

Westminster Seminary California

A Perspective on Footwashing: an Exegetical Experiment on John 3:6-10

Submitted to Professor Dr. Steven Baugh

For New Testament Interpretation (NT-500)

By Yi Wang

May 09, 2016

Pericope: John 13:6-10

Introduction

The account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet is one of unique passages in the Gospel of John whose interpretations have been largely disputed throughout the history. The meaning of this story is controversial and no consensus has ever been achieved. In order to understand footwashing, it is crucial to understand the dialogue between Jesus and Peter in the pericope. And in order to gain a precise grasp of the dialogue, it is necessary to investigate the social and cultural background in the first century Greco-Roman world. This paper argues that in this pericope John renders Jesus' footwashing, as a metaphor of Jesus' self-humiliating salvific cleansing of sin, which overturned the disciples' expectation of what a patron should do.

The paper develops in the following steps: First, it discusses patronage concept and applies it to interpret Peter's objection of footwashing. Second, it unpacks the practice of footwashing in the ancient world as a self-humiliation, which further illuminates the deeper significance of the pericope. In the third part, it argues that the footwashing functions as a metaphor of salvation, including the analysis of the textual variants issue and the historical interpretations of bathing and washing.

I. Peter's objection and Patronage

The dialogue between Peter and Jesus in this pericope (v.6-10) is the center of the fuller pericope of footwashing at the last supper (v.1-20). John developed his story plot with a series of verbs in historical present: ἐγείρεται, τίθησιν (v.4), βάλλει, ἐκμάσσειν (v.5), ἔρχεται (v.6). As Burton stated, the usage of historical present is “to describe vividly a past event in the presence of which the speaker conceives himself to be.”¹ It is a close-up shot that records each move of the person in focus. From verse 4 to verse 6a, the focus is on Jesus. He rose up, lay down his garment, poured water to wash their feet, wiped with towel, and he came to Peter. Now, the camera focus turns to Peter (v.6b): he said (λέγει) to Jesus.

Half of this dialogue is about Peter talking to Jesus. John described it in two levels. The first level is confusion: “κύριε, σύ μου νίπτεις τοὺς πόδας;” (v.6b). Everything in this sentence is interesting. The second person pronoun σύ appears in front of the sentence, which is an emphatic nominative usage with a contrast significance.² An odd placement of μου separates it from τοὺς πόδας and is put next to σύ. The idea of contrasting the identities of two persons is strongly present. Peter was so shocked that he couldn't find the right word order to express his confusion. Jesus used this “you-me” pattern to respond him, “ὃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ σὺ οὐκ οἶδας ἄρτι.” (v.7)

The second level of Peter's objection is direct rejection: “οὐ μὴ νίψης μου τοὺς πόδας εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.” As a matter of fact, οὐ μὴ + subjective is the strongest way to negate in Greek. It negates the potentiality or possibility.³ Peter was saying that not even exist the possibility for Jesus washing his feet. He used the same language when he rebuked Jesus after his

¹ Ernest DeWitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), sec. 14.

² Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 321.

³ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 468.

confession of faith (Matt. 16:22). Jesus used the same language to negate the possibility for his people to lose salvation (John 10:28).

Certainly, Peter's objections proved the misunderstanding among the disciples. But what was he think of Jesus? What does the "you-me" language imply? Why did Peter have such strong reaction even after he recognized Jesus as the Christ? The proposal here is Peter's conception of Jesus as a patron.

