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The historic practice of foot-washing as a sacrament/al and a consideration of foot-washing in contemporary Christian contexts

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THE HISTORIC PRACTICE OF FOOT-WASHING AS A SACRAMENT/AL AND A CONSIDERATION OF FOOT-WASHING IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN CONTEXTS

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DEDICATION

SOLI DEO GLORIA.

I would like to dedicate this work to my wonderful wife Da-young, my loving parents, and my teacher and mentor, Professor Karen B. Westerfield Tucker.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis was written with two purposes: first, to consider the practice of foot-washing as a sacrament/al; and, second, to apply what was learned in order to appropriate the practice of foot-washing for contemporary worship services. Several methodologies advanced the work. A theological approach enabled a comparison of the definitions of "sacrament," "sacramental," and "sacramentality," which led to a demonstration of foot-washing as a "sacramental" insofar as it has the capacity to reveal the divine and possibly to be a means of grace. Historical and socio-contextual approaches undergirded the examination of three Christian traditions that regarded foot-washing as a sacrament or sacramental: the Johannine community of John 13; Ambrose of Milan's community and its post-baptismal practice; and the Mennonites. With the tools of liturgical analysis, examination was made of foot-washing as it appears in liturgical texts for several current Christian denominations in the United States and Korea. The themes inherent in these newer uses of foot-washing were compared with those of the three historical Christian traditions.

The research disclosed that, in terms of contemporary usage, foot-washing is primarily located in rites for Maundy Thursday, while marginalized or absent in other worship contexts. This limitation called for the development of a "sacramental" foot-washing rite for ordinary worship services. The proposed foot-washing rite not only provides an opportunity to meditate on Jesus' death and sacrificial love in connection with the Triduum, but also accentuates themes such as Jesus' humility, God's reconciliation with humanity, forgiveness of sin, and the consolidation of the church community.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout Christian history, diverse and valuable rites have been developed and instituted. Although the number of sacraments vary by denomination, baptism and the eucharist occupy a central place for most Christian communities. Some rites that have the characteristics of sacraments are traceable to the early church: certain of these rites became core practices while others were considered peripheral. Some practices were even forgotten. These peripheral or forgotten rites were not codified or systemized, and so Christian communities failed to form a consensus about their practice or meaning. Even though they still preserve sacramental values, these rites acquired an ambiguous status without recognition or regulation. Thus, their sacramental meaning and practice were not properly embodied.

Foot-washing is a representative example of these peripheral or forgotten rites. In the Gospel of John, foot-washing is described as a practice that is tantamount to baptism or the eucharist. In the fourth century, St. Ambrose also actively advocated the feature of foot-washing as a sacrament/al, and indicated that it was a long-standing practice within the Christian community of Milan. However, foot-washing was not included in the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, and the sacramental values connected with the practice have not received much attention. Foot-washing has taken a “borderline” position, and it is difficult to assess its status as a sacramental rite. An objective understanding of rites such as foot-washing may be achieved by demarcating the border between sacraments and sacramental. In some cases, these borderline rites may have sacramental values for contemporary churches.

My research reconsiders the value of foot-washing from the perspective of a "sacramental." The concept of "sacramental" is appropriate for those rites that have the characteristics of sacraments but usually are not defined as sacraments. In the case of foot-washing, the biblical text indicates that it carries the dominical warrant characteristic of baptism and eucharist, though it has not been received in the same way as those two sacraments. My intention is that this study of foot-washing will call for the reconsideration of the sacramental meanings of foot-washing and provide significant insight for an embodiment of the meanings of the practice.

I take a selective historical approach for this research and concentrate on three foot-washing traditions: Johannine foot-washing, Ambrosian foot-washing, and Mennonite foot-washing. These three foot-washing traditions show the observance of foot-washing outside the context of Maundy Thursday, which is the dominant way of implementing foot-washing in contemporary churches. With regard to Johannine foot-washing, I focus in Chapter 2 on how Johannine community understood foot-washing as portrayed in the Gospel of John and which mysteries they attempted to reveal through foot-washing. Moreover, I will examine the prototype of foot-washing through a brief exegesis of John 13. With regard to Ambrosian foot-washing, I explore in Chapter 3 the Milanese Church's performance of foot-washing as a post-baptismal rite in the fourth century, and particularly the relationship between foot-washing and baptism. Lastly, I examine in Chapter 4 the practices of the Mennonites, one of the few Protestant denominations that has performed foot-washing as a major rite. Research on the Mennonites is appropriate to see in which context foot-washing was performed as well as

to see practical problems that can occur during its performance. Particularly, I anticipate that their recent attempt to embody the ethical dimension of foot-washing through alternative practices will provide new perspectives to foot-washing.

The last part of this thesis covers the practical dimensions of foot-washing. I investigate how the implications of the three historic foot-washing practices can enrich contemporary foot-washing. I explore the ways that contemporary mainline denominations in the United States and Korea define foot-washing and the ways they perform foot-washing based on their books of worship and relevant references. Furthermore, I offer several suggestions to supplement their foot-washing practices in order to enhance the sacramental value. In addition, I end my thesis by providing a model for foot-washing in an ordinary worship service setting.

