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From Christology to Discipleship

—Reading John 13:1-20 (The Footwashing) as a Literary Unity—

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I. Introduction

The footwashing narrative (John 13:1-20) is one of the Gospel passages peculiar to John. In this passage, Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet is followed by two scenes, namely, the dialogue between Jesus and Peter (vv. 6-11) and Jesus' discourse, a monologue (vv. 12-20). Each scene provides an explanation for the action. Yet, one does not appear to agree with the other. The former gives a Christological explanation of the footwashing, whereas the latter gives a moral explanation of the same event. In addition to this disagreement, there are also doublets—such as the account concerning Judas, the betrayer (in vv. 2, 10b-11, 18)—which appear to be repeated unnecessarily.

Although some scholars view the footwashing narrative (John 13:1-20) as a perfectly unified text, the presence of literary tensions in the footwashing passage cannot be ignored.¹ Fernando F. Segovia points out eight of these tensions, and he notes that the problems are “too numerous, involving every section of the narrative, and too far-reaching.”² Among them, the presence of

¹ As Fernando F. Segovia (“John 13.1-20, The Footwashing in the Johannine Tradition,” *ZNW* 73 [1982] 31) points out, “The most overarching logical division that may be made in the ranks of the interpreters of this passage is based on opposing views concerning its literary unity, i.e., either the text as it now stands constitutes a literary unity or it does not.”

² The eight literary tensions which are present in the footwashing passage are as follows:

the two apparently different explanations of the footwashing act is the most significant one.

Scholars who take a redactional approach attribute the presence of the dialogue and the monologue in the footwashing passage to the redactional process the text underwent. They further propose different hypothetical reconstructions of the passage's literary genesis.³ Taking into account these literary tensions, it is crucial to ask what the author's intention in putting the two explanations together in the present form is and whether there is any correlation or inner unity when the whole passage is read as a single literary unit.

In answer to these questions, in this article I shall propose that John makes use of both scenes in the footwashing narrative—the dialogue between Jesus and Peter (vv. 6-11) and Jesus' discourse (vv. 12-20)—to deliver a twofold message: one which is Christological and the other which refers to discipleship. Both are

(1) Verses 1-4 are grammatically overloaded. (2) Verse 2b does not agree with verse 27. (3) Verses 1-3 contains a doublet. (4) Verses 4-5 can be followed by either vv. 6-11 or 12-20. (5) Verses 7 and 12 do not agree. (6) Verses 6-11 present the washing as Jesus' one time act, whereas vv. 12-20 present it as repeated act. (7) Verses 10b-11 and 18-19 constitute another unnecessary doublet. (8) Verses 18 and 26 represent another doublet. See further, Segovia, "John 13.1-20," 36.

³ Source and form criticism have led many scholars to see the two explanations in the footwashing passage as conflicting or even contradictory to each other. These scholars have argued that an earlier version of the explanation of the action has been integrated with a later version, either through a revision or an addition by the evangelist or by a later hand. Among these scholars who defend a source theory, some regard the Christological explanation (vv. 6-11) as the traditional or earlier version. For example, Georg Richter ("The Washing of Feet in the Gospel of John," *TD* 14 [1966] 200-06), Raymond E. Brown (*The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI* [AB 29A; New York: Doubleday 1970] 559-62), R. Schnackenburg (*The Gospel According to John* [vol. 3. Trans. David Smith and G. A. Kon; New York: Crossroad; 1982] 7-15). Meanwhile others propose the moral interpretation (vv. 12-20) to be the earlier version. For example, R. Bultmann (*The Gospel of John* [Trans. G. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971] 461-63), M. E. Boismard ("Le lavement des pieds," *RB* 71 [1964] 5-24), B. Lindars (*The Gospel of John* [Greenwood, S. C.: Attic, 1977] 447).

closely interrelated. The twin message concerning Christology and discipleship in the footwashing narrative is a particularly Johannine strategy to communicate his message to his readers. The author's intention to portray Jesus as the model for his disciples and all his followers explains why John places Jesus' monologue concerning discipleship after the dialogue which deals with the Christological meaning of the footwashing. For John, Jesus' act of love bears the consequence of authentic discipleship. This justifies the presence of two apparently different explanations of the footwashing event, while simultaneously proving that the footwashing passage as a whole is a unified text and truly Johannine, literarily and theologically.

The primary attention of the exegesis, therefore, will be given to the text as it now stands and to its narrative world. By being attentive to the text, one is able to listen to the story as it is communicated by the implied author to the implied reader.⁴ Literary tensions which are often regarded as breaking down (disrupting) the narrative logic will be pointed out and explained in terms of the author's intention to deliver his message, and not (simply) as the result of the redactional process. A literary-critical analysis will be the main approach employed here.⁵ Other critical approaches, such as historical analysis and the

⁴ The implied author is the image of the author as projected by the text. The counterpart of the implied author is the implied reader. The implied reader is the reader that is implied or created by the text. The implied readers share with the implied author not only the story they have been told but also some general presuppositions that the author considers known to the readers. See further, T. J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist, 1985) 96-97; B. C. Lategan, "Reference: Reception, Redescription and Reality," *Text and Reality: Aspects of Reference in Biblical Texts* (ed. B. C. Lategan and W. S. Vorster; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985) 70-71; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 205-11.

⁵ The literary critical analysis is also known as literary approach, close reading, synchronical approach, narratology, or narrative criticism. As Manfred Oeming (*Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics* [trans. Joachim Vette; Burlington: Ashgate, 2006] 61) puts it, this approach attempts "to uncover the communicative design of entire passages by studying the logic of a narrative, its narrative 'grammar' as well as its intertextuality:

redactional approach will only be employed to the extent that they help to shed light on the meaning and message of the text.

II. Exegetical Analysis of John 13:1-20 as a Literary Unity

1. Structure of John 13:1-20

The footwashing narrative begins with the temporal clause, *πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα* (now before the feast of the Passover) which signals the beginning of a new scene. The narrator then makes an introductory statement about Jesus' divine knowledge of the coming of his hour and about his complete love to his own (v. 1). Jesus and the disciples were around the table for dinner. Judas was among them, but his presence is striking because of his alliance with Satan (v. 2). Jesus' knowledge of his authority, his origin, and his destiny (v. 3) moves him to prepare for the footwashing (v. 4), and he begins to wash the disciples' feet (v. 5). When Peter's turn comes, he refuses Jesus' action, and this opens the dialogue between Jesus and Peter regarding the significance of the action (vv. 6-10a). The dialogue ends with Jesus' remarks that someone remains unclean despite being washed by Jesus. The narrator then explains that Jesus said this because he knew who would betray him (vv. 10b-11).

The narrator then continues to describe how Jesus ends his action and how he begins a discourse explaining his symbolic action by asking them a rhetorical question, "Do you understand what I have done to you?" (v. 12). Jesus' monologue then continues until v. 20. In vv. 13-17 Jesus gives a direct explanation of the footwashing. Verse 18 refers to the betrayer, and vv. 19-20 serve as the concluding remark. The phrase *ταῦτα εἰπὼν [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς* ("When Jesus had said this"), at the beginning of v. 21, implies that Jesus' discourse has ended in the previous verse. Verse 21 introduces a new theme of the

each text can be understood as a transformation of already existing texts." See also, Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible*, 92-102.

announcement of Judas's betrayal, and so it serves as the boundary of the footwashing passage.