Patronage in the first century Greco-Roman World

Patronage is a widespread phenomenon in the ancient world. The patron-client relationship is personal, reciprocal, asymmetrical, voluntary, often includes favoritism. The semantic field for "patron" is broad, such as εὐργέτης, προστάτης/προστάτις, παράκλητος (L&N, 35.11,13,15). Patron-client model entails a variety of social relationships: God-man, saint-devotee, godfather-godchild, lord-vassal, landlord-tenant, politician-voter, professor-student, and so forth. Thus the technical terms do not appear often, but the idea is present. It is worth noting that the patron-client relation is distinguished from legal relations, bureaucracy, commercial exchange, and kinship obligations. Nevertheless, it may co-exist with these forms of relationships.⁴ In Roman society, the clients gather at early morning at the house of the patron to bring salutations as well as requests. The importance of a patron is in proportion of his morning audience. The patron, or benefactor, grants "favor" to his client, give assistance by money, credit, influence, advice, provides protection, and welcomes his clients some time to his table. Although the patronage is asymmetrical, the patron calls his client "friend".

⁴ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2003), 67; A. Blok, "Variations in Patronage," *Sociol. Gids* 16, no. 6 (1969): 366; Raymond Westbrook, "Patronage in the Ancient near East," *J. Econ. Soc. Hist. Orient* 48, no. 2 (2005): 211–12, 215.

Sometimes, there is a mediator between patron and client, which is called “broker”. A broker is a patron who provides access to another patron for his client.⁵

There are numerous places in the Roman literatures that exhibit the patronage concept, for instance, the letters of Pliny the Younger.⁶ In one of his letters, he offered financial support to advance his client Romanus Firmus to a position of Roman knight. He says: “The length of our *friendship* is sufficient guarantee that you will not forget this *favor*, ... People ought to guard an honor all the more carefully, when, in so doing, they are taking care of a *gift* bestowed by the *kindness* of a *friend*.” (Pliny, 1.19, italic added) As a patron, he granted benefit to Firmus. He is a benefactor of his client. In the case of brokerage, Pliny acted as a broker of his client Voconius Romanus to beg favor from the Emperor Trajan to promote him to a senatorial rank. Pliny pledged his own credit for the character of his “friend” (Pliny, 10.4). Elsewhere, Pliny referred as the benefactor of human race (Pliny, 10.70,102).

In fact, the patronage is also found in the New Testament. Apostle Paul preached to Athenians that God bestows to all life and breath and all things as the ultimate “Benefactor” (Acts 17:24-28). In the Luke’s account of Last Supper, right after supper, the disciples arose a dispute among them about who was to be greatest, and Jesus mentioned about the kings of Gentile and authorities were called Benefactors (Luke 22:25). In John 19, Jesus’ reply to Pontius Pilate is perhaps an evidence for the author’s awareness of patron-client relation. It is evident that the patronage idea was widely present in the first century Judea province.

Jesus as a Patron

Patron-teacher. As mentioned above, the presence of the idea of patronage is not necessarily in correspondence with the presence of the term. One feature of patron-client relation is the

⁵ David Arthur DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 97–99.

⁶ Pliny the Younger, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny* (trans. Betty Radice; Reissue edition.; Harmondsworth, Eng.; Baltimore: Penguin Classics, 1963).

early morning gathering of clients to the patron. This pattern also appears several places in the New Testament. Early in the morning, people gathered to hear Jesus (John 8:2; see Luke 4:42, 21:38). People saw Jesus as a patron-teacher. The large number of his audience signified his popularity. This also caused the jealousy of the scribes and Pharisees who saw Jesus as a competitor. As a general rule, the patron-teacher grants teachings to his client-audience, and in return he gains respect and honor.⁷ It was the case for scribes and Pharisees. They love the place of honor at banquets and respectful greetings in the market places. And it is the very critique that Jesus gave to them (Matt.23:6-7). But the people and the disciples also thought in this way. Jesus' brothers advised him to make a name in Judea (John 7:4). On the contrary, Jesus withdrew to secluded places when people sought to hear him; ate with disrespectful people whom other patron-teachers tried to keep distance from. Jesus also overturned Peter's expectation. As their patron-rabbi, Jesus was supposed to be honored and respected by his disciples, but instead he humbled himself even down to wash their feet.

