." In the light of the above, the promise of Christ, "happy are ye if ye do them," will then be realized.

If White failed to specifically mention confession in the above statement, although it is certainly strongly implied, she clearly articulates the importance and necessity of confession in this next one.

Christ gave his disciples the ordinance of feet washing. . . . He designed that this should be a season of self-examination, that his followers might have an opportunity to become acquainted with the true feelings of their own hearts toward God and one another . . . This ordinance was designed to result in mutual confession to one another, and to increase feelings of forbearance, forgiveness of each other's errors, and true love.¹

As a result of these seasons of confession and reconciliation, the heart is softened and believers are drawn together. Community and fellowship have been restored as sins have been cast out. Therefore, Ramsey is correct when he says that footwashing represents a "second cleansing (i.e. the practice of love and forgiveness by the community

¹Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1945), 225.

of faith)."¹

That self-examination leads to confession is not always clearly stated, but always implied, as is the case in the next passage:

The performance of the ordinance of humility calls for self-examination. The noble principles of the soul are strengthened on every such occasion. Christ lives in us, and this draws heart to heart. We are led to love as brethren, to be kind, tender, courteous in daily service, having hearts that can feel another's woe.²

These seasons of self-examination, mutual confession of sins, and reconciliation have also a long-range effect. It makes the person more Christlike in daily life; one becomes more tender, kinder, and more courteous. The heart becomes more sympathetic to the burdens and problems of others.

The ordinances are a time when God draws especially close to His people to convict of sins, but also to commune and have fellowship with them.

*The ordinances a time of
special communion with
God*

Just like the feasts of Israel were to be a time of special devotions and remembrances of divine blessings and deliverance in the past, church ordinances were to bring to mind the works and life of Christ on behalf of His Church.

¹Michaels, 246.

²Ellen G. White, "Humility: An Active Principle," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. Don F. Neufeld (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), 5:1139.

The ordinances¹ were instituted by Christ also as a time of special communion and fellowship. Nothing will make the heart more tender and affectionate than meditating and communing with Christ.

Referring to the ordinances, White says:

We have assembled now to meet with Jesus Christ, to commune with him. Every heart is to be open to the bright beams of the Son of Righteousness. Our minds and hearts are to be fixed on Christ as the great center on whom hopes of eternal life depend. We are not to stand in the shadow, but in the saving light of the cross. With hearts cleansed by his most precious blood, and in full consciousness of his presence, although unseen, we may listen to his voice that thrills the soul. . . . On these occasions, heaven is brought very near to the true members of the Lord's family, and they are brought into sweet communion one with another.²

Again she comments: "The children of God are to bear in mind that God is brought sacredly near on every occasion as [sic] the service of feet-washing."³ Again she says: "As we celebrate these ordinances, we are to remember that Christ is present, making the occasion one of great interest."⁴

In the next quote she points to the power that Christ imparts as He meets with His people:

¹In this context I am referring only to the ordinance of footwashing and the Lord's Supper.

²Ellen G. White, "The Ordinances," Review and Herald, June 22, 1897, 12.

³White, "The Lord's Supper and the Ordinance of Feet-Washing--No. 1," 9.

⁴White, "If Ye Know These Things, Happy are Ye If Ye Do Them," 4.

It is in these, his own appointments, that he meets with and energizes his people by his personal presence . . . Jesus is in the midst of his people to work in human hearts. . . . Those who come to the sacramental service with hearts open to the influence of the Spirit of God will be greatly blessed.¹

Summary

The New Testament plainly teaches that the believer must be reconciled with God and with his fellow servant.

God's gift of forgiveness and purification comes as a result of man's repentance and confession. However, God's free gift of justification (complete forgiveness and gift of Christ's righteousness) demands that the recipient will manifest the same spirit of forgiveness and forbearance towards his fellow man.

The footwashing in the Gospel of John teaches these two principles. We must first be cleansed by Christ from all our sins in order to receive our inheritance in His kingdom (13:8), and at the same time extend the same kindness and consideration to our brothers and sisters.

While we can be forgiven and forgive others at any time and place, the footwashing demands that we are reconciled to God and man prior to partaking of the emblems of bread and wine, celebrating our salvation.

The bread that was eaten at the Passover had to be prepared without leaven, a symbol of sin--teaching God's people that sin had to be put away before you can have

¹White, "The Ordinances," 9.

communion and fellowship with Him. Therefore, the Lord instituted the footwashing as a memorial of remembrance.

**Footwashing as a Preparation for the
Communion Service**

Many scholars have wondered why the footwashing in John replaces the Eucharist. Yet, most recognize that the Eucharist is implicitly dealt with in John 6.

While it is highly unlikely that the footwashing replaces the Eucharist as a sacrament, many have seen the close connection and relationship between the two ordinances. Michaels, with much support from other commentators, recognizes here a second cleansing, based on the longer text. He says:

It is better to follow the lead of the best manuscripts (as NIV has done) and adapt the longer reading, with its implication that the footwashing represents not the initial bath but a second cleansing (i.e. the practice of love and forgiveness by the community of faith).¹

He also recognizes the clear command to practice the footwashing when he comments: "The emphasis of the passage as a whole, however, is not on the once-and-for-all character of baptism but on the absolute necessity of footwashing, however the latter is understood."²

Having recognized that the footwashing must be practiced, that it constitutes a second cleansing, and is

¹Michaels, John, 246.

²Ibid., 247.

intimately connected and associated with love and forgiveness, as well as the Eucharist, when should it be practiced?

He answers this question by suggesting that: "If John envisioned footwashing as a liturgical practice, he probably viewed it as part of what happened around the Lord's table, perhaps as a preparation for the Eucharist proper."¹

This thought, that the footwashing is a preparation for the Lord's Supper, is not new. It has had proponents throughout the Christian era based on its close affinity with baptism, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.²

Ellen White explains the way the footwashing functions as a preparation for the communion service:

This ordinance is Christ's appointed preparation for the sacramental service. While pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship with Christ. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood. Therefore it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed.³

As pointed out above, several scholars have noted the close relationship between the ordinance of footwashing and the Lord's Supper.

The Didache makes it quite clear that in the Early Church confession of sins and reconciliation with fellow

¹Ibid.

²For references see Thomas, 104-106.

³White, Desire of Ages, 650.

believers were a prerequisite to partaking of the communion.¹

Hengstenberg, quoting Quesnel, in referring to John 13:8, says:

Whatever purity a man may flatter himself that he has, . . . unless Jesus purifies us, we are unworthy of His fellowship, of the communion of His body, and of the glory of His new life.²

White also leaves no doubt that confession of sins and reconciliation with God and man are necessary to partake of the bread and wine symbolizing the blood and body of Christ:

He connected this ordinance with the supper. He designed that this should be a season of self-examination. . . . If pride existed in their hearts . . . if selfishness or hatred to one another should exist. . . this ordinance was designed to result in mutual confession to one another, and to increase feelings of forbearance, forgiveness of each other's errors, and true love, *preparatory* [italics mine] to engaging in the solemn ordinance of commemorating the sufferings and death of Christ.³

The footwashing then is "preparatory" to the Lord's Supper. Each member of the body of Christ is to search his heart under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repent and confess his sins before God and to man. If this is done by

¹"And when you gather together each Lord's Day, break bread and give thanks. But first confess your transgressions so that your 'sacrifice' may be pure. 2. And let no one who has a quarrel with his friend join you until they are reconciled, lest your 'sacrifice' be profane." Didache, 14:1, 2.

²Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 148.

³White, Spiritual Gifts, 3:225.

the whole congregation, then, the people of God will appear before the Lord's table having put away all sins, and, cleansed by the blood of Christ, stand united in love.

In the following quotation White again connects the two ordinances intimately and points clearly to the footwashing as a preparation for the Communion service:

We do not come to the ordinances of the Lord's house merely as a form. We do not make it our business, as we gather around the table of our Lord, to ponder about and mourn over our shortcomings, the ordinance of footwashing embraced all this. . . . We do not come with our minds diverted to our past experience in the religious life, whether that experience is elevating or depressing. We do not come to revive in our minds the ill-treatment we have received at the hands of our brethren. The ordinance of humility is to clear our moral horizon of the rubbish that has been permitted to accumulate.¹

It is at the footwashing that the past of a believer is dealt with and left behind, regardless of whether that past was "elevating or depressing." This seems to suggest that we not only need "cleansing" from sin but also our good works and the pride of success.

But since we are sinners who dwell among sinners,² we all have "rubbish" that needs to be cleared away. But once we leave the footwashing, where we repented, confessed, and were reconciled to God and man, we come before the Lord's table "with hearts cleansed by his most precious blood, and

¹White, "The Ordinances," 12.

²Isa 6:5.

in full consciousness of his presence, although unseen.¹

We are to "meet with Jesus Christ," and open our hearts "to the bright beams of the Son of Righteousness."²

We clearly see here the function of the footwashing as a preparation for the Communion service.

The first service, of footwashing, is where we deal with our sins, guilt, and failures. As we confess to others and also receive admission of wrongs from others, we are cleansed and forgiven as a body. Reconciled and united we come before the table of the Lord to celebrate and rejoice in our salvation and the assurance of eternal life. White says: "On these occasions, heaven is brought very near to the true members of the Lord's family, and they are brought into sweet communion one with another."³

In another place she says: "This ceremony should precede the partaking of the emblems of the Lord's death."⁴
And again:

The ordinance preceding the Lord's Supper is to clear away these misunderstandings, to bring man out of his selfishness, down from his stilts of self-exaltation, to the humility of heart that will lead him to serve his brother.⁵

¹White, "The Ordinances," 12.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴White, The Faith I Live By, 299.

⁵White, Mind, Character and Personality, 1:277.

Summary

Footwashing is the ordinance that reminds believers of Christ's great and wonderful love for His people and invites them to confess their sins and transgressions and be reconciled with God and their fellow believers. As the Church repents and confesses under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the people are cleansed by the blood of Christ and are united in fellowship with their Savior and one with another, in full assurance of eternal life.

The promise of the blessing pronounced by Jesus is then fulfilled in connection with the footwashing: "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

Forgiveness and Reconciliation Among Believers in the New Testament

The need for forgiveness and reconciliation in the Johannine community is evident from John's writings. However, that need is universal for any community that is based on love. In order to persevere and maintain a loving community that experiences unity and fellowship, it has to deal with human error and sin in an effective way. We now need to explore whether this principle is taught outside the Johannine writings in the New Testament.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation Among Believers in the Gospel of Matthew

Although the Synoptics all contain passages that

address the interrelationship between believers and the subject of forgiveness and reconciliation, the following focuses only focus on the passages in Matthew, since it addresses this subject in the most comprehensive way.

Matt 5:23-24

In the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus addresses the theme of reconciliation:

If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. (Matt 5:23,24)

This passage is unique in its wording and has no parallels in the Gospels.¹ Vs. 23 mentions the offering (προσφερειν), which is regularly used of a gift (δωρον) that is brought as a "sacrifice at the altar (θυσιαστηριον),"² in the temple.

So important and urgent is the need to be reconciled that the worshipper is commanded (imperative διαλλαγηθι, "be reconciled") to interrupt his worship of God: "leave your offering there before the altar" and immediately seek reconciliation.

Although forgiveness is not mentioned in this

¹Donald A. Hagner, Matthew 1-13, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 114.

²Ibid., 117.

context, it is implied. Hagner comments: "Obviously, for Jesus reconciliation and forgiveness are closely related."¹

Once reconciliation has been accomplished, "then" the gift may be offered. The implication would be that, only after reconciliation has been made with your "brother" (αδελφω), the sacrifice becomes acceptable to God.

We must remember that if a sin was committed "defiantly" (Num 15:30), or intentionally, then the sacrifice was powerless to atone. Second, sin had to be confessed at the time the sacrifice was presented, and was to be accompanied with true penitence. True penitence involved the attempt to rectify the wrong that had been committed.

Consequently, the breach between "man and God could not be healed until the breach between man and man was healed."²

The same principle of reconciliation taught here by Jesus was deeply imbedded in the Jewish faith. The Mishnah discusses forgiveness of sins on the Day of Atonement in the context of Lev 16:30, where it states: "From all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord." Yoma 8:9 comments on this verse:

For transgressions that are between man and God the Day

¹Ibid., 114.

²William Barclay, Matthew, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 140.

of Atonement effects atonement; but for transgressions that are between a man and his fellow the Day of Atonement effects atonement only if he has appeased his fellow.¹

Ellen White concurs with this principle as well.

After quoting Matt 5:23,24, she comments:

Many are zealous in religious services, while between them and their brethren are unhappy differences which they might reconcile. God requires them to do all in their power to restore harmony. Until they do this, He cannot accept their services. The Christian's duty in this matter is clearly pointed out.²

**Forgiveness and Reconciliation
Among Believers in the
Lord's Prayer**

Embedded in the Lord's Prayer is the petition: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt 6:12). The same thought is reiterated by Jesus in verses 14 and 15. "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

It is clear from these verses that a direct correlation exists between God's forgiveness of our sins and our willingness to forgive others. While we do not "earn" our forgiveness by forgiving others, our pardon obligates us to be forgiving. The past tense, "as we also have forgiven," suggests that we have already forgiven others

¹Herbert Danby, The Mishnah (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 172.

²White, Desire of Ages, 310-11.

before we make our petition of God.

Matthew uses the word "debts" (οφειλήματα), which ties it directly to Christ's illustration of God's forgiveness to all men who ask to be forgiven, and that in turn obliges them to forgive others, or stand in jeopardy of losing their own salvation (Matt 18:23-35).

However, it also ties it directly to John 13:14, where Jesus says that if He washed His disciples' feet (forgave them freely their sins and transgressions), "you also ought (οφειλετε) to wash one another's feet" (forgive your fellow believers just as freely as Jesus forgave you).

In this way there is a parallel between the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John, not only in thought, but also philological.

That Matthew is referring to sin is evident since "debts" (οφειλήματα) in vs. 12 becomes "sins" or "transgressions" (παρά-πτωματα) in vss. 14 and 15. In Luke's parallel passage the author also uses the word "sins" (αμαρτιαι).

Matt 18:21-35

In Matt 18, the question is asked by Peter, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?" (vs. 21). Christ's answer is, as often as he asks you. In Christ's illustration of this principle of reciprocal forgiveness, the King (our heavenly Father, vs. 35), "wished

to settle accounts with his slaves" (vs. 23). In this instance "slaves" must refer to sinful men.