The dialogue between Jesus and Peter and the discourse of Jesus are the two main parts of the narrative. The usage of dialogue and discourse to explain a single topic meets standard Johannine patterns.⁶ Here, both dialogue and discourse explain Jesus' symbolic act of washing the disciples' feet. Interestingly, the theme of the betrayer emerges in between each scene and creates a kind of "triple sandwich" structure, as seen here:

- A. Introductory remark: Jesus returns to the Father and loves his disciples (v. 1).
- B. Satan and Judas, the betrayer (v. 2).
- C. Jesus begins the footwashing (vv. 3-5) and has a dialogue with Peter (vv. 6-10a).
- D. The betrayer (vv. 10b-11).
- E. Jesus ends the washing and makes a discourse (vv. 12-17)
- F. The betrayer (v. 18)
- G. Concluding remark: Unity of the disciples with Jesus and with the Father (vv. 19-20)

Based on this structure and taking into account the fundamental structure of the Johannine usage of the symbolic image, I propose that the author

⁶ John constantly makes use of dialogue and discourse throughout the Fourth Gospel. In an exchange the dialogue partner of Jesus often misunderstands Jesus' words. This then leads Jesus to explain them in a monologue or longer discourse. For example, the dialogue with Nicodemus in chap. 3 (3:1-10: dialogue; 3:11-21: monologue), with the Samaritan woman in chap. 4 (4:7-20: dialogue; 4:21-24: monologue), with the crowd in chap. 6 (6:25-31; 41-46: dialogue; 6:26-40; 47-58: monologue), with Martha, the sister of Lazarus in chap. 11 (11:21-24: dialogue; 11:25-26: monologue), etc.

conveyed the dialogue and the discourse to deliver the Johannine twofold meaning (message) of the footwashing: one is Christological and the other regards discipleship. In both scenes, the character of Judas plays an important role as a negative example for the readers.

2. Exegetical Analysis of John 13:1-20

A. Introductory remark: Jesus returns to the Father and loves his disciples (v. 1)

After closing the first part of the gospel (the so-called Book of Signs) with an epilogue (12:37-50), John opens the second part of the book (the so-called Book of Glory) with an introduction which begins with a prepositional phrase *πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα* ("now before the feast of Passover"). This phrase sets the chronological and theological setting for the upcoming scene of the footwashing, as well as for the whole scene of Jesus' farewell discourse and the passion narrative.⁷ John has built his chronological setting in the previous reference to the coming Passover in 11:55; 12:1 and 12:12. He mentions it again here to keep a clear time sequence of the events around Jesus' last hours.⁸

The phrase *πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα* is followed by the two consecutive participle constructions of *εἰδώς* and *ἀγαπήσας*. Although some scholars point out that this kind of construction is unusual in the Gospel of John

⁷ Brown (*John*, 563) thinks that v. 1 is the introduction for the footwashing passage as well as the whole Book of Glory. Schnackenburg (*John*, 169) agrees that v. 1 is "both the heading of the whole of the second main part of the gospel and the introduction to the washing of the feet."

⁸ Johannine time sequence differs from that of the Synoptics. In John, the Last Supper takes place on the night before the day of preparation (therefore, it is not the Passover meal). Jesus was arrested and brought to trial the next morning (18:28), sentenced to death at about noon (19:14), died and buried on the day of preparation (19:31,42). A discussion on the date of the last super, see, Brown, *John*, 555-556; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John—An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 48-51.

and take it as a sign of an editorial process,⁹ both verbs, οἶδα and ἀγαπάω, are key verbs in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁰ Bultmann argues that πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα modifies only the first participle εἰδώς, since Jesus' love cannot be affixed to a specific date.¹¹ Brown, on the other hand, thinks that it should modify both participles.¹² This phrase seems to modify both Jesus' knowledge of his "hour" as well as his act of love for "his own." It is not inserted to fix a date for Jesus' love or knowledge. Instead, it clarifies the author's Christological point of view that Jesus died as the Passover lamb—as John suggested in 1:29—whose bones would not be broken (John 19:36; Exod 12:10; Num 9:12). Jesus' death as a Passover lamb is "the hour" (ὥρα) to return to the Father, and at the same time, is his act of love for "his own" (τὰ ἴδια).

John has described a sequence of events in Jesus' life that leads to the coming of "his hour," of which Jesus is fully aware (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27).¹³ The hour has been described as the hour of Jesus' death (7:30; 8:20) which also leads to his glorification (12:23). Here, John mentions Jesus' foreknowledge (εἰδώς) of the coming of "the hour," which is now described as the time to depart from the world to return to the Father. By describing the hour as the time of Jesus' departure, the author of the Fourth Gospel draws the readers' attention not only to the unity of Jesus and his Father (10:30, 38; 14:9-11, 20)—from where Jesus

⁹ Schnackenburg, *John*, 10; Michal Wojciechowski, "La Source de Jean 13:1-20," *NTS* 34 (1988) 135-141, here, 135.

¹⁰ The verb οἶδα is used 84 times in the Fourth Gospel. ἀγαπάω is used 37 times in the Gospel of John and appears 30 times in the Book of Glory. Whereas in the Synoptics, the verb appears only 5 times in Mark, 7 times in Matthew, and 9 times in Luke.

¹¹ Bultmann, *John*, 463.

¹² Brown, *John*, 549.

¹³ John has built two systems of time in the earlier narrative: the calendar of Jewish festivals (1:13, 23; 4:45; 5:1, etc.) and "the hour" of Jesus (2:4; 4:21, 23; 7:30; 8:20). One is the time of the Jews and the other is the time of Jesus. Here, for the first time, these two systems of time are set in relation to one another in the same verse. See, R. Alan Culpepper "The Johannine *Hypodeigma*: A Reading of John 13," *Semeia* 53 (1991) 133-52, here, 135.

has come from and to where he will return—but also to the unity of Jesus with “his very own” (τὰ ἴδια) who are left in the world.¹⁴

“His own,” in the light of the passage of the good shepherd, are those who belong to Jesus, who listen to his voice and for whom he cares (10:3, 4, 12, 27). They are still in “the world,” but the world hates them because they belong to Jesus (15:19).¹⁵ They are the branches that remain on the vine and produce much fruit (15:1-10). John uses the term τὰ ἴδια and not οἱ μαθηταί as an indication that the disciples represent all who believe in Jesus.¹⁶ Later the Johannine Jesus offers his prayer for not only the disciples but also for all believers (17:20). This indicates that John has a wider perspective in mind concerning Jesus’ τὰ ἴδια. The term includes not only the disciples who are present around Jesus but also all those who believe in him. Jesus loves them until the end of his life (εἰς τέλος) in a way that surpasses all imaginable loving: dying on the cross.¹⁷

Thus, since the very beginning of the footwashing passage, John draws the readers’ attention not only to Jesus, but also to Jesus’ very own, his followers. Jesus is portrayed as the leading character who takes the active role. The two main verbs in this opening verse, εἰδώς and ἀγαπήσας, refer to Jesus. It is Jesus who knows the coming of his hour and who loves his disciples. It is Jesus who is the ultimate hero, who delivers his farewell speech prior to his permanent departure. Yet, John also sheds the spotlight upon the disciples gathering

¹⁴ Schnackenburg (*John*, 15) notes, “It is described here as Jesus’ transition from this world to the Father, because attention is drawn to his disciples—‘his own, who were still in the world’—and his time of activity in the world (9:5) is coming to an end (see 17:11,13).”

¹⁵ The contrast between Jesus and his own with the world colors the whole farewell discourse. That κόσμος appears 40 times in the farewell discourse shows the significance of the theme.

¹⁶ Bultmann, *John*, 459; Barrett, *John*, 438.

¹⁷ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SacPag 4. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997) 373-374. Brown, (*John*, 550) suggests that εἰς τέλος has a twofold meaning, “utterly, completely” and “to the end of life.” The related word, τελέω, appears at the moment of Jesus’ death when Jesus cries out, “τετέλεσται” (19:30).

around Jesus. The presence of the disciples is crucial in inspiring Jesus' act of footwashing and illuminating the content of Jesus' farewell speech. The command to love (13:34-35), the metaphor of the vine and branches (15:1-8), the prediction about the suffering that they have to bear (15:8-16-4a), the prayer that the disciples may be one (chap. 17), etc. would not have such degree of effectiveness if it was not for Jesus' own disciples. The whole farewell material including the footwashing passage aims to prepare for the future of the community of believers which is represented by the disciples.