Patron-king. In John 12, John describes Jesus entering into the city of Jerusalem as a patron-king figure. The people welcomed him as the King of Israel (John 12:13). This is crucial to understand the Peter's reaction. For Peter, Jesus is not only a patron-rabbi, he is also the King of Israel. Remember, when Jesus entered into Jerusalem, Peter saw people welcoming him and shouting Hosanna! So this patron-king identity of Jesus is more striking than a rabbi figure. Jesus was not only a polemic teacher, but the promised king! When Peter confessed Jesus as Messiah, he was picturing a Davidic king-figure in his mind who would restore the kingdom to Israel. That is why he rebuked Jesus, because a dead messiah cannot

⁷ This general rule cannot be applied for salvation, which leads new covenant to a covenantal nomism. In fact, Jesus was not an honor-seeker. Cf. David Arthur DeSilva, "Exchanging Favor for Wrath: Apostasy in Hebrews and Patron-Client Relationships," *J. Biblic. Lit.* 115, no. 1 (1996): 103.

lead them to this political military triumph. In the light of this, Jesus' reply to Peter in verse 8 becomes vivid: "if I do not wash you, you have no μέρος with me." The term μέρος here means a share, or a place with someone, but it also may refer to a part of territory, a district (BDAG, see Matt.2:22, 15:21, 16:13). It can be used in a geo-political sense. Taken in account of the triumphant entering Jerusalem in chapter 12, it possibly sounds like having a share in the earthly kingdom. In fact, in the parallel account in the Gospel of Luke, after the meal, the disciples arose a dispute about who was regarded to be greatest. And Jesus told them that he will grant them a kingdom, and they will sit on thrones (Luke22:24, 29-30). Probably it was the scenario in which Jesus performed footwashing. Even right before Jesus' ascension, this theme was still their focus (Acts1:6). Therefore, when Peter heard μέρος, he asked Jesus to wash not only his feet but also his hands and head (John13:9). The purer one is, the more μέρος in reward. However, once again, Jesus overturned Peter's expectation. In a patron-client relation, the patron is expected to fulfill clients' request in order to maintain his reputation and honor. But Jesus did not fulfill these requests. That is why he was crucified because he failed Jews' expectation as a messiah. The Jews' request was a messiah militant liberates them from the dominion of Romans. The disciples' request was sitting on the left and right thrones in the kingdom. Peter's request was to have extra cleansing to share more μέρος. But Jesus did not respond to any of them. Instead, he transformed the request. The μέρος he grants is not through degrees of personal purity, but through his voluntary humiliation, which is symbolized in his action of footwashing.

Paterfamilias. The word simply means the father of the family. The concept of *pater* is closely related to patronage. The *pater* is the patron of the family. As the benefactor of the family, he is to provide, protect, and rule over his family members. As established in the Laws of Twelve Tables, the *pater* holds the power of life and death over his sons as stated in the laws of Twelve Tables (Table VI, Law I). Actually, the Roman Emperors, the Benefactors,

were customarily titled *Pater Patriae*, “Father of the Country”, for he was responsible for the entire *familia* of the Roman Empire. According to Suetonius (*Tiberius* 26), Tiberius, the successor of Augustus, declined this title.⁸ In the Gospel of John, this language is adopted to describe Jesus. After the last supper, Jesus prophesied the betrayer was someone who “eats my bread”, that is the provision by the *pater* (John13:18). Later, in his farewell discourse, he said to the disciples, “I will not leave you as orphans.” (14:18). John portrayed Jesus as a responsible *paterfamilias* who provides, protects and takes care of his family members.

In summary, as the social fabric of the first century Roman world, the patronage idea permeates in the New Testament, and certainly in the Gospel of John. Surveying briefly through this concept, the story becomes more vivid and concrete in mind. It explains Peter’s objection. The emphatic usage of “you-me” language in this dialogue. Jesus fits in people’s understanding as patron-teacher, patron-king and *paterfamilias*, nevertheless, he also transcends these concepts. Peter was confused and surprised by what Jesus was doing. It was definitely not an action of a patron! But what did Jesus do? Why footwashing now?