One servant (representative of every sinner), owed (οφειλετης) the King a staggering sum,¹ but was forgiven (αφηκεν) because the King felt "compassion" (vs. 27).

However, the forgiven servant was unwilling to forgive a fellow servant the small sum he owed (ωφειλεν) him and had him cast into prison (vss. 28-30).

The King, when he found out what had taken place, summoned the unforgiving servant and said: "You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt (οφειλην) because you entreated me" (vs. 32), and then asked him this pivotal question: "Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow-slave, even as I had mercy on you?" (vs. 33).

As mentioned above, the debt represents sin; if the forgiven sinner does not forgive his brother, he will forfeit God's forgiveness (vs. 35). The saved will be like their Master, full of mercy. In Jesus words "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy" (Matt 5:7) is fulfilled in His followers. James writes: "For judgment

¹To show that the debt of the fellow servant was trifling compared to the debt that the king forgave his servant, Barclay records the following illustration. "Suppose the debts (were) to be paid in sixpences. The 100 denari debt could have been carried in one pocket. The ten thousand talent debt would have taken to carry it an army of about 8,600 carriers, each carrying a sack of sixpences 60 lbs. in weight; and they would have formed, at a distance of a yard apart, a line five miles long!" Barclay, Matthew, 2:214.

will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy." (Jas 2:13).

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus makes it very apparent that it is unthinkable--impossible--that we can enjoy God's forgiveness without in turn extending our forgiveness towards our fellow believers, as often as they ask.

Summary

The Gospel of Matthew is quite specific about forgiveness and reconciliation with man and God. This might be an indication that the community, as was the case in the Johannine community, was suffering the tension of sin among its members.

The word $\sigma\upsilon\nu\delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\sigma$ in 18: 28f. is a reminder of the binding interrelation of men and of their common and very serious subjection to the same Lord and Judge. If there is a refusal to remit the debt of one's brother, then God for His part will replace grace by the pitiless justice that casts one back quite hopelessly into the state of inability to pay. Therefore, the words of Jesus make it quite clear that man cannot be right with God until he is right with men; we cannot hope for forgiveness until we have confessed our sin, not only to God, but also to men, and until we have done our best to remove the practical consequence of it.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Epistles of Paul

This survey is not an in-depth study of the passages, nor is it comprehensive in its scope, but only serves the purpose to investigate the above theme in the writings of the apostle Paul and catch an impression of the importance of this topic in the life of the New Testament Church.

Rom 15:1-7

Paul is still pursuing the subject of weak and strong (spiritually), and in vs. 1 says that the "strong ought (οφειλομεν) to bear (βασταζειν) the weaknesses of those without strength." This way the strong are like Christ, Who "Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases" (Matt 8:17). Only as this counsel is followed will the community be able to live in unity and harmony.

While this text does not directly mention sins and forgiveness, it is mentioned in the parallel text found in Gal 6:1-5. The obligation arises out of what Christ has done for the believers.¹

Gal 6:1-5

In this passage, Paul defines what the obligations are of those who "live by the Spirit" (5:16, 25a) and are

¹James D. G. Dunn, Romans 9-16, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38B (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 836-843.

"led by the Spirit" (5:18). The counsel is necessary "to meet their problems of strife and divisions."¹

The brother who slips into sin (not deliberate sin)² must be restored to the community in a "spirit of gentleness" (vs. 1). As the spiritual strong (Rom 15:1; Gal 6:2) bear "one another's burdens", they "fulfill the law of Christ" (6:2). These burdens must apparently refer to "whatever oppresses man spiritually, threatens to induce him to sin, or to keep him in sin."³

Much here depends on how you understand "the law of Christ," which has been the focus of extensive discussion. I believe that Longenecker comes very close to identifying the meaning when he says:

I propose that *ὁ νόμος τοῦ χριστοῦ* here (as does *ἐν νόμῳ χριστοῦ* of 1 Cor. 9:21) stands in Paul's thought for those "prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel (usually embodied in the example and teachings of Jesus), which are meant to be applied to specific situations by the direction and enablement of the Holy Spirit, being always motivated and conditioned by love."⁴

The heart of the gospel is forgiveness and reconcil-

¹Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 27.

²Herman N. Ridderbos, The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, Publishing Co., 1953), 212.

³Ibid., 213.

⁴Longenecker, 275-276.

liation, which is the only way to preserve the unity of the Church, based on the love Jesus.

Eph 4:2-3, 32

This chapter begins the second part of Ephesians and deals with the responsibilities of each member of God's household in relationship to each other, if the Church is to carry out God's plan.

Again, Paul strikes the theme of unity. As mentioned above, sin is the great problem in Scripture, because at the root is the reality that sin destroys relationships. In order to "preserve the unity of the Spirit," sin has to be dealt with, even in the Church, and on a continuous basis. Just like God has to continuously forgive us of our sins (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2), so believers within the household of God need to exhibit the same forgiving spirit towards one another.

Paul admonishes the believers to be Christlike with one another, dealing with each other in "humility, and gentleness," and "patience, showing forbearance to one another in love" (vs. 2).

This passage reminds the reader of the Christ-like attitude believers should have towards one another as outlined in Phil 2:1-4, and is illustrated in Christ's incarnation that resulted in His sufferings and death (2:5-8).

This whole chapter culminates and is summed up in vs.

32, where Paul says: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

The motive, as in Matt 18, is God's generous forgiveness of all debt. Again, there is the reminder of Christ's words in John 13:14: "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Forgive, as you have been forgiven. The problem is clearly post-baptismal sins, just as we find in the first Epistle of John: Lying, anger, stealing, unwholesome language, bitterness and wrath, clamor and slander. (vss. 25-32).

The only remedy is forgiveness, prompted by love. Someone has said that an unhealed breach is a magnificent opportunity for the devil to sow dissension and disunity. Paul lays down the law of personal relationships "that we should treat others as Jesus Christ has treated us."¹

Col 3:12-15

Part of this section begins in vs. 1, which marks "an important transition piece in the letter"² and spells out the newness of the Christian life beginning at baptism.

¹William Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 160.

²Peter T. O'Brien, Colossians, Philemon, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 157.

The phrase, "you have been raised up with Christ," connects it to Paul's previous statements "you were also raised up" and "He made you alive," in chap. 2 (vss. 12,13).

The imperative "put on" (ενδυσσασθε) "a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" stands in contrast with the aorist imperative "put to death" (νεκρωσατε), "immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed" (vs. 5), as well as the aorist imperative "put aside" (αποσεσθε), "anger, malice, slander, and abusive speech" (v. 8).

Each of the above pericopes consists of a list of five cautions. The virtues the Christian is commanded to "put on" are all important to unity. As Barclay correctly points out: "It is most significant to note that every one of the virtues and graces listed has to do with personal relationships between man and man."¹

These virtues are the fruit of love, which is the ultimate and most important element the Christian has to "put on," "which is the perfect bond of unity" (vs. 14).

Again, unity is the central concern of the apostle Paul. Love is the central bond that ultimately holds any community together in unbreakable fellowship.

By designating the Colossians as "chosen of God, holy

¹William Barclay, The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 188.

and beloved," terminology reminiscent of the nation of Israel, Paul has succinctly set forth the Church as the new Israel.