It is not surprising, therefore, that both verbs, οἶδα and ἀγαπάω, which are used here to denote Jesus' knowledge and Jesus' love are also applied to the knowledge and love of the disciples. In his monologue to explain the meaning behind the footwashing, Jesus encourages the disciples to do what they know (οἶδατε) about his teaching (v. 16). Similarly, Jesus charges the disciples to follow his example (v. 14) by loving (ἀγαπᾶτε) one another as he loves them (v. 34). It is possible, therefore, that the author of the Fourth Gospel allows the unusual construction of the two consecutive participles in this opening verse of the footwashing passage because it best portrays the Johannine Jesus, whom John wants his audience to see as their model. For John, this theologically concentrated sentence is the perfect opening for the footwashing passage and the Book of Glory.¹⁸

B. Satan and Judas, the betrayer (v. 2)

In v. 2, which is connected with the preceding verse with the καί parataxis, John states more exactly the time and place of the event in a genitive absolute

¹⁸ Culpepper (*The Anatomy*, 33) calls John 13:1-6 "the most majestic scene introduction," which illustrates Johannine stereoscopic perspective (the double perspective of Jesus' "whence" and "whither") because, "First, it does the required: it sets the time, the place, and the characters involved in the ensuing action. Beyond that, it sets the footwashing and the farewell discourse in the context of Jesus' awareness of his origin and his destiny."

καὶ δεῖπνου γινομένου.¹⁹ Jesus and his disciples are at a meal which is already going on. Another meal has taken place earlier in the narrative, where Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed Jesus' feet with very expensive ointment (12:1-8). There, Judas challenges Mary's action, but this challenge enables Jesus to make clear that it has been done as the preparation for his burial.

Now, another meal takes place, and John again puts Judas under the spotlight as the one who will betray Jesus. At the end of the bread of life discourse, the reader also has been informed that Jesus has known that Judas is a devil and that he will betray Jesus (6:64, 70-71). Judas will be mentioned again in the footwashing narrative in vv. 11 and 18. His identity as the betrayer is revealed in 13:21-30. In 17:12, Jesus called him ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας ("the son of destruction"). In 18:5, Judas is depicted as standing among those who come to arrest Jesus. In 21:20, the beloved disciple's desire to know the identity of Jesus' betrayer during the supper (13:23-25) is described as the way to identify the beloved disciple.

In the Johannine plot, Judas is an antagonist, who becomes the ally of Satan, the opponent of Jesus (8:44; 14:13). Judas's deceitful personality (12:6) allows Satan to employ him (13:2), and he enters into him (13:27) to betray Jesus.²⁰ John portrays Judas as a contrast to Peter, to the beloved disciple, as well as to all those who believe in Jesus. Judas is like the unproductive branch which is cut

¹⁹ Although Paul uses the word δεῖπνου in 1 Cor 11:20 to refer to the agape or Eucharist, the Last Supper in John is not the Passover meal, as it is in the Synoptic account. John's usage of the historical present γινομένου is meant to emphasize the vividness of the action and to show the reader that the action takes place in an unusual time. Jesus does not wash the disciples' feet when they arrived at supper but after the meal had begun. The action is undertaken deliberately and therefore readers have to pay close attention on it.

²⁰ John's usage of διάβολος in 13:2 and σατανᾶς in 13:27 has been highlighted to support the hypothesis that John 13:2 is the result of editorial work. But it is also possible that this is simply another example of John's usage of words with similar meaning being used interchangeably.

off from the vine, withers, and is burned (15:6). Some scholars argue that this verse is the result of editorial work for it is a doublet of vv. 11 and 18. It also appears to contradict 13:27 which states that Satan enters Judas only after he received the morsel.²¹ However, John inserts Judas, who is under the Devil's influence to betray Jesus, into the narrative because it is crucial for the understanding of the footwashing and the whole passion narrative. By depicting Judas here at the beginning of the footwashing passage and of the Book of Glory, John not only invites the readers to relate the footwashing with Jesus' death, in which Judas plays an *important* role,²² but he also prepares his audience to see a figure who will perform the negative example that contradicts the example of Jesus. Judas's *παραδίδωμι*—a term that John uses solely to describe Judas's betrayal of Jesus²³—is the most startling contrast of Jesus' self-giving love. For John, Judas's betrayal is such a heinous deed that it could only be the immediate work of the Devil.²⁴

C. The beginning of the footwashing (vv. 3-5) and the dialogue on its significance (vv. 6-10)

1. The beginning of the footwashing (vv. 3-5)

The plot of the Devil employing Judas does not distract Jesus from his hour. In v. 3, John reminds the reader of Jesus' sovereignty, that the Father had handed over all things to him. The theme of Jesus' sovereignty was introduced during Jesus' ministry in 3:35; 6:39 and 10:28-29. John reintroduces the theme here to

²¹ Segovia, "John 13.1-20," 36.

²² Brown (*John*, 563) rightly inserts, "The betrayal is mentioned in 2 precisely so that the reader will connect the footwashing and the death of Jesus. Jesus undertook this action symbolic of his death only after the forces had been set in motion that would lead to crucifixion."

²³ W. K. Grossouw. "A Note on John XIII 1-3," *NovT* 8 (1966) 124-131, here 127.

²⁴ Kenneth Hein, "Judas Iscariot: Key to the Last-Supper Narratives?" *NTS* 17 (1970-71) 227-32, here, 229.

provide the motive for Jesus' symbolic act. Jesus is going to wash his disciples' feet in his perfect knowledge of his identity as the Son of God.

Since Jesus takes the action in his capacity as the Son of God who washes the disciples' feet, one can easily see the aspect of humility in the footwashing.²⁵ However, showing humility is not Jesus' primary goal for washing the disciples' feet, nor is it the primary motive for his death on the cross. Jesus acts in this way because he has the power to lay down his life for those who are his own (10:18). Moreover, the readers just have been told in v. 1b that Jesus chooses to perform the act of footwashing because of his love for "his own." This might explain why John repeats the statement of v. 1a concerning Jesus' foreknowledge of his origin and destiny in v. 3b by employing the same participle εἰδώς. Although some scholars see the verb εἰδώς in v. 3 as a doublet of εἰδώς in v. 1—thus they regard it as editorial and uncharacteristically Johannine style of composition²⁶—the construction of this verse is intentional. In v. 1 John states that Jesus' foreknowledge (εἰδώς) of his destiny (v. 1a) intensifies Jesus' love (ἀγαπήσας) for his own (v. 1b). Only by repeating Jesus' foreknowledge (εἰδώς) of his destiny in v. 3b John reminds his audience that even the Devil's plot (v. 2) does not affect Jesus' love for his own (v. 1b), because Jesus has power over all (v. 3a), including over Satan. At the same time, by repeating the phrase of v. 1a John prepares the readers to understand Jesus' act of washing the disciples' feet (vv. 4-5) as an act of love. Jesus, who will soon return to the Father, executes his power over all by performing an act of love: washing the disciples' feet.

Thus v. 3, which seems to be the doublet of v. 1 and a grammatically

²⁵ Barrett, *John*, 439; Brown, *John*, 564.

²⁶ Schnackenburg, *John*, 17. Segovia ("John 13.1-20," 40-41) suggests that v. 1a and 4 are original, while vv. 1b, 2, 3 were added by the later redactor. The redactor repeats the last theme of the original version (concerning Jesus' foreknowledge) in the last part of his addition. Segovia thinks that this explains why there is doublet in v. 1a and v. 3a. One must ask whether the repetition is done for its own sake.

overloaded sentence, is purposeful.²⁷ In this verse, the continuation of v. 2 which depicts the Devil's plot through Judas, John draws a contrast between Jesus' self-giving act and Judas's selfish act. Jesus, the only Son of God, who was given (δίδωμι) to the world because God so loves the world (3:16), voluntarily gives himself up for the sake of his own, whereas Judas cooperates with the Devil "to hand Jesus over" (παραδίδωμι) to the authorities to be crucified.²⁸ The immense power that moves Jesus to perform a slave-like act is not one of humility but the power of God's love, which will soon come to its climax in Jesus' death on the cross.