CHAPTER 1

An Understanding of the Concept of Sacramental

How can we define foot-washing as "sacramental?" Foot-washing generally does not fall into the Protestant definition of sacrament. Most of the Protestant denominations only approve baptism and the eucharist as a sacrament because of the explicit evidence of a dominical warrant as attested in the scriptures. Roman Catholics do not include foot-washing among the seven sacraments as well. However, even so, it is difficult to say that foot-washing has never been considered as sacrament throughout the history of Christianity. It appears that foot-washing may have had a status equivalent to baptism in the Johannine community. Several Christian writers, with representatives from the patristic period to the middle ages, engaged in in-depth discussions on whether foot-washing deserved to be included as a sacrament. Furthermore, the practice of foot-washing itself has been continued throughout history although it may have not been regarded as a primary practice.

How can we explain the status of foot-washing which is not acknowledged as a sacrament, but was constituted by Christ and has been performed consistently ever since? The concept "sacramental" may help to identify the vague position of foot-washing. The term "sacramental" may be applied to rites or practices that possess the features that correspond to a sacrament but do not receive that designation.

What is the definition of "sacramental"? In order to answer this question, the definition of a sacrament should be made first. This is because the scope or definition of a sacramental depends on the definition of a sacrament. The concept of a sacramental is

loosely interwoven with that of a sacrament, and these are distinct although there is a common denominator between the two. Therefore, an understanding of sacrament is necessary.

The concept of sacrament has been built and established through the ages.[1] In the pre-Nicene period, discussion on sacraments was related to the use of the Greek term *mysterion*, which was later translated into Latin as *sacramentum*. In the early church several rites, among them baptism and the Lord's Supper, emerged and came to be considered as "mysteries" or "sacraments."[2] Sacramental theology from the fourth century to the seventh century, in which St. Augustine and his thought played an active role, developed in association with theological disputes. During this period, there was interaction between sacramental experience and doctrinal debate.[3] St. Augustine's theology of grace developed from three major theological debates with Manicheans, Donatists and Pelagians.[4] Augustine emphasized that "human actions can be meritorious, that is, worthy of eternal life, only when preceded and elevated by God's grace."[5] From these disputes, the definition of sacrament was derived that later formed the backbone of

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[1] Tad Guzie, *The Book of Sacramental Basics* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 69.

[2] Everett Ferguson, "Sacraments in the Pre-Nicene Period," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 125-26.

[3] Khaled Anatolios, "Sacraments in the Fourth Century," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, 140.

[4] Chad C. Pecknold and Lucas Laborde, "Confirmation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, 490.

[5] Ibid., 491.

medieval sacramental theology: "the visible sign of an invisible grace."[6] To summarize, the initial definition of sacrament was flexible, but during the course of the medieval period, it became fixed and legislated in certain places, eventually leading to the institution of seven sacraments in the West. However, even after the establishment of the seven sacraments, ritual actions that were considered meaningful by the church continued within the church. [7] These rites were categorized as borderline actions akin to sacraments, but were not regarded as dominically ordained.

The discussion on sacraments continued in the Reformation era. The Reformation was not only a time of theological reform, but also of a liturgical reform. Therefore, there were changes in terms of sacramental theology in various Protestant traditions. Although a few Protestant denominations had skeptical opinions about sacraments, and the number of sacraments was reduced mainly to baptism and the eucharist (some scholars consider penance to have the status of a sacrament in early Lutheranism), consensus was formed among the churches on the need for the existence of sacraments. However, by the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment criticized material objects and actions as unreasonable, and promoted a strong suspicion on the unity of the physical and spiritual. This tendency influenced American Protestantism, and in some denominations it served as a momentum for sacramental practices to be considered as a marginal part of religious life.[8] Consideration on the exchange between the physical and spiritual resumed when

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[6] Everett Ferguson, "Sacraments in the Pre-Nicene Period," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, 125.

[7] James F. White, *Sacrament as God's Self Giving* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 87-88.

[8] Ibid., 22-23.

certain scholars challenged the rationalism of the Enlightenment.[9] Among many scholars, British theologians F.D. Maurice advocated sacramental forms of worship, and A.G. Hebert argued the necessity of sacramental theology in association with social justice.[10] In the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the trend toward appreciation for sacraments grew in Protestantism, and interactions between Catholics and Protestants in response to the ecumenical and liturgical movements "led to significant mutual influence both in sacramental practice and in theological reflection on the sacraments."[11] Moreover, in this period, scholars took up research on modern "sacramental theology." Sacramental theology encompassed the fields of contemporary sacramentality, sacraments, sacramental, and liturgics.[12] Sacramentality is a broader concept that may include the more narrow subjects of sacraments and sacramentals, and can be regarded as a systematic theology that covers the relationship between the material world and the sacred.[13] Scholars such as the Roman Catholics Louis-Marie Chauvet, Kevin Irwin, Xavier John Senbert, and the Protestants James F. White, Hans Boersma, and Graham R. Hughes deal at length with the subject of sacramentality.

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[9] Ibid., 27.

[10] Ibid., 27-28.

[11] Martha L. Moore-Keish, "Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Protestant Sacramental Theology: Part I: Sacraments in General and Baptism in Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Protestant Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, 397.

[12] Lizette Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality Renewed: Contemporary Conversations in Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 5, 11.

[13] Ibid., 11-12.