Unity has two powerful enemies: first, the Church is made up of people from nations that naturally despise and hate each other (vs. 11), and second, and by far the more powerful and difficult element to deal with, is the old man of sin still active in the members (see vss. 5,8). They openly sinned against each other (see parallel section in Ephesians above), along with all the other manifestations of evil.

All disciples are called to practice the love of Christ toward each other. He had commanded them "to love one another even as I have loved you" (John 13:34). So, like Christ, they must bear "with one another, . . . forgiving each other . . . just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you," (vs. 13).

Here, as in the other passages, it is evident that the unity of the Church is endangered by sin, and this unity can only be preserved and maintained through Christlike love (John 13:34, 35) that manifests itself in an attitude of continuous forgiveness and reconciliation. Because Christ has forgiven sinners, forgiven sinners *must* forgive each other. Each member must have an attitude of forbearance and forgiveness towards his fellow believers. As Barclay puts it: "As God forgave him, so he must forgive others, for

only the forgiving can be forgiven.¹

Summary

As in the Synoptics, the epistles likewise lay great stress on the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation.² The unity of the Church is at stake, which can only be maintained if a spirit of forbearance and forgiveness is nursed by the members of the community. This attitude is called into existence and motivated by Christ's love exhibited on behalf of the sinner.

It is very evident then that the footwashing in John stands in place of the clear counsel of Jesus to forgive and be reconciled to your brother that is recorded in the Synoptics and the Epistles.

Only as mutual forgiveness and confession are practiced in the body of Christ, can unity be experienced and maintained. It is on this basis alone that true fellowship rests.

The Footwashing in Retrospect

The above study has revealed certain principles about footwashing. First, it prepares a person for some task, experience, or relationship. Second, it teaches a second cleansing from sin, subsequent to baptism, and is commanded

¹Barclay, The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, 190.

²Reconciliation is always present, or potentially present, when forgiveness and confession take place.

by Christ to be practiced as an ordinance until His Second Coming. Third, it was instituted as the ordinance of preparation for the Lord's Supper, to confess our sins before God and be reconciled to our fellow believers. As the great Spurgeon put it:

Christ continues to guard the purity of His Church. From the occasion it is clear that He would have us seek the special purifying power of His presence during religious ordinances. We need our feet washed before we come to His table-"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread," while we are at His table, for there is sin in our holiest things.¹

Fourth, it is a time of reflection and meditation on the life of Christ. His act of washing His disciples' feet not only brings to memory that great act of love itself, giving us the assurance that He will do whatever is necessary in order to save a sinner, but the footwashing is also a memorial of His incarnation and the plan of salvation. As one commentator explains it:

He rose from His kingly throne, and laid aside His garments of royalty; and took the towel of humanity and wrapped it around Himself. After that He poured out His precious blood, and made possible the cleansing of His disciples.²

In this way, the Upper Chamber was but a feeble picture of what had already taken place behind the veil. Unless Christ had willed to take the "form of a servant," He would not have had a body to gird with the slave's towel.

¹C. H. Spurgeon, The Biblical Illustrator, ed. Joseph S. Exell, John II (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), 393.

²Powell, 275.

Footwashing is also a symbol of the ultimate service Christ rendered to every man; that He gave himself "a ransom" to redeem sinners. As the assembled congregation meditates on the love and humility of Christ, it will not be difficult to repent and find unity in Jesus.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FOOTWASHING AS AN ORDINANCE

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has practiced footwashing as an ordinance almost from its inception. This chapter is dedicated to the study of the criteria of what constitutes a sacrament or ordinance, as well as a survey of the meaning and distinction of these terms.

We have already seen that the footwashing has soteriological significance, based on John 13, vss. 8 and 10, and concluded that the longer text has by far the best textual support, gives clarity to the passage, and is in harmony with John's theology.¹

The Definition of a Sacrament

The word sacrament was used to refer to something sacred or consecrated, relating to a "mystery." In the Latin Vulgate *sacramentum* is used to translate the Greek word *μυστήριον* (cf. Eph 1:9; Col 1:26f; 1 Tim 3:16).

In a wider sense, it was used to designate any sign that had a hidden meaning. Religious rites and ceremonies (anointing with oil, preaching, prayer, etc.) were all

¹See chapter 3, pp. 75-84.

called sacraments.

Since the term became too broad for biblical application, efforts were made to confine the term to prescribe biblical rites, but no common ground was found. Ultimately the church settled on seven sacraments.

The reformers rejected the majority of the sacraments. They taught that not every sign is a sacrament and narrowed the sacraments to two, baptism and the communion.

They believed that the sacrament had to be appointed by Christ in the New Testament. They taught that sacraments are "signs and seals of the covenant between God and His people."¹

In this way they are visible and outward attestations of the covenant. "As signs they represent the blessings of the covenant of redemption; as seals they ratify and confirm its validity."²

The Reformers and the Sacraments

Luther

Luther defined his understanding pertaining to the sacraments in the Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity where he states:

It seems proper that those rites be called Sacraments

¹C. M. Horne, "Sacraments," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (1975), 5:193.

²Ibid.

which contain promises with signs attached to them. The remainder, not connected with signs, are only promises. Hence it follows that there are, strictly speaking, only two Sacraments in the Church of God: Baptism and the Bread; for in these alone we note both the divinely instituted sign and the promise of the forgiveness of sin.¹

This became Lutheran doctrine in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, drafted in 1531. "Sacraments are rites which have the command of God, and to which the promise of grace has been added."²

This provided a clear distinction between the Protestant view of the communion as a spiritual blessing based on promise, and the Catholic view of a sacrifice.

However, to Luther it seemed that the words of Scripture could bear no other interpretation than that Christ's physical body and blood are present on the altar. Although he rejected the Roman Catholic view, that the bread and wine are transubstantiated by the eucharistic miracle into the body and blood of the Lord, Luther had come to the conviction that, while the bread remains bread and wine wine after the words of consecration, Christ's physical body and blood are truly present with them; in his words, as fire and iron are mingled in a red-hot bar. From this view he never deviated. This became known as the doctrine of Consubstantiation.

¹Martin Luther, "Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity," quoted in David R. Plaster, Ordinances: What Are They? (Winona Lake, IN: MBH Books, 1985), 18.

²See Book of Concord.

Zwingli

In the beginning, Zwingli also held that Christ's presence in the Supper is physical. However, in 1523 he received a letter from the Dutch lawyer, Cornelius Hoen of the Hague, in which he argued that "This *is* my body," might justly be interpreted, "This *signifies* my body." From then on Zwingli abandoned all thought of a physical presence of Christ's body in the sacrament.

To him, from then on, the Lord's Supper was a memorial of Christ's death and a symbol of membership in His mystical body. He felt support for his view in John 6:63, "the flesh profits nothing." Zwingli could not believe that a physical presence could exist in more than one place simultaneously.

Consequently, Zwingli saw the sacraments more as symbolizing an event or reality. About baptism, he wrote that it was "an initiatory sign, symbolizing although not effecting an inward change in those who receive it."¹

His definition of "sacrament" is "a covenant, sign or pledge." While Zwingli used the word "seal," he considered it more as a "sign."

Calvin

Calvin agrees that the sacrament is a "sign" and a

¹Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Zwingli and Bullinger (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1953), 122-23.