The main action, which John begins to describe with a temporal clause καὶ δείπνου γινομένου ("and during supper") in v. 2, is now portrayed in detail in v. 4.²⁹ The clause "during supper" calls the readers' attention to the peculiar nature of Jesus' action. The standard practice in the Jewish as well as the Graeco-Roman cultural context is that the washing of feet takes place *before* the meal.³⁰

²⁷ Segovia ("John 13.1-20," 39) claims that vv. 2-4, as v.1, are grammatically overloaded because they include two genitive absolutes and a long participial clause prior to the main verbs.

²⁸ Culpepper ("The Johannine *Hypodeigma*," 134) suggests that in the first five verses of John 13 "Jesus' action for his own is also set in contrast to the Devil's action in relation to Judas."

²⁹ This rather clumsy arrangement of material in vv. 2-4 has been thought to be the result of a redactional process. Segovia, ("John 13.1-20," 40-41) suggests that v. 1a and 4 are original, while vv. 1b, 2, 3 were added by the later redactor. The redactor repeats the last theme of the original version in the last part of his addition. This explains why there is doublet in v. 1a and v. 3a.

³⁰ In the Jewish and Graeco-Roman world, the washing of feet is practiced in different settings for different purposes: in cultic settings to gain ritual purity, and in the domestic setting for personal hygiene and comfort as well as a sign of hospitality. In the domestic setting, the washing of feet often takes place in the context of a meal or banquet. Abraham prepares the water for his guests to wash their feet and then also prepares a meal for them (Gen 18). The man of Ephraim also lets the Levite and his companions wash their feet before serving them the meal (Judg 19). In the Graeco-Roman society, there are many examples of washing before a banquet, even with spiced wine instead of with water. In every instance, the washing precedes the meal or banquet. For the

However, Jesus engages in the act when the supper has already going on. Jesus rises from the supper (ἐκ τοῦ δείπνου),³¹ lays aside (τίθησιν) his clothes (τὰ ἱμάτια) and tied a towel (λέντιον)³² around his waist. In describing Jesus' action of taking off his clothes, John uses the word τίθημι, the same word used in referring to Jesus' act of laying down his life (10:11, 15, 17, 18).³³ The author's choice of the word gives a hint for the readers to relate the footwashing to Jesus' death.³⁴

John's usage of plural form τὰ ἱμάτια is also purposeful. He uses the word in the singular to indicate the outer garment in 19:2, 5 and in the plural to describe Jesus' clothes (outer garment and tunic) taken by the soldiers in 19:23, 24. If τὰ ἱμάτια in this verse points to Jesus' clothes, it presents Jesus stripped to a loincloth like a slave.³⁵ John presents his readers with a vivid portrait of Jesus' slave-like death on the cross. Now, as he appears like a servant with a towel around his waist, Jesus is ready to perform his symbolic action.

Employing the conjunction εἶτα at the beginning of v. 5, John continues to highlight the significance of Jesus' action by mentioning a chain of events in detail: Jesus pours out water into the basin and begins to wash the disciples' feet

socio-cultural context of the practice of the washing of feet, see J. C. Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

³¹ The insertion of ἐκ τοῦ δείπνου after a long interpolation also supports the idea that footwashing happened during the supper.

³² λέντιον is a Latin loan-word that has penetrated the Greek and Judaic languages. (Bultmann, *John*, 466, 4).

³³ The Synoptics use the verb ἐκδύω to mean "to take off" or "to undress" (Matt 27:28,31; Mark 15:20; Luke 10:30).

³⁴ Brown, *John*, 551.

³⁵ L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1971) 615. Thomas, (*Footwashing in John 13*, 89) describes, "Jesus removes his clothes and girds himself with a towel, attire that is reminiscent of the dress of servants depicted in Roman works of art. John also describes the taking of the basin and the drawing of water, actions that were assigned specifically to slaves according to the evidence from antiquity." He concluded that Jesus' identification with the servant's role is prominent.

and wipes them with the towel which is tied around his waist. Water (ὕδωρ) plays an important role throughout the Gospel of John. The word ὕδωρ appears at least twenty times in John in connection with Jesus' baptism (1:26,31,33; 3:23), in the story of Jesus' first sign in Cana (2:1-11), in the discussion with Nicodemus about "birth from above" (3:5), in the conversation with the Samaritan woman about the living water (4:7-15) and in two miraculous healings (5:1-9; 9:1-34). And later when Jesus died on the cross, water comes out from Jesus' side (19:34). So, when John describes that Jesus pours water into the basin (νιπτήρ)³⁶ and begins (ἄρχω)³⁷ to wash the disciples' feet, the readers are aware that something crucial is going on.

The author's usage of the verb ἐκμάσσω (to wipe out) is also significant. Elsewhere in the gospel of John, this verb appears in connection to the anointing of Jesus' feet (11:2; 12:3). Its usage in this verse helps the audience to see the footwashing in the light of the preceding anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary, the sister of Lazarus. The Johannine Jesus, who has been anointed for his burial (12:7), now interprets the meaning of his death by washing the disciples' feet.³⁸

Jesus' chain of actions (he appears like a slave, pours out water into a basin, washes the disciples' feet, and wipes them with a towel) shows that Jesus indeed acts like a servant who washes the feet of his master — a standard practice in the Graeco-Roman socio-cultural context.³⁹ However, to see Jesus' action merely as

³⁶ νιπτήρ is a hapax legomenon in the New Testament. Brown (*John*, 551) translates the word as "pitcher," a normal utensil for the meal. Recent archeologists found that many footbaths are round basins with a support in the center on which the foot could rest. See Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13*, 89. I prefer to translate νιπτήρ as basin.

³⁷ The uses of the word ἄρχω, which usually draws attention to a particular element in the story, prepares for the interruption by Peter in the following verse.

³⁸ Culpepper, "The Johannine *Hypodeigma*," 137.

³⁹ In the Graeco-Roman world, the washing of feet is a menial task of slaves. It is an unpleasant task that only slaves or servants are expected to do. The task then becomes a duty that symbolizes one's status as a slave. The act indicates the subjugation of the one who washes the feet under the one whose feet are washed. See for example the

a sign of servitude or an expression of humility is to miss the core message of the Johannine footwashing. The disciples, represented by Peter, are in danger of missing the whole point of Jesus' symbolic action. But John makes use of Peter's misunderstanding to clarify the significance of Jesus' action.

2. The Dialogue (vv. 6-10a)

The dialogue between Jesus and Peter, in which the significance of the footwashing is interpreted, is totally Johannine in character, particularly in its usage of "misunderstanding" as a literary strategy. Throughout the Gospel, John develops a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples (4:31-34; 6:7-9, 67-70; 9:2-5; 11:8-10; 14:5-10) in which the disciples show a lack of understanding of Jesus' words. Their misunderstanding leads Jesus to reveal the deeper meaning of his words.⁴⁰

In v. 6, John introduces Peter as Jesus' dialogue partner. Up to this point, the readers have a positive impression of Peter since he has been portrayed among Jesus' first disciples. Jesus then gives him a new name Κηφᾶς (1:42), and Peter affirms his faith in Jesus' words of eternal life (6:68). Peter's refusal to allow Jesus to wash his feet appears to mark the beginning of a decline in Peter's status in the Fourth Gospel. After the footwashing, Jesus predicts Peter's denial (13:36-38). When Jesus is arrested, Peter misunderstands Jesus by defending him with a sword (18:10). Peter comes to a low point in his discipleship with his denial of Jesus (18:15-18, 25-27). But, after Jesus dies, Peter slowly recovers. He goes to the empty tomb (20:1-10), jumps into the sea to go to Jesus (21:7), and confirms his

stories in Herodotus, *History in Herodotus* (vol. 3; translated by A. D. Godley. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963) 165; Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives* (vol 5; translated by Bernadotte Perrin; London: William Heinemann, 1917) 309.

⁴⁰ Probably the best example of misunderstanding is the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus (3:1-21). Jesus speaks about being reborn in Spirit. Nicodemus understands it as to reenter the womb and be born again.

love for Jesus. Finally, Jesus entrusts his flock to Peter (21:15-19). John portrays the character of Peter in this verse, and throughout the dialogue, to establish a contrast with Judas in v. 11, who never recovers from his act of betrayal. Peter stands as a symbolic figure of the one who believes in Jesus, the one who overcomes his failure and continues to follow Jesus.