The Australian Graham R. Hughes' book *Reformed Sacramentality* is especially interesting in that he deals with sacramentality in the Reformed tradition. Understanding his theory is beneficial, because his theory offers valuable resources for exploring Protestant sacramentality. A significant portion of Hughes' book is allotted to introduce and defend the sacrament to the Reformed tradition. The focal point of his defense is a re-evaluation of opinions on sacraments and the sacramental theology of John Calvin. Hughes argues that the lukewarm position of the Reformed tradition on sacraments so far stemmed from misunderstanding Calvin's sacramental theology.[14] Moreover, Hughes suggests that there is a sacramental aspect in "the Word of God" which is a core value of the Reformed tradition, and that a sacrament is the "fusion of the Word of God with a material object."[15] This necessary connection of word with sacrament is an argument that the Reformed tradition can embrace, and potentially contributes to help the Reformed tradition accept sacraments as a familiar practice. Furthermore, the author points out the dichotomy of the Reformed tradition between "works" and "faith," and notes that there is a physical aspect in faith which the Reformed tradition regards as spiritual by saying that "an expanded view of faith attends to the more corporeal dimensions of human

[14] Graham R. Hughes, *Reformed Sacramentality* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 120, 125-28, 130. Hughes first claims that the confusion between idolatry and materiality, or between idol and icon, caused iconoclasm and led to a limited perspective on sacraments. Moreover, he maintains a somewhat innovative argument that Calvin's sacramental theology bears a close parallel to that of the realist or substantialist. According to Hughes, Calvin argues that although God communicates with human beings mainly through audition, "God accommodates himself to human frames," God can use other than aural methods for communication. This opens up the possibility of other ways for delivering God's grace than preaching.

[15] Ibid., 110.

existence."[16] Keeping in mind that materiality is one of the key characteristics of sacraments and sacramentality, this transition of his thought is essential in establishing a foothold for an understanding of sacramentality in the Reformed tradition.

In addition to his reevaluation of Calvin's statement, Hughes presents a notion of sacramentality that arises from the consideration of the constitution of the human being. Hughes observes a question on the fact that the Reformed tradition has mainly focused on spiritual matters. At the same time, he emphasizes that the human being is a combination of spirit and physical form, and argues that human beings should be treated as a "psychosomatic unit."[17] His claim indicates that human faith includes a physical dimension, and that sacraments or sacramental rites are necessary for one's faith.

Hughes defines sacramentality by combining definitions from diverse scholars rather than being tied up to one specific definition. He admits the polyvalence and extensiveness that must be found in any definition of sacramentality. Among many definitions, he advocates the definitions of the Roman Catholics Kevin W. Irwin and Edward Schillebeeckx, and especially that of Irwin. According to Irwin, sacramentality is "the way the divine is manifested in the human, the signs of the sacred in our secular world."[18]

Sacramental theology in the twenty-first century discusses sacramentals as well as sacramentality. According to Lizette Larson-Miller, "sacramentals" are "official actions

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[16] Ibid., 157-58.

[17] Ibid., 37-8, 122.

[18] Kevin W. Irwin, "A Sacramental World-Sacramentality as the Primary Language for Sacraments," *Worship* 76, no. 3 (May 2002): 198.

of the church or of popular religiosity that still may be both corporate and essentially revelatory of the divine (and efficacious in their effects) but yet are not sacraments (whether dominical or ecclesial or both)."[19] She mentions that when seven sacraments were established in the twelfth and thirteenth century, multiple materials and human actions related to the church were classified as sacramental actions and things of a distinct ecclesial order.[20] Tad Guzie emphasizes that sacramentals have survived as continuing practices of the church:

> Scholastic theologians themselves detected problems here, both during and after the middle ages, because they discussed distinctions between "direct" and "indirect" institution of the sacraments by Christ. In any case, the numbering of the seven sacraments did not come out of reflection on biblical data or the life of the early church. It came from the actual liturgical practice of the medieval church and observation of what was universal in practice, with some influence from the fitting symbolism of the number seven.[21]

The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David: according to the Use of the Episcopal Church (1979) refers to sacramentals that are "other sacramental rites evolved in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit," that include confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, reconciliation of a penitent, and unction. Moreover, this Prayer Book states, "although they are means of grace, they are

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[19] Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality Renewed*, 29.

[20] Ibid., 29.

[21] Guzie, *The Book of Sacramental Basics*, 42.

not necessary for all persons in the same way that Baptism and the Eucharist are."[22] This book takes the position of accepting rites other than the ones mentioned above by emphasizing that "God does not limit himself to these rites; they are patterns of countless ways by which God uses material things to reach out to us."[23]

The Catholic Church classifies a sacramental as "other liturgical celebrations." In defining sacramental, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* declares:

> Holy Mother Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy.[24]

This book highlights that sacramentals were instituted for certain ministries of the church, and they prepare congregations to receive the grace of God and to perform sacraments.[25]

Although there are only few references that provide detailed characteristics of sacramentals, what stands out the most is the physicality, considering the properties of sacrament or sacramentality. Physicality, which can translate into "manifestations of God's grace," "carriers of God's or Christ's presence"[26] and "pointers to

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[22] Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church together with the Psalter or Psalms of David: According to the Use of the Episcopal Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 657-658.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 415, Part 2: "The Celebration of the Christian Mystery," chap. 4: "Other Liturgical Celebrations," Article 1: #1667.

[25] Ibid., 418.

[26] Hughes, *Reformed Sacramentality*, 92.

transcendence,"[27] shows diverse aspects depending on the situation and role. Sometimes, physicality can signify metaphor, sign, symbol, or ritual. Sometimes Jesus becomes a medium of revealing the presence of God. The important fact is that one can experience God or religious values when physically embodied in any form, and one can encounter them in both a physical and spiritual way.

Hughes notes that Xavier John Senbert emphasizes the complexity that physicality contains, and states that one can experience God's presence in a composite way. "Sacramentality is the orchestration of the diverse elements of a time-space embodied world for manifestation."[28] Sacramentality is embodied not only through material objects, but also through the composition of time, space, practices, and theologies. Therefore, all of these factors should be considered. Sacramentals also encompass a comprehensive way of God's manifestation through certain mediums, such as symbol, sign, metaphor, practices, presider, time, and space.