"seal."¹ He adopts Augustine's definition that the sacrament constitutes "a visible sign of a sacred thing."² He notes the importance of the word (preaching, teaching, etc.) in connection with the sacrament, because the sacrament confirms the word, therefore he says: "Though the sacraments are ineffective without the Word, nevertheless the bare word cannot have its full effect without the sacraments."³ The sacraments have an advantage over the word because they are visual. He says: "And they have this characteristic over and above the word because they represent them (seals) for us as painted in a picture from life."⁴ He compares them to "mirrors in which we may contemplate the riches of God's grace, which he lavishes upon us."⁵

However, the ultimate effectiveness of the sacraments depends on the presence of the Holy Spirit and His work in the hearts of the participants:

But the sacraments properly fulfill their office only when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them, by whose power alone hearts are penetrated and affections moved, and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter

¹Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol. 4, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battle (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1975), 1276.

²Ibid., 1277.

³Ibid., 1280.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 1281.

in.¹

Since Calvin did not become prominent and therefore did not wield influence until after Luther and Zwingli met in Marburg, Germany, he is seen as moderating the position of the above Reformers and lands somewhere in the middle.

However, Calvin has exerted perhaps the greater influence in the Christian community in the area of sacraments. His statement on sacraments most often quoted and commonly adopted as his definition of a sacrament is found in the Institutes.

A sacrament . . . is an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will towards us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety towards him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men.²

Calvin departs from Zwingli's "symbolic" view by stressing the sealing function of the sacrament when he says:

The seals which are attached to government documents and other public acts, are nothing taken by themselves, for they would be attached in vain if the parchment had nothing written on it. Yet, when added to the writing, they do not on that account fail to confirm and seal what is written.³

On the other hand, he was careful not to follow Luther in his teaching that the sacrament contained "secret virtue" or "secret efficacy" that was "perpetually inherent"

¹Ibid., 1284.

²Ibid., 1277.

³Ibid., 1280.

in the emblems.

In this way, Calvin stood between the view of the other Reformers, and it is fair to say that his view has exerted by far the greater influence in Western Protestantism.

However, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin all agreed on the following points: All rejected with equal intensity the Roman view that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice offered by the priest to God. They held that the communicant should partake of the sacramental wine as well as of the consecrated bread. And all viewed it as a communion instituted by Christ, and vital to the Church, as well as life-giving to the individual believer.

The following is a summary of the main points Reformed theologians generally hold concerning the sacraments, of which much can be adapted by Christians of all faiths:

1. The Sacraments of the New Testament are Divine institutions appointed by Christ.

2. The Sacraments of the New Testament are sensible signs of spiritual blessings, teaching and representing by outward actions the gospel truths.

3. The Sacraments of the New Testament are federal acts affording a seal or confirmation of the covenant between God and His people.

4. The Sacraments of the New Testament are made means

of grace to the individual who rightly partakes of them.¹

The Origin of the Term "Ordinance"

It was left for the radical arm of the Reformation to change the word "sacrament" to "ordinance." According to Plaster, the Brethren, Anabaptists, Moravians, and Pietists eventually developed the term "ordinance" in the United States to "distinguish their theological position from those who attributed some kind of virtue, efficacy, or intrinsic value to 'sacrament'."² As one Mennonite scholar writes:

Ordinances. A term used in nonliturgical churches to designate what is referred to in liturgical churches as "sacraments." There is considerable difference in meaning between these. . . . The term "ordinance" emphasizes the aspect of institution by Christ and the symbolic meaning. For this reason the use of the term "sacrament" by Mennonites is misleading. Nevertheless, it is being used at times particularly by ministers who have received training in non-Mennonite institutions of liturgical leanings, and was also used at times by the early Anabaptists.³

However, Plaster does not see a clear demarcation between the two terms, and he comments: "While distinction could be made, there does not seem to be an intrinsic or real difference between 'ordinance' and 'sacrament' other than the definition each group chooses to put with the

¹James Bannerman, The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Power, Ordinances, Discipline and Government of the Christian Church, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1868; reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 5-12.

²Plaster, 21.

³Cornelius Krahn, "Ordinances," The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement (1934), 72.

word."¹

The Ordinance of Footwashing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

There is good reason to believe that the practice of footwashing became established among Adventists from converts of the Brethren, Mennonites, or primitive Baptists, since in the early publications the footwashing is almost always mentioned alongside "the holy salutation," an ordinance practiced by these groups.²

It should also be noted that the early Adventists, when referring to God's commandments, included the footwashing. As one correspondent wrote: "[We] are trying to keep 'all' God's commandments, not excepting washing the saints feet--the holy salutation, and God's Holy Sabbath--not the first day."³

Another reader commented: "I believe I can truly say that I love the Lord with my whole being and also that I love to keep His commandments. How my heart leaped to obey the commandment in the 13th of John."⁴

¹Plaster, 22.

²Ron Graybill, "Footwashing in Early Adventism," The Review and Herald, May 22, 1975, 4-5; and May 29, 1975, 6-7. I am indebted to Graybill's excellent articles for many of my references.

³C. Main, "Letters to the Editor," The Day-Star, Aug. 25, 1845, 12.

⁴Amelia Curtis, "Letters to the Editors," The Day-Star, Oct. 18, 1845, 3.

Even children were joyful in obeying God's commandments. One of them wrote: "We are happy here in keeping all God's commandments, including the seventh-day, washing the saints feet, and the holy salutation."¹

If it is true that this ordinance entered the Adventist community by the above-mentioned groups, it might prove valuable to notice the development of ordinances among the Brethren over the last century.

The Development and Change of Ordinances Among the Brethren

A committee on church government presented the following belief on ordinances in 1883 at a convention in Ashland.

We believe the New Testament teaches both by precept and example the following ordinances: the Lord's Supper, Communion, Feet-washing and the Holy Salutation, and we shall continue to teach and practice them. We believe that whatever Christ has commanded, be it ever so small, is binding, and that it is morally dangerous to omit its observance.²

By 1893, these doctrines became more defined and specific, particularly how they related to each other in practice and time.

1. That the ordinance of baptism is trine immersion only: and, therefore, the Brethren Church accepts and practices only the same as Christian baptism. Matthew

¹[From a little child], "Letters to the Editor," The Day-Star, Oct. 3, 1845, 39.

²The Brethren Church, Proceedings of the Dayton Convention Held by the Brethren Church, June 6-7, 1883, reported by L. B. Clifton (Dayton, OH: Daily Journal, 1883), 59.

28:19.

2. That footwashing is a divine institution, and should be practiced in the public worship by all saints, and, therefore, the Brethren Church accepts and practices the same as such in connection with the Lord's Supper. John 13:17.

3. That the Lord's Supper is a full evening meal, and is to be eaten in the night, as a divine institution, in the public worship of God, in connection with the communion of bread and wine; therefore, the Brethren Church accepts and practices the same in the divine manner as set forth in the Word of God. Matthew 19:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11.

4. That the eating of the communion bread and the drinking of the communion wine, in connection with the Lord's Supper is a divine ordinance, to be thus kept and obeyed by the church, in her public worship; therefore, the Brethren Church thus honors and practices the same. Matthew 19:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11.