The word ἔρχεται at the beginning of v. 6 implies that Peter is not the first one whose feet Jesus washed.⁴¹ As Jesus approaches Peter, he refuses to let Jesus wash his feet. John does not explicitly give the reason for this refusal, but the readers may have an idea based on the nuance of Peter's rhetorical question, κύριε, σὺ μου νίπτεις τοὺς πόδας; Peter begins with the vocative "Master" and continues with σὺ μου, which are juxtaposed to emphasize the paradoxical reversal of roles.⁴² Peter's answer implicitly indicates his understanding of the meaning of footwashing in its socio-cultural background. He knows that washing another's feet carries the meaning of subjugation because it is a slave who usually washes the feet of his master. Even if he knew of examples of someone who voluntarily performs the act as a sign of love, it never happens that someone who is in a superior position stoops down and washes the feet of his or her subordinate. Peter does not simply refuse to let anyone wash his feet. What he refuses is to have his feet washed by Jesus, his master. Thus, in the socio-cultural context of footwashing practice, Peter's refusal is legitimate; but in the Johannine context, Peter's refusal is due to his inadequate understanding of Jesus' act. John uses Peter's failure to understand the significance of his master's act as a narrative strategy to enable the dialogue to move further and to give Jesus occasion to reveal the true meaning of his symbolic act.

Jesus responds to Peter in v. 7 by again using the pronoun ἐγὼ and σὺ.

⁴¹ Brown (*John*, 550) suggests that Jesus' pronouncement immediately at the end of the dialogue can be seen as a clue that Peter was the last one.

⁴² Lindars, *John*, 450; Barrett, *John*, 440.

This usage heightens the conflict in the dialogue and leads Jesus to reveal the deeper meaning of the footwashing. Here, Jesus gives Peter a clue that the significance of his action is more than what is implicit in Peter's rhetorical question. It has a deeper meaning which Peter cannot understand now but which he will understand "after these things" (μετὰ ταῦτα). John leaves μετὰ ταῦτα undefined here. But John has told the readers in 12:16 that it points to the time "when Jesus had been glorified" (ὅτε ἐδοξάσθη Ἰησοῦς) in his death, resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Since μετὰ ταῦτα refers to the time after Jesus' death and resurrection, some scholars think that it contradicts Jesus' rhetorical question at the beginning of Jesus' monologue, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (v. 12).⁴³ They think this question implies that the disciples have understood the meaning of Jesus' symbolic action. These scholars conclude that there exists an inherent contradiction between the content of the dialogue between Jesus and Peter (vv. 6-11) and Jesus' monologue (vv. 12-20).⁴⁴

However, from the point of view of the implied readers, μετὰ ταῦτα does not necessarily contradict Jesus' statement in v. 12 because the implied readers of the Fourth Gospel share the post-resurrectional perspective of the author. The readers know some general knowledge about Jesus, especially that Jesus has died and is risen from the dead. They are told explicitly about Jesus' death and resurrection, right at the beginning of the gospel, when John mentions the fact that the disciples understand Jesus' words after Jesus has risen from the dead (2:22) and after he has been glorified (12:16). Thus, even though Peter and the other disciples at the supper table can only understand the meaning of Jesus'

⁴³ Scholars who take the redactional approach think that the contrast between v. 7 and v. 12 is obvious. See, Segovia, "John 13.1-20," 36-37.

⁴⁴ This question has also led scholars to propose that both the dialogue and the monologue come from different literary layers (sources). See, footnote 3.

symbolic act after the resurrection, the readers of John immediately understand the meaning of Jesus' symbolic act of washing the disciples' feet, based on the knowledge of what they have been told by the author. If *μετὰ ταῦτα* is read from the perspective of the implied readers, the phrase does not necessarily contradict Jesus' words in v. 12. Further discussion concerning this point will be given later in v. 12. For now, the focus will be given to the further development of the dialogue.

Peter responds to Jesus' statement with a very strong negation of οὐ μή + future indicative structure,⁴⁵ "You will never (οὐ μή.) ever (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) wash (νίψης) my feet." The addition of εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα makes the negation even stronger. In John, this structure (οὐ μή + future indicative/aorist subjunctive + εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα [4:14; 8:51; 10:28; 11:26]) is used to describe Jesus' words concerning eternal life.⁴⁶ Schnackenburg points out that this is a Johannine irony in which Peter uses the formula that Jesus has used to offer eternal life, but he uses it to refuse Jesus' offer.⁴⁷ Peter's refusal allows Jesus to reveal the deeper significance of his action.

Jesus discloses to Peter that, "If I do not wash you, you have no inheritance (μέρος) with me." The word μέρος can simply mean "part" or "share,"⁴⁸ but as Brown suggests, it is better translated as "heritage, inheritance," and here it means "the μέρος for eternal life."⁴⁹ If John intends the footwashing to be a

⁴⁵ M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Example* (English edition adapted from the fourth Latin edition by Joseph Smith. Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963) 149. Brown (*John*, 552) sees in οὐ μή a nuance of an oath.

⁴⁶ The only exception is found in 8:52 where Jesus' opponents repeat his words.

⁴⁷ Schnackenburg, *John*, 19. Another Johannine irony can be seen in the Caiaphas' prophecy (11:49-50). Also in 4:12; 7:35, 42; 8:22, 11:50.

⁴⁸ μέρος, BDAG, 633-634.

⁴⁹ Brown, *John*, 564. There are some of the New Testament texts where μέρος appears in the context of eternal life and eternal punishment (Matt 25:51; Rev 20:6; 21:8; 22:19). They support the idea of μέρος as pointing to eternal life. Thomas, (*Footwashing in John 13*, 93) observes the evidence of μέρος used in the sense of a share in eternal life in the works

symbol of something that makes it possible for the disciples to have eternal life with Jesus, it cannot be other than Jesus' salvific death on the cross.⁵⁰ Up to this point in the gospel, John has told the readers that Jesus will give eternal life to those who are placed in his hands (3:35-36; 6:40; 10:28-28). In v. 3, they are reminded of Jesus' awareness that all things have been placed in his hands by the Father. So, once the gospel narrative reaches its climactic moment on the cross, the readers are able to confirm that indeed it is the death of Jesus that brings eternal life.

This Christological-soteriological message (meaning) of Jesus' symbolic act has further consequences for the disciples because to share the μέρος with Jesus one has to let himself or herself to be washed by Jesus. John will clarify the consequences of being washed by Jesus in the discourse.

In v. 9, John skillfully combines a typical Johannine misunderstanding with Peter's impetuous character. As he hears that footwashing brings heritage with Jesus, Peter suddenly asks Jesus to wash his hands (τὰς χεῖρας) and head (τὴν κεφαλὴν) also. Some commentators see a cultic reason behind Peter's request to have his hands and head washed.⁵¹ Others look for the symbolic meaning of the washing of hands and head based on the cultural value of each body part.⁵² What is obvious is that John takes advantage of Peter's

of Ignatius of Antioch (Epistle to Polycarp and Martyrdom of Polycarp).

⁵⁰ Barrett, *John*, 440; Brown, *John*, 562; Schnackenburg, *John*, 19.

⁵¹ Thomas (*Footwashing in John 13*, 95-96) thinks that Peter suggests it because hands and head are regarded as worthy of washing or anointing in Judaism. He argues that Peter proposes that his hands be washed because they need constant washing according to Jewish tradition (Mark 7:1-23; Matt 15:1-20). He also proposes his head be washed because upon it blessing (Gen 48:14, 18; 49:26), curse (2 Sam 1:10; 3:29; Ezek 33:4), anointing (Exod 29:8; Lev 8:12), dust and ashes (Josh 7:6; Neh 9:1; Lam 2:10) are placed. Weiss ("Footwashing," 317) argues that Peter's offer of his hands and head is a clear polemic against Jewish phylacteries. However, John probably simply puts them to signify Peter's misunderstanding, for he thinks on the physical level.