II. Footwashing: a metaphor of self-humiliation

The peculiarity of footwashing requires some study on the practice itself. Besides the identity of Jesus, how did footwashing look like in the eyes of the disciples? What is the significance of it? The discussion is divided in to three parts: worship, hospitality, and servitude.

Worship?

One understanding of footwashing is that it recalls the priest cleansing in the Old Testament. It is found in the book of Exodus, that God commanded Moses to make a basin, and put it between tent of meeting and altar. Aaron and his sons were to wash their hands and feet, before they entered to the tent of meeting or made any offering at altar (Ex. 30:17-21;

⁸ Suetonius, *Suetonius* (trans. John Carew Rolfe; vol. 1; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944), 333.

40:30-32). This practice was carried on in the Temple worship. The Sea was set for priests to wash their hands and feet before they approach the altar (1Kgs 7:38; 2Ch.4:6). Josephus also explained this practice:

And, having filled the Sea with water, he set it apart for the priests to wash their hands and feet in when they entered the temple and were about to go up to the altar, while the lavers were for cleansing the entrails and feet of the animals used as whole burnt-offerings.⁹

In this case, Jesus washed his disciples' feet may be understood as a priestly washing ritual that grants them the identity of priesthood (see 1Pet.2:9). However, the priestly cleansing entails the washing of feet *and hands*. But Jesus refused to wash Peter's hands when he asked for it. Moreover, in the priest cleansing, there is no mention that it is somebody else wash priests' feet. So the connection between priest cleansing in Old Testament worship and Jesus washing his disciples' feet is not strong.

Hospitality?

Another explanation is that footwashing is an act of hospitality. The evidence is found in Abram offering footwashing to the messengers of God (Gen.18:4). The action is not about cultic cleansing, but about hospitality. And only footwashing is mentioned. But the ambiguity lies on who is the one does the washing. It is possible that it was done by the messengers themselves. However, in reading of Septuagint, the most possible answer is that it was done by somebody else, probably slaves.¹⁰ The obstacles to connect hospitable practice to Jesus' action are: first, this happens prior to the meal; and second, it is not performed by the host but by slaves. But Jesus performed the washing after the meal and by himself. However, even though it does not perfectly fit Jesus' action, it does allude to the connection between footwashing and servitude.

⁹ Josephus, *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities* (trans. H. St J. Thackeray; vol. V, XX vols.; Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press; W. Heinemann, 1977), 616–19.

¹⁰ In the MT, *וַיַּחֲמִיץ* is Qal imperative plural. But in the LXX, *τιψατωσαν* is third person plural which indicates that the footwashing is performed by someone else.

Servitude!

In the first century Roman world, slave performing footwashing was a common practice. But there is one significant evidence for a non-slave footwashing. It is found in Plutarch's *Pompey*, 73.6-7:

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 own 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[.]”¹¹

A few things are worth mentioning. First, footwashing was commonly performed by slaves. Second, it was normal for someone to wash his own feet. Third, it was very rare for a non-slave person to wash feet of another person. It is a humiliating action. But Favonius did it as courtesy. It was still an action of a lower-rank person toward a higher-rank person.

In the Old Testament, the story of David and Abigail also illuminates this connection (1Sam. 25). After Nabal died, David sent his servants to Abigail telling her that he was going to take her as his wife. And Abigail said: “Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord’s servants.” (1Sam.25:41). In this case, the footwashing might be understood as an act of hospitality, but it is more about Abigail’s the self-humility. It implies that footwashing is considered as an action done by slave. A similar account is found in the pseudopigraphal story *Joseph and Aseneth*.¹² In Aseneth’s prayer she said, “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 on him and be a slave for him and serve him for ever (and) ever.” (*Joseph and Aseneth*, 13:12). Later, when Joseph came to her father’s house, she washed his feet:

¹¹ Plutarch, *Plutarch’s Lives* (trans. Bernadotte Perrin; vol. V, XI vols.; Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1914), 309.

¹² James H Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (vol. 2, 2 vols.; Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1983), 224.