5. That the "Holy Kiss" is a divine institution to be practiced by all the saints in the public worship of God; therefore, the Brethren Church practices and honors the same according to the Holy Scriptures. Romans 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14.¹

The Statement of Faith was revised and approved in 1969 in the following manner:

ORDINANCES: The Christian should observe the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are (1) baptism of believers by triune immersion (Matt. 28:19) and (2) the threefold communion service, consisting of the washing of the saints' feet (John 13:1-17), the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 33-34; Jude), and the communion of the bread and the cup (1 Cor. 11:23-26).²

The most notable change is the absence of the "Holy

¹The Brethren Annual (Ashland, OH: Brethren Publication Board, 1897), 3-4.

²Homer A. Kent, Jr., Conquering Frontiers: A History of the Brethren Church (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972), 133-34.

Kiss" or "holy salutation."

"Holy Salutation" in Early Adventism

It is interesting that in the writings of Ellen White, the "Holy Kiss" is mentioned four times. In Early Writings we find the following quote: "Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet and salute the brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshiped at our feet."¹

In this context, White is speaking about the time just before the return of Christ in glory.

This quote is part of White's first vision and is quoted in the exact same way in two other publications.² One other time the "Holy Kiss" is mentioned.³ Here, caution concerning the communion service is given. First, the church ought to practice it judiciously, so as not to cause prejudice by those not familiar with the ordinance; second, it ought to be practiced more frequently,⁴ and instruction was given that it was acceptable for women to wash the feet of men but not for men to wash the feet of woman.

Concerning the practice of the "Holy Kiss," White

¹White, Early Writings, 15.

²White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:59; idem, Life Sketches Of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 65.

³White, Early Writings, 116-117.

⁴At the time this counsel was given, the Lord's Supper was celebrated once annually.

comments: "It should be regarded as a sign of fellowship to Christian friends when parting, and when meeting again after a separation of weeks or months."¹

A little later she adds: "There can be no appearance of evil when the holy kiss is given at a proper time and place."²

It appears that there was cause for concern as to how some individuals or groups carried out the "holy salutation" in practice. However, it does not seem to have been practiced as an ordinance but rather as a sign of affection and brotherly love.

After these early references, it disappears from the writings of Ellen White and also disappeared as a practice among Seventh-day Adventists.

As we have noted above, it obviously ceased to be an ordinance among the Brethren, as is evident from the above quote,³ where the holy salutation is not included among the ordinances as they were revised in 1969.

It is evident that the "holy salutation" does not meet the criterion of an ordinance. Consequently, it has been dropped by the Brethren and had never been accepted by Seventh-day Adventists as an ordinance. It is commendable that our pioneers were able to very quickly distinguish

¹Ibid., 117.

²Ibid.

³See pp. 279-280, above.

between the footwashing as an ordinance and the "holy salutation" as a simple greeting, although both had been accepted by the group that introduced them as ordinances to Advent believers.

The Footwashing, an Ordinance

As shown above, the footwashing constitutes an ordinance, that is, Christ has instituted a religious rite in perpetuity.¹

However, we need to explore in more detail the basis upon which an ordinance or sacrament is established.

Melanchton, in his Apology on the Augsburg Confession, states: "Sacraments are rites which have the command of God."² Another commentator writes: "An express Divine appointment is necessary to constitute a sacrament."³ Horne simply says: "The sacraments of the church are those appointed by Christ in the N.T."⁴ A Grace Brethren theologian adds: "The specific or clear command for perpetuation of a form as an ordinance."⁵

A more restrictive criteria is added by M'Clintock

¹See chapter 3, pp. 88-89.

²Bannerman, 5.

³Ibid.

⁴Horne, 5:193.

⁵Herman A. Hoyt, "Biblical Criteria and Characteristics of a Church Ordinance," Unpublished paper of the Brethren Home Missions Council Workshop, Ashland, OH, March 1981.

and Strong when they set forth their understanding of what constitutes an ordinance. The very first requirement of an ordinance is "illustrated by our Lord's own example and enjoined by his specific command."¹

Plaster is correct when he argues that an ordinance should be characterized by at least three things: First, "a physical act which is ceremonial in nature";² second, a symbolic representation of a spiritual reality expressly taught in the Scriptures,³ and third, a command to perpetuate it by Christ as taught in the NT.⁴

Footwashing, a Physical Act Ceremonial in Nature

Was Jesus' action ceremonial in nature? I have shown that Jesus was not carrying out an expected or usual procedure. The significance was greater than the physical act.

In addition, as has been shown conclusively in this study, footwashing served at different times and places as a ceremonial act.⁵

Therefore, footwashing constitutes a physical act

¹Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, 1891 ed., "sacraments."

²Plaster, 33.

³Ibid., 43-44.

⁴Ibid., 69-71.

⁵The priests in the OT sanctuary, pagan religions, Islam, etc. See chapters 1 and 4 above.

that is ceremonial in nature.

Footwashing, a Symbolic Representation
of a Spiritual Reality

The dialogue between Jesus and Peter clearly shows that footwashing is a symbol that points to a spiritual reality. First, the full spiritual significance can only be understood after Christ's "glorification" and Pentecost. Second, footwashing is a redemptive act of Jesus; that is, it has soteriological significance since Peter has "no part" with Christ unless Christ washes his feet.

Since Peter was already a believer, to "have part" with Jesus must point beyond having clean feet physically and can only mean and point to a cleansing of sin after baptism.¹ Therefore, it is apparent that footwashing represents a symbolic act pointing to a spiritual reality.

Christ's Command to Perpetuate

The command of Jesus to perpetuate footwashing among His disciples is explicitly set forth in John 13:14-15. In chapter 4, numerous examples are given of Church leaders who practiced the footwashing and encouraged fellow believers to do the same, based on the distinct command of Jesus. Few have ever questioned the command of Jesus to practice the footwashing in perpetuity.

¹See chapter 3 and 4.

Conclusion

Footwashing, based on the above study, meets or exceeds every criterion of an ordinance. This has been recognized in the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the beginning; consequently, footwashing has always constituted an ordinance in this Church. Footwashing is closely connected to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as a preparation, where the believer celebrates the free gift of salvation offered to all who accept and believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. All confessed sins are forgiven, and believers, filled with the love of Christ, are reconciled in fellowship and peace.

As has been stated, the criteria for a biblical basis for an ordinance is met or exceeded by the footwashing, even the most confining. In fact, it might even be said that in a strict sense, based on the words of Jesus Himself, it meets the criteria more fully than even the Lord's Supper. As Donald Guthrie points out:

It is striking that none of the synoptic gospels gives any indication that the Lord gave a specific command that the supper was to be observed in the future. It is only in Paul's record of the institution that the words are recorded, "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:25). It is natural to suppose that the disciples after Pentecost recognized the theological importance of the words of institution, and not only preserved the words, but also repeated the act because of the particular authority with which the words were given.¹

¹Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1981), 720.

Technically speaking, the first time the command is found in writing pre-dates the Gospels. Most commentators agree that 1 Cor was written around A.D. 54,¹ while the Gospel of Luke was probably written no earlier than A.D. 61, but a more likely date is found from "the late sixties" to "the late seventies of the first century."²

Only in Luke 22 is the bread commanded with a present imperative. The other commands are aorist tense. However, 1 Cor 11:23-26 has two present imperatives.