⁵² G. S. Shae ("Why Feet, Hands, and Head?" *BT* 48 [1997] 21-28; here, 227) thinks that Peter suggests also his hands and head "because Peter's response follows not only the

misunderstanding to give Jesus the opportunity to reveal the deeper meaning of his symbolic action. Peter understands Jesus' washing at a physical level whereas Jesus speaks at a spiritual level. Readers notice Peter's misunderstanding since they have seen similar misunderstandings in previous scenes (3:1-15; 4:10-15; 6:32-45). It is typical Johannine fashion to let Jesus make the clarification.

Jesus' reply to Peter in v. 10a, "Whoever has bathed has no need to wash, [except his feet], for he is clean all over" is one of the passages in the Fourth Gospel which receives the most attention of the exegetes. Its interpretation becomes more complicated with the textual problem, whether or not the phrase εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας should be included in this verse.

In the case of the shorter reading, Jesus says to Peter, "Whoever has bathed (ὁ λελουμένος) has no need to wash (νίψασθαι), for he is clean all over." If this reading is to be preferred, λελουμένος would refer to the footwashing and νίψασθαι points to the partial washing of hands or head, which is not needed if one has taken a bath. The footwashing, therefore, represents a certain act which is a symbol of a complete bath. As Brown points out, "Jesus is telling Peter that he has missed the point in thinking that the number or extent of the washings will increase his heritage with Jesus. Only the footwashing is important because that symbolizes Jesus' death."⁵³ The shorter reading, therefore, is by far the better reading to emphasize the significance of the footwashing as the symbol of Jesus' salvific death on the cross which cleanses the sins of all. The problem with this reading is that there is no evidence that the verb λούω also refers to the partial washing of feet.

physical ascending order of the positions of the body parts, but also the ascending order of cultural value, expressing the increasing degree of Peter's submission to the Lord's cleansing, from the most humble to the most honored."

⁵³ Brown, *John*, 566.

This problem would be solved if the longer reading is preferred because λελουμένος then refers to a complete bath and νίψασθαι refers to the partial washing of feet. It is the common usage of these verbs in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman literature.⁵⁴ However, other problems emerge when one opts for the longer reading. One problem is that it makes the footwashing seem trivial, since it is only a partial washing, whereas there is another more complete bath. Another problem, related to the first one, is to find out what the complete bath (λελουμένος) refers to. Some scholars suggest that λελουμένος refers to Baptism, since in the New Testament the verb λούω is used as a reference to baptism (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Tit 3:5).⁵⁵ However, there is no clear indication that John thinks of Baptism in this verse.⁵⁶ Others suggest that it refers to τὸν λόγον in 15:3 where Jesus says, “You are already clean (καθαροί) by *the word* (τὸν λόγον) that I have spoken to you.”⁵⁷ However, this suggestion is also not

⁵⁴ There is no example either in the OT or in the Graeco-Roman literature where the verb λούω is used for footwashing or the verb λούω and νίπτω are used as synonyms. There is an example where the two words are used as synonyms is in *P. Oxy.* 840. However, this document alone, as Thomas (*Footwashing in John 13*, 99) argues, is unlikely to bear weight to the argument that John intends the two verbs as synonyms due to the late date of the papyrus (fourth century), the ambiguity of its meaning, and the absence of other supporting evidence.

⁵⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953) 401; Barrett, *John*, 83; J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St John* (London: Black, 1985) 307; A. M. Maynard (“The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel.” *NTS* 30 [1984] 534-535) think that λούω refers to the Baptism and νίπτω refers to Eucharist. See also, G. H. C. MacGregor, “The Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel”, *NTS* 9 (1963) 113; J. C. Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13*, 103.

⁵⁶ As Brown (*An Introduction to the New Testament* [New York: Doubleday, 1997] 377-78) suggests, in the Fourth Gospel, “the Johannine Jesus’ words and action are prophetic anticipations of the sacraments rather than direct references.” In the footwashing passage, one can see Jesus’ words in this verse and in v. 18 as an allusion to the Baptism and Eucharist. However, there is no direct reference which gives clear indication that John intends these words to point to a certain sacrament.

⁵⁷ Bultmann, *John*, 170-171; Schnackenburg, *John*, 22; Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13*, 101-102.

without problem since 13:10a and 15:3 are different in context. Although both speak about καθαρός, one speaks of καθαρός from uncleanness with water and the other uses it in the sense of pruning the branches in order to bear good fruit.

In any case, the problems related to the longer reading would be solved by simply admitting that the attempt to identify what “λελουμένος” might refer to is out of the question as far as this verse is concerned. Here, by referring to the typical practice of the footwashing—that the one who has bathed needs only to wash his feet—the Johannine Jesus helps Peter to understand the deeper significance of Jesus’ symbolic action. Jesus is saying to Peter that he is wrong in understanding the act at the physical level.⁵⁸ It is not the number of body parts which are washed that really matter. What Peter and the disciples need is to have their feet washed by Jesus because it is absolutely necessary in order to become clean and to have “μέρος” with Jesus. Once Peter has received the benefit of Jesus’ act, he will be entirely clean. Thus, the longer reading on its own merit emphasizes the indispensability of being washed by Jesus.

The verbal clues and the content of the dialogue lead readers to realize that Jesus’ act which cleanses Peter and all the disciples is Jesus’ slave-like death on the cross. Later when the readers hear that Jesus’ side was pierced and blood and water flows out (19:34), they are convinced that the water from the side of Jesus, the Lamb of God, cleanses the world of its sins.

D. The betrayer (vv. 10b-11)

John closes the dialogue in v. 10b with an assertion by Jesus that although the disciples are declared clean after the footwashing, someone is excluded. The

⁵⁸ That Jesus does not speak on the physical level is clarified in v. 10b when he adds, “You are clean, but not all of you.” All the disciples have their feet washed by Jesus, but it is not a guarantee that all of them are clean, because it is not the physical cleanliness that really matters.

voice of the omniscient narrator in v. 11 clarifies that Jesus makes this assertion because he knows (οἶδα) the one who is betraying (παραδιδόντα) him. Although some scholars believe that vv. 10b and 11 are part of a later addition by a redactor,⁵⁹ the portrait of the betrayer plays two crucial functions in the understanding of the message of the footwashing narrative.

First, John returns to the theme of Jesus' knowledge—this time the knowledge of his betrayer—to contrast the disciples' ignorance. As Peter and other disciples are not able to understand the meaning of Jesus' act, they also do not know who will betray Jesus. By reporting the "inside information" about Jesus' knowledge of his betrayer to the readers, "the narrator moves the readers from the vantage point of the disciples' ignorance to the informed vantage point of Jesus and the narrator."⁶⁰ In doing so, John prepares his readers to hear the implication of Jesus' symbolic action for the disciples in Jesus' discourse which follows it.

Second, John inserts the reference to Judas at the end of the dialogue to contrast Peter and Judas. Peter refuses Jesus' act but in the end accepts it, and he is declared clean. John wants the readers to be aware of the fact that Judas, although he was washed by Jesus as the other disciples, does not receive the impact of the act because it is not a mechanical act.⁶¹ Having μέρος in Jesus has the consequences, but Judas does not live up to it. Thus, vv. 10b and 11 close the dialogue as well as serve as a bridge to Jesus' monologue, in which the consequence of having μέρος with Jesus will be made clear.

E. The end of the washing and the discourse (vv. 12-17)

Employing the conjunction οὖν to mark the transition from the dialogue

⁵⁹ Brown, *John*, 562. Segovia, "John 13.1-20," 46-7.

⁶⁰ Culpepper, "The Johannine *Hypodeigma*," 141.

⁶¹ Barrett, *John*, 442.

to the monologue, John goes on to describe that when Jesus has washed the feet of the disciples, he puts on his clothes (ἔλαβεν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ) and reclines again. In v. 4 John has used τίθημι, the word he uses for laying down of life (10:11,15,17,18), to describe Jesus taking off his clothes. Here John employs the word λαμβάνω which he has used in 10:17, 18 to describe the good shepherd who takes up again his life after he has laid it down. Thus, once Jesus has taken again his clothes (life), he is ready to ask the disciples, “Do you understand what I have done for you?”