By exploring sacraments, one can infer that there are several characteristics of sacramentals other than physicality such as "a communal aspect," "quality," and "performance." James White suggests that "the participants celebrate the sacrament within shared conventions of meanings that they hold in common."[29] Foot-washing is a rite with a communal aspect as two or more community members are needed to participate. Moreover, "quality" is an indicator that distinguishes foot-washing from other

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[27] Ibid., 151.

[28] Ibid., 133.

[29] White, *Sacrament as God's Self Giving*, 31.

secular rites. Foot-washing is performed in diverse context outside the church. What separates foot-washing within the church from that of the world is that foot-washing in churches manifests God's presence and nature in a manner called mysteries. The characteristic of performance cannot be overlooked as well. Foot-washing particularly reveals the divine presence through the action itself rather than simply through material elements. According to ritual theorist Catherine Bell, "performances communicate on multiple sensory levels, usually involving highly visual imagery, dramatic sounds, and sometimes even tactile, olfactory, and gustatory stimulation."[30] Furthermore, Bell refers to "the dynamics of framing" as another feature of "performance." She insists that "such frames not only distinguish performance as such, they also create a complete and condensed, if somewhat artificial world—like sacral symbols, a type of microcosmic portrayal of the macrocosm."[31] By means of a refined act, foot-washing can release its sacramental value.

I have examined the concepts of sacrament, sacramentality, and sacramental to prepare for a consideration of foot-washing. I continue my discussion by limiting foot-washing to a discussion of the sacramental. As already seen, a sacramental is similar to a sacrament and shares several aspects with it, yet it is also broader in definition when compared to a narrower definition of sacrament. Moreover, foot-washing is a liturgical practice of the church, and has been such since the apostolic period.

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[30] Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual: perspectives and dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 160.

[31] Ibid., 161.

Furthermore, an understanding of foot-washing as a sacramental may provide theological justification for the adoption or adaption of foot-washing within contemporary Protestant traditions. This thesis aims for a modern application of foot-washing in the Presbyterian Church of Korea as well as in mainline Protestant denominations in the United States. The category of "sacramental" can place the characteristics of foot-washing in a closer relationship to the historic Protestant category of "sacrament." This considerate method of approach can be suitable for dealing with foot-washing which has an unclear status as a sacrament, and this method can allow the Reformed tradition, which particularly in the Korean context has had a skeptical perspective on sacramental theology, to develop a balanced and objective perspective on foot-washing. Therefore, this attempt can allow churches to embrace a wider understanding of sacrament and provide theological bases that are necessary for making foot-washing acceptable.

A more fundamental reason for why foot-washing should be dealt with in sacramental perspective is because indifference to foot-washing has been a widespread trend. Foot-washing is the rite that has continued from the patristic era to modern times. It has delivered various sacramental meanings, and has played a role as a medium of divine grace. Sometimes, it was regarded as one of the sacraments. However, these features have faded. Foot-washing is barely performed in ordinary worship, and it tends to be confined to a rite for occasional worship. Moreover, the meaning of foot-washing is sometimes limited to a certain interpretation such as humility instead of its full sacramental meaning. The reason why my thesis concentrates particularly on the foot-

washing traditions of the Johannine community, the Milanese Church and the Mennonites, is to reconsider the sacramental characteristics of foot-washing that have not been highlighted in many twentieth century worship texts.

CHAPTER 2

Johannine Foot-washing (John 13) and its relevance to the Johannine Community

Research on the Gospel of John is essential when investigating the origins of foot-washing and its meaning and practices. The Gospel of John, especially chapter 13, contains direct and distinctive references to foot-washing. This short scripture reference describes foot-washing, which Jesus performed himself, and it provides clues to its meanings and practices in a condensed form.

There have been many literary and exegetical analyses of John 13, and John Christopher Thomas raises an interesting theory arising from the fact that foot-washing only appears in the Gospel of John. He starts with the presupposition that the preference for foot-washing by people known to the gospel writer would have affected the inclusion of foot-washing in the Gospel. Thomas effectively claims that those people would have put an emphasis on foot-washing and translated it to actual practice, and that they were mutually inclusive with "the Johannine community."

> When the commands of 13.14-17 are read against the cultural context of western antiquity, it seems even more probable that the first readers (members of the Johannine community) would have taken vv. 14-17 as calling for literal compliance on their part. The survey of footwashing in antiquity indicates that footwashing was both widely practiced and diverse in its significance. In light of these points, it is reasonable to assume that the readers of the Fourth Gospel would be familiar with footwashing of one kind or another through actual participation.[32]

[32] John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 128.

Furthermore, he suggests that there is enough evidence to support the argument that the Johannine community would have performed foot-washing as a religious rite. Examples show both that the implications drawn from the reading of John 13:1-20 were somewhat consistent, and that the practice of foot-washing was widespread.[33]

The theory of connecting foot-washing with the Johannine community is Thomas' specific contribution even though the researches on the Johannine community have continued.[34] Martin F. Connell also refers to the connection between the Johannine community and foot-washing. Although he does not mention it precisely, he argues that "the communities of the Fourth Gospel" that are distinct from the synoptic communities appear in the Gospel of John in an implicit manner.