This seems to invalidate the argument of some that the command for an ordinance or Church practice must be found first in the Gospels and then validated in another book in the New Testament.

If this principle would be strictly applied, it would invalidate the practice of dealing with an offending brother as commanded by Christ in Matt 18:15-17, were He clearly taught how the Church is to proceed in this matter. However, we do not find any implication of this specific command of Christ in the rest of the New Testament.

Of course, it could be argued that 1 Tim 5:10 speaks

¹F. W. Grosheide, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 13.

²John Nolland, Luke, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35A (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), xxxix.

of an ordinance;¹ however, it is safer and more accurate to say that one clear passage commanding a practice or ordinance in the New Testament is sufficient. This is certainly the case in John 13.

Historically, the authority in the early Church concerning faith and practice flowed from the teachings and example of the apostles, long before the Gospels were written. It is therefore safe to assume that the apostle John practiced and taught the footwashing, that this was an ordinance practiced in Ephesus² and practiced widely in the Johannine community, and ultimately was recorded in the Gospel of John at the end of the first century.

¹Kent argues that an ordinance is discussed in this passage. Kent, The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in I and II Timothy and Titus, 173-74.

²Bacon, 218.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, it became evident that footwashing was instituted by Christ to deal with post-baptismal sins and is a means of reconciliation with God and man.

The footwashing service is the ideal time to confess our sins to God and also to make confession to our fellow believers, extending forgiveness to them as God has to us. In this way, the footwashing recorded in John 13 accomplishes the same purpose as Christ's words in Matt 5:23-24; 6:12-15; and 18:21-35.¹

There is reason to believe that the Matthean and Johannine communities suffered the same problem of post-baptismal sin, resulting in alienation and disunity that could only be remedied through the confession of wrongs committed against each other and extending mutual forgiveness to each other resulting in reconciliation. In this way, unity and fellowship are restored, man is blessed and at peace, and God is glorified and honored as His character is displayed by and in His people.

¹Note also, Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37; Heb 12:12-15; Jas 5:16.

However, while that is the central truth and purpose of footwashing and fundamental to Johannine theology, it teaches other principles as well.

Footwashing as an Act of Honor and Love

Because footwashing was such a menial and lowly service, it lent itself perfectly to show a person love, honor, and devotion.

Several examples of this have been noted in this study. The maidens of Ceos willingly washed each other's parents' and brothers' feet. Asenath, out of love and devotion for her husband Joseph, washed his feet, although she could have commanded any one of her maid servants to do it. Then there was Favonius, though unsolicited, who washed Pompey's feet; and Abigail in the Old and Mary in the New Testament who willingly stooped to become the lowliest of servants of all to wash feet, compelled only by love for their master.

All these pale, however, in the light of Christ's deed for His disciples. In washing their feet, He made a statement of service, that He, the King of heaven and earth, would do whatever is necessary to save a person from sin and condemnation. This is an awesome thought. One is compelled to keep this thought before the people: Footwashing is a constant reminder that Jesus serves His chosen ones.

In the Old Testament, when a servant had finished his seven years of service and was set free, but instead chose

freely and willingly to remain as a slave in that household, he became a slave for life (Deut 15:16-17). The Christian who has tasted the love of Christ and has received the hope of eternal life through faith in Jesus will more than willingly submit himself to Christ and become His slave. As an act of love, honor, and devotion to Christ, he willingly and unreservedly serves Him always, compelled by love. For love begets love, and footwashing is but an opportunity to show this love for Christ in a tangible way. Every time we wash someone's feet, or serve someone willingly, in the Church or outside the Church, we wash Christ's feet. For Jesus said: "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (Matt 25:40).

Footwashing as a Reminder of Christian Service

Above all, footwashing is a constant reminder of the love, humility, and service of Jesus on behalf of His people. Since an ordinance is a physical act that is ceremonial in nature and points to a spiritual reality, footwashing must always point believers to Christ. Since cleansing from sin and condemnation comes only through faith in Christ's shed blood and His death, which signifies the ultimate service on man's behalf, we are reminded by footwashing that Christ not only serves us, but we, in turn, are compelled to serve Christ by serving others.

This service cannot be confined to the Church, but

has no limits or boundaries: "For God so loved the world" (John 3:16). So the Christian is sent into the world to serve. Jesus said: "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The motive, as we have noted above, is always love for Christ.

However, this study has also raised some concerns about the future of the practice of footwashing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Concerns

One concern is twofold: Whether the ordinance of footwashing among Seventh-day Adventists will continue is at risk; and if it will fulfill the spiritual function intended by Christ remains to be seen. As noted in chapter 4, several denominations (who have practiced footwashing as an ordinance for hundreds of years and have defended the practice vigorously on a biblical basis) are now losing interest in it. Should this not cause Seventh-day Adventists to be alarmed?

In a recent publication sponsored by the Euro-African Division, dealing with the Lord's Supper and footwashing, one author comments: "The footwashing is not to be understood as a ritual cleansing from sin."¹ Oestreich

¹My translation of: "Die Fußwaschung ist nicht als rituelle Reinigung zur Sündenvergebung zu verstehen." Bernhard Oestreich, "Die Bedeutung Der Fusswaschung im Johannes 13," Abendmahl und Fußwaschung, Studien zur

denies that John 13:10 refers to baptism or that *bathe* (*λουω*) points to baptism in John's writings. He does, however, acknowledge in the rest of the New Testament that *λουω* does refer to baptism.

The author accepts the shorter version of 13:10 as the original and ancient,¹ thus following the lead of a number of critical scholars who interpret footwashing as a sign of Christ's death. He says: "Just as the Lord's Supper is a sign proclaiming Christ's death for us, so is the footwashing."² On the other hand, he denies that footwashing is a preparation for the Lord's Supper; however, he advocates that footwashing and the Lord's Supper are of equal importance (weight); they ought to be practiced together, and both point to Christ's death. While the Lord's Supper is a *love meal* (*Liebesmahl*), footwashing is a *love service* (*Liebesdienst*).³

As we have noticed in chapter 1, very few commentators show any awareness of the meaning of footwashing in secular or sacred history, and as a result, interpret John

adventistischen Ekklesiologie (Hamburg: Saatkorn-Verlag, 1991), 171.

¹He seems to follow the lead of Lohse here who falsely claims that P⁶⁶ contains the shorter text. See chapter 3, pp. 75-84.

²My translation of: "Wie das Abendmahl is auch die Fußwaschung eine zeichenhafte Verkündigung des Sterbens Jesu für uns." Oestreich, Abendmahl und Fußwaschung, 169.

³Ibid.

13 in a historical vacuum.

It seems that footwashing is in danger of becoming a meaningless ritual, void of meaning and purpose. An ordinance must have the command of Christ but must also contain a promise of Christ that is fulfilled when the Church meets in faith to practice the ordinances, expecting to receive the promise in faith.

The promise of footwashing is that those who practice it in faith "will be blessed" (John 13:17). The blessing received is peace with God as a result of justification by faith (divine forgiveness)¹ and as a result of reconciliation, unity, and fellowship among Christ's disciples. Since the occasion of the first footwashing was contention and alienation, the promise is that Christ will be present to wash away the pride and alienation separating the community of faith following confession and repentance.