This question and Jesus’ statement in v. 17 seem to contradict what Jesus says in the dialogue because in v. 7 Jesus says that the disciples can only understand the act μετὰ ταῦτα. But here Jesus speaks as if the disciples have understood everything. On the one hand, this inconsistency could be explained as the result of the text’s redactional process, as some scholars have suggested.⁶² On the other hand, it proves the author’s consistency by not leaving such an important symbolic act without its message for discipleship.⁶³ For the author of the Fourth Gospel, once Jesus has taken (λαμβάνω) again his clothes—which symbolizes his taking up his life in his resurrection (10:17, 18), it is the right time to communicate to the readers what is expected from those who have μέρος with Jesus and who are cleansed by his death. At the same time, the implied audience which shares the author’s post-resurrectional point of view and which is accustomed to the Johannine pattern of delivering the twofold meaning of Christology and discipleship in his usage of symbolic images, it is the time to

⁶² Culpepper (“The Johannine *Hypodeigma*,” 141) thinks that the narrative logic breaks down in verse 12 because “the real audience for this instruction is not the disciples but the readers of the narrative, who already know of Jesus’ death and resurrection.” In other words, the inconsistency is a result of the post-resurrectional context of the redactional process of the text.

⁶³ The movement from Christology to discipleship in the Johannine symbolism including in the footwashing passage has been pointed out by Koester (*Symbolism*, 13-14).

hear about the implication of Jesus' act for his disciples. John does not offer a new interpretation of the footwashing but draws out the implications of Jesus' act for the life of the disciples.⁶⁴ Thus, the two seemingly different interpretations of the footwashing deeply correlate with each other in the sense that the second explanation is the natural outcome of the first. Jesus' act of love bears the consequence of authentic discipleship.

In v. 13, Jesus refers back to the title Peter uses in vv. 6 and 9 to confirm that “you (ὕμεῖς) call me “teacher” (ὁ διδάσκαλος) and “master” (ὁ κύριος), and you speak rightly, for that is what I am (εἰμὶ γάρ).” Jesus has been referred to as διδάσκαλος and κύριος throughout the Gospel. In John, διδάσκαλος is used for Jesus only by those who believe in him (11:28; 20:16), or by those who will come to believe in him (1:38; 3:2). The title has the nuance of honor and authority and represents the title of Rabbi (רבי). Κύριος is a word used for addressing a respected person (equal to “sir” or “master”). It is especially used by a rabbinic pupil to address his teacher.⁶⁵ Although there is a tendency that, as the book progresses, the generic sense slowly disappears and the Christological orientation becomes stronger (6:68; 11:27; 20:6, 9, 18, 28), κύριος in this verse might simply mean “master,” as a word correlative to δοῦλος. This is probably the reason why Jesus confirms these titles with an unemphatic εἰμὶ γάρ, and not ἐγώ εἰμι. In giving Jesus a chance to confirm his human identity, John shows that Jesus' act can also become the act of his disciples. The

⁶⁴ Brown, (*John*, 569) points out that the general context of the discourse indicates that it does not lose its association with the death of Jesus. Barrett, (*John*, 443) also agrees that the discourse does not exclude the interpretation of the dialogue but rather they imply each other.

⁶⁵ As Barrett (*John*, 443) points out, both titles are in articular nominative used for vocative. It perhaps represents the Semitic vocative. A rabbinic disciple addressed his teacher as רבי ומרי. See also, Lindars, *John*, 452; Brown, *John*, 553; Bultmann, *John*, 474.

Christological aspect of Jesus' death, therefore, can be transformed to become a model of discipleship.

In v. 14, Jesus gives an explicit instruction in a *minori ad maius* argument.⁶⁶ "Therefore (οὖν), if I, the master and the teacher, have washed your feet, you also (καὶ ὑμεῖς) ought to (ὀφείλετε) wash one another's (ἀλλήλων)⁶⁷ feet." Here, οὖν serves to make clear the connection between Jesus' own action and the following command, that the disciples have to wash each other feet in the light of Jesus' action.⁶⁸ The appearance of καί, and the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς help to emphasize the instruction, which is an obligation for the disciples, as is made clear in verb ὀφείλω.⁶⁹ The disciples have to wash one another's feet because they have been washed by Jesus. It, therefore, has to be a distinctive act of the disciples of Jesus (13:35).

The force of Jesus' command is again emphasized in v. 15 when John refers to the act as a ὑπόδειγμα. The word occurs in Heb 4:11; 8:5; 9:25; Jas 5:10; 2Pet 2:6 and means "pattern" or "example." One can simply see ὑπόδειγμα literally as a pattern to wash one another's feet because in v. 14 there has been an explicit command to do so. However, the footwashing in John 13 is a symbolic act, and those who take Jesus' metaphorical statement literally in John are usually those who misunderstand.⁷⁰ Moreover, in the LXX, the word ὑπόδειγμα is used particularly as an "example of how to die a good death" (2 Macc 6:28, 31; 4 Macc 17:22-23) and as "an example of repentance to all generations" (Sir 44:16). Based on the usage of the term in the LXX, Culpepper concludes, "The occurrence of

⁶⁶ This kind of argument is often used by rabbis; however, Barrett (*John*, 443) thinks that it would be ridiculous to claim John's argument as Jewish or rabbinic. This kind of argument is used wherever someone thinks and speaks logically.

⁶⁷ ἀλλήλων means each other, one another, and mutually. See, BDAG, 46.

⁶⁸ Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13*, 109.

⁶⁹ John uses the same verb in 19:7 with the nuance of obligation. Luke uses the word with the same nuance in 17:10.

⁷⁰ Culpepper, "The Johannine *Hypodeigma*," 141-42.

the term in these significant passages shows that one of the established contexts in which it was used was in accounts of exemplary deaths which served as models for others to follow.”⁷¹

Therefore, in the light of the Christological explanation in vv. 6-11, a careful reader would see *ὑπόδειγμα* not (simply) as a command to imitate the footwashing *per se* but to follow the example of Jesus’ act of love by dying on the cross which is symbolically expressed in the footwashing. John’s usage of the same pattern, *καθὼς ἐγὼ... καὶ ὑμεῖς* later in 13:34 and 15:12 where Jesus states the new commandment of love, gives another clue that *ὑπόδειγμα* is not a model for “how Jesus washes the disciples’ feet” but “how Jesus loves his own.” And in John Jesus loves the disciples not as a master towards his unworthy slave but as a friend (15:15). That is the reason why Jesus does not urge the disciples to wash the feet of their subordinates as an act of self-humiliation, but rather that they should wash the feet of *ἀλλήλων* (“one another”).

In v. 16, John reminds the readers of the further consequence of becoming disciples in the saying, “No slave (*δοῦλος*) is greater than his master (*κύριος*), nor the one who is sent (*ἀπόστολος*) greater than the one who sent (*πέμψαντος*) him,” which is similar to Matt 10:24 and Luke 6:40. The authority of the saying is emphasized by a preceding double *ἀμήν*.⁷² Dodd sees that John has copied the saying from Matthew,⁷³ while Brown suggests that John might have reported one of the various forms of Jesus’ original sayings.⁷⁴ Wherever the source of this verse, what is obvious is that John must have had his own purpose to place the saying in this context. In its vocabulary, the words *δοῦλος* – *κύριος* refer to previous verses, while the words *ἀπόστολος* – *πέμψαντος* correlate

⁷¹ Ibid., 142-43.

⁷² Lindars, *John*, 48; Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13*, 111.

⁷³ Dodd, *The Interpretation*, 393.

⁷⁴ Brown, *John*, 570.

with v. 20. By putting it here, John emphasizes that as a servant or as the one who is sent, the disciples cannot expect a better destiny than what Jesus, their master and the one who sent them, endures. In 15:20, where Jesus refers back to this word, John makes clear that the saying is placed in the context of willingness to follow Jesus' way: "If they persecute me, they will also persecute you. If they keep my word, they will keep also yours." This is the consequence of having μέρος with Jesus.