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 Aseneth said to him, 'No, my Lord, because you are my lord from now on, and I (am) your maidservant.' (*Joseph and Aseneth*, 20:2-3)

Like Abigail, Aseneth committed herself as a maidservant to her lord-husband. And the very thing they mentioned about is footwashing. Thus the tie between footwashing and servitude is strong. In fact, footwashing was so demeaning that Jewish slave must not be commanded to do, and was only assigned to a non-Jewish slave.¹³

From the discussion above, it is evident that Jesus' footwashing was an action of self-humiliation. John carefully pictured this scene of this humble lord. It was this Jesus, whom John recognized as the Word-God in the beginning with God (John1:1-2), through whom all things came into being (1:3), and in whom was the Light of life (1:4), came as the lord-bridegroom of his maid-bride church represented by his twelve disciples, voluntarily committed himself as a slave to wash their feet. He is the true David, but he came to not to be washed, but wash the feet of his "Abigail". Yet, Jesus' action does not merely function as a moral exemplar of humility, but as a metaphor of the salvation.

III. Footwashing: a metaphor of salvation

Before entering into the discussion in verse 10 in particular, it is important to notice the context of the event. The whole footwashing scenario is bracketed by two significant actions: τίθησιν τὰ ἱμάτια (v.4) and ἔλαβεν τὰ ἱμάτια (v.12). He left his seat and put down his garment, and after he finished the washing, he put on his garment and resumed his seat again. This detailed language alludes to the whole event of incarnation. The eternal Word-Son left his heavenly seat and put down his glory, came to flesh to accomplish the salvation through his humiliation on the cross, and rose from dead, put on his glory and resumed his seat through

¹³ See Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Mekhilta De-Rabbi Ishmael* (vol. 1; Philadelphia, PA.: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 358.

λούω only means whole body cleansing, it most possibly it refers to a previous bathing that make the disciples completely clean, or the baptism of the new covenant. Thus, the footwashing indicates a continuing washing after this total cleansing. Some suggest that the new covenant community should continue practicing footwashing as a quasi-sacramental rite for post-conversion sin.¹⁵ The omission of the phrase is best understood as an accidental omission or deliberate change to reconcile with next phrase, ἀλλ ἔστιν καθαρὸς ὅλος.¹⁶ On the other side, those who prefer the shorter reading as original, they think that the inclusion of the phrase introduces a previous bathing that makes the disciples completely clean, it contradicts Jesus' emphasis on the necessity of footwashing. And their explanation of the addition of the phrase is *lectio difficilior*, that the scribe intentionally harmonized the text because of his incomprehension of λελουμένος referring to footwashing.¹⁷

It seems difficult to reconcile the two sides. The problem is, however, both sides think that if the bathing is not the footwashing, it must be an approximately complete cleansing of sin with regard to the new covenant, most possibly their baptism. But this is a theological overstretch. There is no such indication in context. It is unlikely that Jesus is talking some cleansing so distant from the current situation. A closer look at the context offers a more reasonable understanding of the bathing, thus footwashing.

¹⁵ Most Latin fathers took bathing as baptism, see N. M. Haring, "Historical Notes on the Interpretation of John 13:10," *Cathol. Biblic. Q.* 13, no. 4 (1951): 355–80; Calvin takes this interpretation of footwashing as a cleansing dealing with continued struggle of sin, see John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John* (vol. 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 59; For the argument of continuing practice of footwashing, see Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, 177–184.

¹⁶ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 204.

¹⁷ James D G Dunn, "Washing of the Disciples' Feet in John 13:1-20," *Z. Für Neutestamentliche Wiss. Kunde Älteren Kirche* 61, no. 3-4 (1970): 250–51; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*. (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), 567–68; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (ed. R.W.N. Noare and J.K. Riches; trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia, PA.: The Westminster Press, 1971), 469.

What is washing (νίπτω) to do with bathing (λούω)?