The Importance of the Word

While an ordinance must have the command and promise of Christ, it can very quickly deteriorate into a ritual that becomes meaningless and therefore useless. The result is that soon the practice will cease to be important to members and thus the practice begins to be abandoned.²

¹See chapter 6, pp. 221-224.

²As appears to be the case among the denominations cited by Goodhue, where in some instances only 20 percent practice footwashing while others have abandoned the practice altogether. Goodhue, 128.

First, dissatisfied members will visit other congregations when the ordinances are practiced in their home churches. Later, they may attend but will not participate, setting a poor example to others, especially the young.

Therefore, it is vital that any ordinance be connected to the word. Separated from the spoken word, the action of an ordinance has no longer any spiritual power or effect on the participants. It becomes a lifeless and bare practice, void of the spiritual power it was intended to convey and impart.

However, once the word is attached to the practice, it fills the ordinance with meaning and makes it efficacious. This word must be declared in preaching and teaching to God's people, proclaiming the truth and meaning of each of the three ordinances commanded by Christ in the New Testament.

In general, Seventh-day Adventists do well with the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Most Bible study guides contain lessons on the meaning and teaching of baptism, and a few on the Lord's Supper; there are none, to my knowledge, on footwashing.

Often converts to the Seventh-day Adventist faith learn about footwashing when they attend their first Communion service and are suddenly confronted with the requirement to partake in a "strange" custom of washing feet.

Presently, there are no prepared materials available in print or otherwise to instruct our youth or converts on the biblical meaning of footwashing.¹

Footwashing is not listed as a separate subject in the publication dealing with the twenty-seven fundamental doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In fact, footwashing is not found in the table of contents.² It is briefly and eloquently discussed in chapter 15, "The Lord's Supper," explaining well the function and meaning of footwashing in a condensed fashion. Presently, the ordinance of footwashing takes up about two and a half out of approximately 375 pages. This means that an average of about 14 pages is devoted to each doctrine. It would be well to expand it into a separate chapter, giving it equal exposure with the other two ordinances.

This would allow the authors to furnish the full biblical teaching it deserves, rooting it in the Old and New Testaments by connecting it to baptism as well as to the Lord's Supper.

Unless the membership is well educated concerning the meaning and purpose of footwashing as a means of reconciliation with God and man through confession and

¹Checking with the local Adventist Book Center manager, he was not aware of any such material.

²Seventh-day Adventists Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988).

forgiveness, the faithful cannot fully appreciate nor can they experience the joy of salvation as they gather around the Lord's table and partake of the emblems signifying the assurance of their salvation. There remains ambiguity as to how we ought to approach the Lord's table if we have not correctly experienced the ordinance of footwashing. The very fact that it is referred to as "the ordinance of humility" is misleading, since that definition only highlights one aspect of this ordinance. Although correct in what it affirms, it fails to give a more central or inclusive definition to footwashing. It probably is preferable to simply call it "the ordinance of footwashing."

In my limited research among laymen and clergy in the Seventh-day Adventists Church, I have found a lack of real understanding concerning the meaning of footwashing. Very few sermons seem to be directed toward this ordinance, explaining its function as a means of reconciliation and preparation for the Communion service. It seems that perhaps the real meaning of footwashing is being lost, and if this trend should continue unchecked, this ordinance may experience the same fate it has had among those denominations that are in the process of giving it up or that have already done so.

Certainly further study on this subject is warranted. In either case, it would be helpful if the denomination would publish some material on footwashing that would be

helpful in sermon preparation or that could be used in small groups and/or mid-week services. Years ago a Sabbath School Quarterly was published dealing with the ordinances, including footwashing; perhaps another one is due.¹

A well-educated and informed congregation on the subject of footwashing and its important relationship to the Lord's Supper as a preparation of cleansing from sin and condemnation can then properly engage in the celebration, coming with joy and thanksgiving before the Lord's table to partake of the emblems of Christ's death. Instead, God's children often come to the Communion table with sadness and a repentant mood, because they have not cleared their hearts and conscience of sin and conviction at the appropriate ordinance.

Considerations for Further Studies

When a study such as this comes to a conclusion touching on so many related topics, several subjects come to mind that could be explored further, perhaps making meaningful contributions to the Christian community.

The Importance of Confession to the Individual Believer

Our industrialized, highly technological age has brought about a sharp distinction between the material and spiritual world that has created many emotional and

¹N. F. Pease, "The Memorial of His Humiliation." Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, October 1976, 94-101.

psychological problems for individuals. Paul Tournier, a noted Christian psychiatrist, has included a chapter on confession in one of his books.¹ Throughout this book, he indicates the importance of confession as to the individual's emotional health and well-being. He cites many cases of individuals who suffered varieties of emotional and physical problems that were cured once that individual confessed his/her sins; sometimes there was immediate relief.

Certain passages in Scripture seem to indicate there is a close relationship between confession and psychosomatic well-being, such as Pss 32; 51; and Jas 5:13-16.

It seems that Protestantism has not developed or encouraged a proper time or place for confession to God, nor has it created an environment for individuals and groups to confess their sins to one another.

Celebrating the Ordinances

Since Seventh-day Adventist members traditionally engage in both footwashing and the Lord's Supper on the same Sabbath morning in church, it brings about a great time restraint that does not allow time for the worshipper to properly enjoy or experience the blessings and promises attached to either ordinance.

Perhaps it would be beneficial and more meaningful to

¹Paul Tournier, The Healing of Persons, trans. Edwin Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965).

separate the ordinances so that the worshippers could properly prepare for each. If the existential blessing of footwashing is the assurance of sins forgiven, then there needs to be not only proper preparation but also proper execution of this ordinance. Since Seventh-day Adventists do not believe that any ordinance works *ex opera operato*, but becomes effective only through faith in the promise of Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and mind of the believer, the worship leaders need to provide sufficient time and a place and/or environment for the ordinances to be biblically administered. Perhaps Friday or Wednesday evening, prior to the celebration of the Communion service, would be one option.

The Importance of the Word and Ordinance

The importance of combining preaching with the ordinances, particularly footwashing, is essential to receiving the promise and blessing of Christ's institution for His people. Unless there is solid biblical preaching on this subject, ignorance will ultimately reside and a lack of understanding will lead to sacramentalism and ritualism. Instead of imputing new life and energy into the worshippers, it will become a time of boredom.

When the preaching of the word and ordinances are vitally connected, the preaching not only gives information, understanding, and insight on the subject, but as the worshipper by faith practices the ordinances, the word is

confirmed, fulfilled, and punctuated in the believer's life. For the bare word cannot have its full effect without the ordinances. While the word enters our being through the ear, the ordinances are visible examples and/or parables that not only reinforce the word but provide power through action and participation of the worshipper with God.

The ordinances were provided and instituted by God to provide another avenue for the truth to penetrate our minds and being by engaging more of our senses.

Therefore, the interrelationship of the word and ordinances needs further exploration, not only in theory but also in practice at actual worship settings.

The Christological Significance of Footwashing

I only briefly touched on the relationship of John 13, Phil 2, and Mark 10:35-45. Here is a subject that entreats one to conduct further study and research that will provide vital sermon material ideally suited for presentation before the footwashing service and many other occasions.

As footwashing is explored in the light of Christ's incarnation and ministry, ultimately leading to Calvary and culminating in His high priestly ministry for His people, it may elucidate and magnify the Savior's self-emptying ministry for His people and the whole plan of salvation.

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