John seems to be consistent in portraying Jesus as the model for the disciples. His usage of word "knowledge" (οἶδα) in v. 17 might be intentional. As Jesus' knowledge in v. 1 and 3 becomes the motive of his act, here the disciples' knowledge of Jesus ὑπόδειγμα has to be followed by putting it into practice. "If you know (οἶδατε) these things (ταῦτα), blessed (μακάριοί) are you if you do (ποιῆτε) them." In 12:47, John has emphasized the necessity of doing as well as hearing the word of Jesus.⁷⁵ Only by doing these things (ταῦτα), which they now know (see and hear), will the disciples be declared μακάριος.⁷⁶

F. The Betrayer (v. 18)

However, Judas is not counted among those who receive a blessing as the reward of true discipleship, as he has been excluded from those who have μέρος with Jesus and who are declared clean (vv. 10b-11).⁷⁷ Although Jesus himself chose Judas, John does not allow that the decision is a mistake, since Jesus knows whom he has chosen (ἐγὼ οἶδα τίνας ἐξελεξάμην). Jesus let Judas betray him because the Scripture has to be fulfilled. In John, the fulfillment of the Scripture

⁷⁵ The theme of "hearing" and "doing" also appears in Matt 7:21, 24-27, 24:46, Luke 11:28.

⁷⁶ ταῦτα is probably a general reference to the footwashing and its lesson. Brown (*John*, 570) suggests that the word ταῦτα and ποιέω might be compared to Luke's eucharistic command: "Do this (τοῦτο ποιεῖτε) in memory of me" (Luke 22:19). However, as Brown himself points out, the sacramental interpretation is secondary in John.

⁷⁷ Verse 18 serves the same function for vv. 12-17 as vv. 10b-11 for vv. 6-10a.

texts are all in the context of “the hour,”⁷⁸ and now Judas is about to play his role. Here, Judas’s act of betrayal is to fulfill Ps 41 (40):10, “The one eating (ὁ τρώγων) my bread (ἄρτον) has raised his heel against me.”

It is the only occasion where the word ἄρτον is explicitly mentioned in the Johannine farewell material. The verb τρώγω, which the author has used in the discourse of the bread of life (6:22-59), indicates that John rewrote the text freely.⁷⁹ The use of these two words in the context of Judas betrayal is similar to the Lucan institution of the Eucharist (Luke 22:19-21) and the account of the Eucharist in I Cor 11:23. This leads some scholars to see an allusion to the sacrament of the Eucharist in this verse.⁸⁰ However, John’s primary intention for putting the quotation here is “to communicate to the readers the heartfelt anguish which Judas’s treachery brings to Jesus.”⁸¹ Judas’s act fulfills the Scripture, but it does not relieve the great pain of the betrayal. Jesus shared with Judas the bread of life which is his own body (6:51) and washed Judas’ feet as a beloved friend. But in return, the same heel has been raised against Jesus. Instead of laying down his own life for his friend (15:13), Judas betrays the friend and he loses his own life forever (12:25). For John, Judas is the antithesis of true discipleship.

G. Concluding Remark: Unity of the disciples with Jesus and with the Father (vv. 19-20)

The theme of Jesus’ divine knowledge has opened the footwashing passage. It appears again in v. 3 to provide the motive for the footwashing. In vv. 10b-11 and v. 18, John portrays Jesus speaking about the betrayer because of his divine knowledge. Here, in v. 19, John gives the purpose of Jesus’ revelation of

⁷⁸ Brown (*John*, 554) notes that even the refusal by Jewish people in 12:38 is also for the fulfillment of the Scripture.

⁷⁹ The LXX renders it using the verb ἐσθίω.

⁸⁰ Barrett, *John*, 444-45; Sanders and Mastin, *A Commentary*, 307.

⁸¹ Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13*, 113.

his betrayer in the ἵνα clause “so that when it happens you may believe that ἐγὼ εἰμι.” Jesus’ knowledge confirms his divinity and brings people to faith. This kind of faith is possible only when Jesus has been exalted (8:28). At that time the disciples will realize that even the betrayal and the plan of Satan serve for the exaltation of Johannine Jesus.⁸²

Verse 20, which contains a double ἀμήν and a logion similar to Matt 10:40 and Luke 10:16, seems to be out of place.⁸³ Although its connection with the footwashing account seems loose, the saying serves as an inclusion with v. 1. Both verses contain the theme of the unity of the Father, Jesus, and the disciples—one of the main themes of Jesus’ farewell discourse. In v. 1, Jesus plays an active role as the unifying agent. He shows his love in action by washing the disciples’ feet so that they are cleansed and are ready to have μέγος with him in the Father’s house. In v. 20, John repeats the theme of unity between *Jesus* with *the Father*, and with *the disciples*. The circle of unity is now open to all who receive the disciples. By receiving anyone whom Jesus sent, the believers act as the unifying agent because to receive the one whom Jesus sent is to receive Jesus, and to receive Jesus is to receive the Father. The Johannine Jesus has shown his disciples, the believers, and the audience of John a perfect example of receiving others through his symbolic act of love: washing the disciples’ feet.

III. Conclusion

This narrative-exegetical analysis shows that from the point of view of the

⁸² Schnackenburg, *John*, p. 26.

⁸³ Without v. 20, the transition from v. 19 to v. 21 will be smoother. And since the logion is similar to the logion in v. 16, Lindars (*John*, 455) argued that that these two sayings were linked together in their older tradition. Brown (*John*, 572) suggests that both verses were brought together to the present context; v. 16 fitted closely into the sequence about the footwashing and v. 20 was loosely tacked to the end. The Matthean parallel is found in 10:40. Brown agrees with Dodd that the same logion is involved but they are independently reported in the two gospels.

implied readers, the passage of John 13:1-20 is comprehensible as a literary unit. The literary tensions in this passage—which are often regarded as disrupting the narrative logic and are explained as the result of the redactional process—can be explained as serving the author’s intention to communicate his message to the audience. One has to admit that Jesus’ symbolic act of washing the disciples’ feet can be followed either by the dialog between Jesus and Peter (vv. 6-11) or by Jesus’ monologue (vv. 12-20). Either case would make a complete and intelligible narrative. However, John does not simply opt for one or the other. The Johannine Jesus cannot leave such an important symbolic act, which has been performed to interpret the climactic moment of his hour, without delivering the message of discipleship. For the author of the Fourth Gospel, there is no better way to reveal the significance of Jesus’ salvific death on the cross as the model of authentic discipleship than through the present text. To this end, the presence of both the dialogue and the monologue is not a mere coincidence. They are not simply an unnecessary doublet from different sources. Both the dialogue and the monologue contribute to making the footwashing passage a unified narrative and truly Johannine, literarily and theologically.

Jesus’ act of washing the disciples’ feet symbolizes Jesus slave-like death on the cross. Jesus’ salvific death on the cross cleanses the disciples and all Jesus’ followers of their sins and enables them to have the inheritance of eternal life. However, it is not a mechanical act. Having “part” in Jesus has its consequence of following the example of Jesus. John employs the figure of Judas as the negative example (antithesis) of true discipleship. The three accounts concerning Judas between the triple sandwich structure of the footwashing passage are not simply repetitions as the result of the redactional process of the text. John intentionally portrays Judas in contrast to Jesus, to Peter, to the other disciples, and to those who truly believe in Jesus.

Judas’s fatal mistake is not that he is not humble enough but that instead

of giving his life for his friend he betrays his friend. Jesus' example that John wants his audience to follow is not simply a self-humiliation. In light of the Christological meaning of the footwashing act, the Johannine Jesus charges his disciples to follow his example of self-giving love which culminates in his death on the cross. As God who loves the world to the point of giving his only Son (3:16), and as Jesus who loves his own "to the end" (13:1), so are the disciples and all believers called to love one another as Jesus loves them (13:14-15, 34).