> Readers and hearers of the Gospel often think of it as a narrative revealing the values, theology, experiences, and practices of "the Community of the Beloved Disciple." But closer to the truth is that the Gospel captures that community not at its acme, but as it is ceding to the authority and symbolic leadership of Petrine communities…The Gospel reveals that at least some part of the community joined the communion of churches, and on the way their leader had to pass the mantle onto Peter, the (at least) symbolic leader of the synoptic communities…From the evidence seen in what biblical studies has yielded about the footwashing pericope, we can see tensions about worship and liturgy in the communities of the Fourth Gospel which parallel the ecclesiological and theological issues of the late first century.[35]

John C. Thomas traces the values and behavior pattern of the Johannine community in relation to foot-washing, starting from his hermeneutics on John 13 and attempting to do a so-called "historical reconstruction." He recognizes that there is a limit

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[33] Ibid., 147.

[34] Ibid., 126-27.

[35] Martin F. Connell, "Nisi Pedes, Except for the Feet: Footwashing in the Communities of John's Gospel," *Worship* 70, no. 6, (Nov 1996): 526-27.

in identifying how the Johannine community looked as literary analysis so far has been focused on whether John 13 vv. 1-11 and vv.12-20 is incongruent or not.[36] Thomas reconstructs the foot-washing of the Johannine community by collecting historical records that are relevant to foot-washing, especially evidence of foot-washing in the early church. Tertullian's *De Corona 8* (written c. 211) and *the Canons of Athanasius* (written c. 366-73) provide the "proofs" for Thomas of the historical implementation of foot-washing.[37] John Chrysostom's *Homilies on John 71* (written c. 391) and Ambrose's *Of the Holy Spirit* (1.15) along with selections from the works of Augustine and Caesarius of Arles, emphasize the necessity and appropriateness of foot-washing.[38] In the case of Caesarius of Arles, many references appear in his sermons in regard to washing the feet of foreigners and travelers and this seems to indicate the actual occurrence of the practice considering the admonition to wash feet was part of a standard list of suggested actions.[39] *Sermon 104.3* of Caesarius of Arles is significant in that it shows the correlation between baptism and foot-washing.[40]

An interesting suggestion is brought up by Herold Weiss based on the socio-political context of the period in which the Johannine community existed. Weiss concludes that foot-washing functioned as an act of preparation for martyrdom.

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[36] Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community,* 125.

[37] Ibid., 129-30.

[38] Ibid., 131-33.

[39] Ibid., 144-45.

[40] Ibid., 145.

> Two things are quite evident in these words. One is that after they have become "exsynagoguites" the disciples will be killed by those who continue to worship God in the synagogue. The other is that the disciples also have an "hour," just as Jesus had an hour…Chapter 16 makes clear that "the hour of the disciples" is their hour of persecution and death, but since their death is directly related to their faith in Jesus as the Christ one may properly speak of martyrdom…Faced with the decimation at the hands of persecutors who are already killing some members of the community, the members who are still alive must have developed a rationale for their death, especially when they might have to face it soon.[41]

Thomas is skeptical of Weiss' theory and points out that there are biased aspects to Weiss' argument.

> Although much could be said about many facets of Weiss's argument, the following comments identify some of the major weaknesses of the proposal… (2) Weiss seems to overemphasize the theme of persecution and martyrdom. While some evidence from the Fourth Gospel suggests that martyrdom and persecution figure in the Johannine sitz im Leben in some fashion, it is unwise to interpret the whole Fourth Gospel in the light of those factors. (3) Instead of permitting Jn 13.10 to speak on its own terms, Weiss makes the mistake of insisting that 13.10 be interpreted in the light of 15.3. (4) Weiss may be too dependent on source analysis. Rather than reading Jn 13:1-20 as a unit and then moving to historical reconstruction. Weiss quickly dismisses part of the passage (vv. 6-10) as irrelevant for determining the meaning of footwashing for the community. As Chapter 4 has demonstrated, the literary unity of the passage should not be summarily rejected—in fact, recognizing this unity is key to a proper interpretation.[42]

Considering and synthesizing all the diverse evidence mentioned above, Thomas "reconstructs" foot-washing of the Johannine community. He suggests the meanings and practices of foot-washing of the community in correlation with limited cases of foot-washing of the early church. The features of foot-washing of the Johannine community

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[41] Herold Weiss, "Foot Washing in the Johannine Community" *Novum testamentum* 21, no. 4 (October 1979): 306-07.

[42] Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, 153.

which Thomas presents are as follows. In terms of meaning, he puts an emphasis on spiritual cleansing and fellowship with Jesus.

> The literary and exegetical analysis has shown that as a sign of preparation for Jesus' departure, the footwashing signifies the disciples' spiritual cleansing for a continued relationship with Jesus. As such, the footwashing functions as an extension of the disciples' baptism in that it signifies continual cleansing from the sin acquired (after baptism) through life in a sinful world. This act then is a sign of continued fellowship with Jesus, but it also functions as a sign of their continued readiness for participation in his mission.[43]

Connected with this is the association of foot-washing with forgiveness of sin.

> Several concluding observations may be offered about the relationship between footwashing and post-conversion sin in the Johannine community. (1) 1 John exhibits a concern about post-conversion sin and is not hesitant about affirming its presence in the community.[44]

However, the meanings that John 13 implies are not limited to the forgiveness of sin, which Thomas emphasizes. John 13 should not be generalized by only looking at the fragmentary part. One must search for the probable meaning by taking the overall contents of John 13 into consideration.