The immediate context is with no doubt a meal. Now, there are some evidence for the customary bathing before a meal. According to Plutarch, both Cato the Younger and Pompey had a bath (λούω) before supper. (see *Cato the Younger* 67.1; *Pompey* 55.6; see also Lucian, *The Cock* 7,9; *Timon* 54.) But, it is unlikely what the disciples did. First of all, Cato and Pompey were the top nobilities in the Roman Republic. Marcus Porcius Cato was a leading Roman senate and a quaestor, while Pompey was the consul of Roman Republic and a General. Their practice cannot be taken as a custom for ordinary people. In addition, in the area like Judea, water is considered valuable. Daily bathing before an ordinary meal was undoubtedly a luxury lifestyle. In fact, bathing was ordained in preparation for holy rites or healing medium.¹⁸ It seems impossible for the disciples to take a bath before a meal, unless it was a special meal. And this is exactly the break-through.

The Last Supper was by no means an ordinary meal but a holy feast of Passover. The reclining of Jesus and his disciples at the table proves that it was not an ordinary meal but a Passover feast. It was a ritual duty to recline at table at Passover as a symbol of freedom.¹⁹ In order to participate this Passover meal, one must bath (קִיֵּוּ) into a state of purity as commanded in the ceremonial law (Num.9:10, 19:18-19; 2Ch.30:17). John recorded that pilgrims went up to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves (John11:55). It was highly unlikely that Jesus and his disciples did not follow this ceremonial requirement, since Jesus was not a law-breaker (Matt. 3:15; 5:17-18; Luke 2:22-23; 16:17). Moreover, John mentions that they came to Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12:1). This alludes also to the probability of them taking bathing ablution, because the effect of purification rite

¹⁸ Isidore Singer and Cyrus Adler, *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (12 vols.; New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901), 596.

¹⁹ Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (trans. Perrin; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 48–49.

lasts only for a week (Num. 19:12). During these days, Jesus taught in the city during the daytime, but went to Bethany at night, because the permission was given that one could spend Passover night in the district of Jerusalem due to the large number of the pilgrims (about 100,000). However, he remained in the overcrowded city for the last supper, for the lamb must be eaten in the place which the Lord chooses (Deut. 15:20).²⁰ Jesus had to keep the Law perfectly.

Considering the background, the bathing Jesus indicated was most likely this customary bathing rite before Passover. Thus Jesus was saying to his disciples that they had performed the ceremonial rite and was completely clean *with regard to the Mosaic law*. It was a ceremonial purity in the mosaic covenant, not a spiritual purity in the new covenant. Yes, they were clean, but in the sense of external keeping of ceremonies. That is why they don't need to perform it once again the rite as Peter asked, but a different cleansing, because the ceremonial rites cannot remove their sin. It cannot bring salvation. Sin entangles man like the dust on the feet. It can only be cleansed by Jesus' humiliating washing. And those who are washed by Jesus, have the μέρος with him. No one can enjoy a μέρος with this true Passover Lamb without this washing, not even those who keep the mosaic ceremonial laws. They may be clean externally according to the mosaic law, “ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πάντες,” not every part of them, because their intrinsic sinful nature still remains.²¹ So in verse 10, the bathing is indeed a different washing from the footwashing, but it is not baptism of new covenant, but the purification rite of the old covenant. Therefore, footwashing is not a ritual of gradual cleansing from post-conversion sin that the new covenant church should practice over and over again. The footwashing is one-off metaphor of Jesus' salvific cleansing of sin.

²⁰ See Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 43.

²¹ Thus there may be multiple senses in Jesus' words: first, as John revealed to us in verse 11, Jesus referred to Judah the traitor; second, Jesus referred to their intrinsic sinfulness; third, what Peter might think of was that Jesus referred to the physical uncleanness of his feet.

Going back to the textual criticism issue, the discussion above offers an alternative. The shorter readings can be reconciled with the longer readings as the abbreviated expression. The one who has bathed (ceremonial rite), does not need to wash (hands and head), but is completely clean (ceremonially); you are clean (ceremonially), but not all (soteriologically). This is also keeping with the natural logic of the story. Since verse 10 follows Peter's request for washing his hands and head, the natural flow of thought should be that Jesus rejected his additional request but insisted on footwashing.

In summary, the debate over the phrase εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας are led by the same misinterpretation of bathing as baptism. But the Passover context leads to an alternative answer: bathing refers to pre-Passover ceremonial purification rite. While bathing was ceremonial cleansing that makes one clean with regard to ceremonial law, footwashing was a metaphor of the salvific cleansing. It is coherent with the natural flow of the dialogue, and with Jesus' emphasis on the necessity of footwashing.

Conclusion

The account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet is one of unique passages in the Gospel of John whose interpretations have been largely disputed throughout the history. Yet, a close study of patronage concept of the first century Greco-Roman society and the background of footwashing provides illumination for a deep understanding of the dynamics in the dialogue. With regard to the difficult verse 10, the context gives a more natural and reasonable reading which prevents a theological over-interpretation. The footwashing serves as a one-off metaphor of Jesus' self-humiliating salvific cleansing of sin, which goes beyond Peter's expectation of a patron.

Peter could not have a clue why Jesus washed his feet, because in his mind, Jesus was a patron. He was an honorable patron-teacher, a triumphant patron-king, and an authoritative

paterfamilias. And the footwashing was something so demeaning that even a Jewish slave should not be required to do. But Jesus insisted it is necessary to perform such humiliating washing to them, otherwise, they could not have μέρος with him, because it is a metaphor of salvation. No one can have a share with Jesus through other means, not even by performing the mosaic ceremonial rites in the old covenant. Footwashing is not a sacramental rite that the new covenant community should repeat to deal with the post-conversion sin. It is a one-off metaphor of Jesus' self-humiliating salvific cleansing of sin.

Bibliography

Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd Edition*. Edited by Frederick William Danker. 3rd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Blok, A. "Variations in Patronage." *Sociologische Gids* 16, no. 6 (1969): 365–78.

Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel according to John*. Garden City, NY.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970.

Bultmann, Rudolf. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Edited by R.W.N. Noare and J.K. Riches. Translated by G.R. Beasley-Murray. Philadelphia, PA.: The Westminster Press, 1971.

Burton, Ernest DeWitt. *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*. Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1949.

Charlesworth, James H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1983.

DeSilva, David Arthur. "Exchanging Favor for Wrath: Apostasy in Hebrews and Patron-Client Relationships." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115, no. 1 (1996): 91–116.

———. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Dunn, James D G. "Washing of the Disciples' Feet in John 13:1-20." *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der älteren Kirche* 61, no. 3–4 (1970): 247–52.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2003.

Haring, N. M. "Historical Notes on the Interpretation of John 13:10." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1951): 355–80.

Jeremias, Joachim. *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*. Translated by Perrin. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966.

Josephus. *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities*. Translated by H. St J. Thackeray. Vol. V. XX vols. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press ; W. Heinemann, 1977.

Lauterbach, Jacob Z. *Mekhilta De-Rabbi Ishmael*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia, PA.: Jewish Publication Society, 2004.

Louw, J. P., and Eugene Albert Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd edition. New York: United Bible Societies, 1999.

Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2nd ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994.

Pliny the Younger. *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*. Translated by Betty Radice. Reissue edition. Harmondsworth, Eng.; Baltimore: Penguin Classics, 1963.

Plutarch. *Plutarch's Lives*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Vol. V. XI vols. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1914.

Singer, Isidore, and Cyrus Adler. *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. 12 vols. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901.

Suetonius. *Suetonius*. Translated by John Carew Rolfe. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944.

Thomas, John Christopher. "A Note on the Text of John 13:10." *Novum Testamentum* 29, no. 1 (1987): 46–52.

———. *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991.

Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.

Westbrook, Raymond. "Patronage in the Ancient Near East." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, no. 2 (2005): 210–33.