The first significant prerequisite to comprehending John 13 is to consider when the foot-washing took place in Jesus' ministry. It is important to keep in mind that this rite was implemented at the gathering of Jesus and his disciples right before the crucifixion. John 13:1 directly indicates the death of Jesus by stating, "Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father" (NRSV). Verse 3

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[43] Ibid., 150.

[44] Ibid., 158.

mentions the relation between Jesus' foot-washing and his death by saying, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God" (NRSV). R. Alan Culpepper argues in his *The Gospel and Letters of John* that "the foot-washing scene functions metaphorically and proleptically in relation to Jesus' death, clarifying the meaning of his death so that the reader may have a part in Jesus and his story."[45] Raymond E. Brown asserts that the death of Jesus is implied in the foot-washing by mentioning that the phrase "took off his outer robe" (NRSV) in John 13:4 signifies the laying down of life.[46] Therefore, in order to understand the Johannine foot-washing, consideration should take place of its location in the context of Jesus' life and ministry.

Consideration of Jesus' death helps to supplement the existing perspective, which regards foot-washing as an expression of humility. In addition to the prior point of view that Jesus' foot-washing symbolizes Christ as God and Lord who descends to the world and lives as a servant, foot-washing can also be recognized as a propleptic action of Jesus' humiliation of crucifixion.[47]

The second prerequisite to comprehend John 13 is that foot-washing was a practice commanded (and commended) by Jesus to his disciples. It is not certain whether Jesus' command in John 13:15 means to follow the foot-washing practice or, as

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[45] R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 205.

[46] Raymond E. Brown, S.S. *The Gospel according to John*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1970), 551.

[47] Ibid., 564.

Culpepper suggests, to imitate the pattern of Jesus' life and death.[48] What is evident, however, is that either possibility should not be excluded. In the case of the latter, the Johannine community should participate in Jesus' ministry of death, and Culpepper presumes the possibility of the community having this kind of radical ethics.[49]

The third prerequisite to consider is the fact that foot-washing is a practice which is directly related to Jesus' disciples. Throughout John 13:2, 11, 21, and vv.26-30, "Judas son of Simon Iscariot" constantly appears. Especially, in v.11, Judas appears to become the direct cause of the foot-washing practice as can be seen from Jesus' reference "you are clean, though not all of you" in v.10. Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh claim that Judas' betrayal opened up the issue of group solidarity. They argue that foot-washing is a symbolic act that signifies forgiveness of "trespasses" or "transgressions" in that Jesus forgives his disciples who offend against him.[50] Hugo Zorrilla also emphasizes that there is a sacrificial love motif in John 13, specifically, "the action by which Jesus washed the feet of all the disciples is the expression of the Master's sacrificial love."[51] In this regard, foot-washing indicates the meaning of reconciliation.

The apostle Peter also contributes to foot-washing. His rebellion plays the role of drawing out Jesus' interpretation of foot-washing in vv. 7-10. Moreover, he gives Jesus

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[48] Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 208.

[49] Ibid., 207.

[50] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 219-23.

[51] Hugo Zorrilla, "A Service of Sacrificial Love: Footwashing (John 13:1-11)," *Direction* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 78.

the opportunity to reveal a new meaning of foot-washing. The word "heritage" in v. 8, which comes from the Greek expression "*echein meros,*" bears the meaning of "to share with; be a partner with." Therefore, according to v. 8, foot-washing has the meaning of *meros* between Jesus and his disciples which is to share eternal life with Jesus.[52]

The last prerequisite that should be considered is John 13:34-35. This scriptural reference corresponds to a "symposium" which is the last order of the meal, considering that the meal in John 13 follows the order of the ancient Hellenistic festive meals.[53] Keeping in mind that a symposium is a post-meal discussion session, it is possible to deduce the correlation between foot-washing and John 13:34-35. In this discussion, Jesus' new commandment of love is the climax of the last gathering before the crucifixion of Jesus. Raymond E. Brown points out that Jesus' commandment aims at Christians within the community.[54] Through foot-washing, Jesus ultimately desired an enhancement of the community's solidarity. By washing his disciples' feet, Jesus "overcame the inequality that existed by nature between himself and those whom he had chosen as friends." Peter refused Jesus' intention in this practice and rebelled against Jesus as he wanted to keep the relationship of master and servant.[55] Therefore, foot-washing is a rite for affirming the friendship of the Johannine community. However, Malina and Rohrbaugh expand the understanding of solidarity by emphasizing that foot-

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[52] Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 566.

[53] Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 227.

[54] Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 613.

[55] Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 194-95.

washing is applicable to those who are beyond the group.[56] They stress the interpersonal relations of foot-washing, and highlight the friendship that reaches to the world through foot-washing. D. Moody Smith also argues that John 13:35 implies the meaning of God's love for the world. He suggests that, according to the Gospel of John, God sent Jesus to manifest God's love, and Jesus' mission is extended to Jesus' followers that they might also witness God's love.[57] In a similar vein, Frank D. Macchia sees "foot-washing as a means to reach out to the poor and the oppressed outside of the church community."[58]

Foot-washing as presented in John 13 has room for various interpretations. These interpretations include forgiveness of sin, humility, friendship, and symbol of Jesus' death or his sacrificial love. This diversity of interpretation provides possibilities of choosing the meaning of foot-washing appropriate to later Christian traditions, and also the prospect of finding new meaning as contemporary communities deal with John 13.

In conclusion, the foot-washing of the Johannine community introduced basic motifs that served as prototypes to certain later Christian traditions communities. The meaning and practice of foot-washing that the Johannine community pursued is later developed, reinterpreted and reconstructed as can be seen in the case of Ambrose and his fourth-century Milanese community, and the Mennonites.

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[56] Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 228.

[57] D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 181.

[58] Frank D. Macchia, "Is Footwashing the Neglected Sacrament? A Theological Response to John Christopher Thomas," *Pneuma* 19, no.2 (Fall 1997): 247.

CHAPTER 3

Ambrosian Foot-washing as a Post-baptismal Rite

This chapter will cover the foot-washing practice of the Christian community in Milan where St. Ambrose had taken charge in the fourth century, which represents a development of the foot-washing practice introduced by the Johannine community.

Why does the foot-washing of Ambrose need to be included among various historical liturgical traditions? An understanding of the context of this period provides the platform to ponder the significance of Ambrosian foot-washing. The fourth to fifth century AD was a period in which the liturgies of the early church flourished and developed in many ways. Christianity was officially approved by the Roman empire, and in each region of the empire, diverse local liturgies simultaneously began to appear and form, showing complex and multifaceted features. Moreover, different so-called "families of rites" appeared at the cities that played leading roles as Christian centers in each region of the empire.

"Families of rites" refers to Christian ritual families that share distinctive liturgical forms. There are diverse factors that caused the formation of the families of rites, among them political, religious and theological considerations. Political factors include the change of the political system of the Roman empire.

The Roman emperor Diocletian (284-305) reorganized the political system into a more centralized form following the system of eastern empires. He appointed several *vicarius*, public officials, to govern their jurisdictions. The *vicarius* was commanded by several co-emperors called *Augusti*. The territories they ruled acquired cultural and

societal empowerment to some degree.[59] The result of this division of the Empire encouraged the diversity of the local cultures.[60] Metropolitan bishops began to rule local churches in *dioceses*, thus, the metropolitan churches such as Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and (in the fifth century) Jerusalem functioned as headquarters of their provinces. The federation of local churches in provinces encouraged the standardization of rites, but also created differences between the federations—even though each federation continued to borrow rites or ritual material from other ritual families.[61]

Religious and theological factors include theological disputes and the gathering of synods. The fourth and the fifth centuries were a period of accelerated theological disputes. Bryan D. Spinks demonstrates that there were vibrant theological disputes between Arians, semi-Arians, Homoiousians, Eunomians and Apollinarians, and these theological tensions resulted in a division of the Syriac-speaking churches into the Church of the East or East Syrian, and the Syrian Orthodox or West Syrian.[62] It is estimated that these theological disputes caused the development of doctrine and the changes in rites. Church leaders took charge of the implementation and design of rites in their provinces. Therefore, it can be said that a diversity of rites was derived from the church leaders—what we know as the "church fathers"—to some extent.

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[59] Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 115.

[60] Ibid., 116.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism-From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (Farham: Ashgate, 2006), 38.

The contexts mentioned above provide a background to the flexibility and distinctiveness of Ambrosian/Milanese rite, and particularly to Ambrosian foot-washing. Milan was near to Rome, which had exerted strong political and religious influences; however, the Milanese Church kept its distinctiveness in ritual from Rome, a distinctiveness appreciated by Aurelius Ambrosius when he became bishop of Milan by popular acclamation in 374. However, the Milanese practice of foot-washing raises certain questions. Did St. Ambrose acknowledge the foot-washing rite as a sacrament? In which properties are the meaning and practice of Ambrosian foot-washing similar or dissimilar compared to what seems to be the case for the Johannine community's foot-washing? Along with these questions, it is important to note that the Ambrosian foot-washing, as a post-baptismal practice, is a unique component compared to other fourth-century Christian initiatory rites. Why, then, was foot-washing included in the baptismal liturgy? How did it manage to develop and survive in the Milanese context alone? What is the connection between baptism and foot-washing?

In order to consider Ambrosian foot-washing, it is necessary to see the order of the post-baptismal rite which Ambrose describes. While the foot-washing practice of the Johannine community is a matter of speculation, the evidence shows that the Milanese foot-washing was an established practice with a defined function within the larger framework of the rite of Christian initiation. The order of liturgy is shown in the chart

below from Hugh Riley's *Christian Initiation*, which is in the form of a comparison with other fourth century rites.[63]

The Post-Baptismal Ceremonies			
Cyril (of Jerusalem)	Chrysostom (of Constantinople)	Theodore (of Mopsuestia)	Ambrose (of Milan)
			Anointing with "*myrum*," by bishop, on head, With formula
			Reading: Jn. 13
			Foot-washing, begun by bishop, continued by priests
	White garment	White garment	White garment
			Reading: 2 Co. 1:21-22
Anointing with "*myrum,"* On forehead, ears, nostrils, breast		Anointing with oil ("*myrum*?") By bishop, On forehead, With formula	Signing (anointing?), of cross (?), by bishop, on forehead (?), with invocation by bishop
White garment			
	Lamp (?)		

This synoptic chart shows which rites follow immediately after water baptism. Riley briefly describes Ambrose's foot-washing within the context of the other post-baptismal practices:

[63] Hugh M. Riley, *Christian Initiation* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1974), 357.

> The neophytes come out of the font and approach the bishop. The bishop spreads chrism ("*myrum*") ("*unguentum*") on their heads, and recites this formula: "God the Father almighty, Who regenerated you by water and the Holy Spirit and forgave you your sins, will Himself anoint you unto like everlasting." *Jn*. 13 is then read whereupon the bishop begins to wash the feet of the neophytes, and after he has begun this act, the priest continues it. After the foot-washing the neophytes receive the white garment.[64]

This chart displays that Ambrose's rite with its use of post-baptismal foot-washing appears to be unique among fourth-century Christian rites of initiation. Ambrose himself acknowledged that the inclusion of foot-washing is different from the baptismal rites of Rome, and that it is a unique practice. In *De sacramentis* 3.1.5, he advocates the practice of foot-washing by saying that "in all things I desire to follow the Roman Church. Yet we, too, are not without discernment; and what other places have done well to retain, we, too, do well to maintain."[65] In this reference, he alluded that he will place foot-washing rite in his baptismal rite, as a consequence of discernment.

This chart offers more clues on Ambrose's foot-washing. First, foot-washing is placed after the baptismal act. Second, the additional components that accompany foot-washing all come before the vesting in a white garment. These two points suggest that a separate rite is necessary between the baptismal act and the "white garment." According to Ambrose, baptism is regeneration[66] and resurrection,[67] union with Christ and a contract

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[64] Ibid., 353.

[65] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments and On the Mysteries*, trans. T. Thompson, ed. J. H. Srawley (London: SPCK, 1950), 73.

[66] Riley, *Christian Initiation*, 305.

[67] Ibid., 259.

with him.[68] Furthermore, the "white garment" as a post-baptismal rite symbolizes union with the risen Christ, the forgiveness of sins and purity of life as well as partnership with Christ.[69] The "white garment" may be interpreted as a practice that symbolizes the unity with the resurrected Jesus and the neophytes which is achieved through baptism. Therefore, the insertion of foot-washing between baptism and the "white garment" may be to complete the unity with God by the help of the forgiveness of sin enacted in foot-washing.

Other writings by Ambrose may also suggest this intention, among them *Of the Holy Spirit* 1.13:

> Come, then, Lord Jesus…Pour water into the basin, wash not only our feet but also the head and not only the body, but also the footsteps of the soul. I wish put off all the filth of our frailty. Wash the steps of my mind that I may not sin again. Wash the heel of my soul, that I may be able to efface the curse, that I feel not the serpent's bite on the foot of my soul, but as Thou Thyself hast bidden those who follow Thee, may tread on serpents and scorpions with uninjured foot.

John C. Thomas argues from this text that the forgiveness of sin is the main intention behind the practice of foot-washing:

> The next group of texts demonstrates that in Milan, footwashing was practiced as a sign of the forgiveness of sin, but in this case it is hereditary sin which is forgiven. Ambrose notes that the one who submits to the washing receives cleansing by Christ himself (*Of the Holy Spirit* 1:13). Not only is cleansing achieved, but in some sense the effects of the Adamic curse are reversed so that spiritually one is already encountering eschatological conditions.[70]

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[68] Ibid., 96.

[69] Craig Alan Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 175.

[70] Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, 162.

Thomas also finds a connection between baptism and foot-washing in Ambrose' *De mysteriis* 6.32: "Peter was clean, but he must wash his feet, for he had sin by succession from the first man, when the serpent overthrew him and persuaded him to sin. His feet were therefore washed, that hereditary sins might be done away, for our own sins are remitted through baptism." Thomas notes:

> The connection between baptism and footwashing is made with the assertion that baptism washes away personal sin, while footwashing washes away inherited sin… The logical conclusion is that footwashing is to be performed at least once in a convert's life. At Milan this ordinarily took place immediately after baptism (cf. *On Sacraments* 3.4). However, it is possible, on account of the Ambrose text consulted earlier (*Of the Holy Spirit* 1.15), that footwashing continued to wash away sin, at least in the one washing the feet of others. At any rate, there is no question that Ambrose and the Milanese church attached sin-forgiving significance to the footwashing.[71]

From this evidence, it is possible to see that foot-washing is stressed as a rite of cleansing of additional inherited sins that remain after baptism. Craig Alan Satterlee mentions, by quoting *De sacramentis* 3.1.7 in terms of baptism's efficacy, that "while all guilt is washed away in baptism, there remains the transmitted hereditary tendency to sin, and for this there is needed a "reinforcement of sanctification."[72] Based on this, one can deduce that Ambrose deemed foot-washing as a rite that cleans the "hereditary tendency to sin" which remains after baptism. What is significant here is that those who wash the feet of others can wash their own sins away by their actions, according to *On the Holy Spirit* 1.15:

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[71] Ibid., 163.

[72] Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching*, 173.

> I, then, wish also myself to wash the feet of my brethren, I wish to fulfill the commandment of my Lord, I will not be ashamed in myself, nor disdain what He Himself did first. Good is the mystery of humility, because while washing the pollutions of others I wash away my own.[73]

Apparently, according to Ambrose, foot-washing has the power to remit the sins of the presiders as well as those who are washed, a particularly interesting consideration given that most of the presiders were priests or bishops.

The final important reference of Ambrose is *De sacramentis* 3.4-7.[74] In this reference, new focuses appear: humility and sanctification. Ambrose repeatedly argues in his *De sacramentis* 3.4-6 that humility is the primary theme of foot-washing. In 3.4, he defines Jesus' behavior, which is depicted in John 13, as humility.

> 4. That is to say: Do you, the master, wash the feet of the servant? Do you, the spotless one, wash my feet? Do you, the creator of the heavens, wash my feet? You have the same thing elsewhere. He came to John, and John said to him: 'I sinner, and you have come to the sinner in order to make a pretense of putting away your sins: you who never committed sin. See all the righteousness, see the humility, see the grace, see the holiness.[75]

De sacramentis 3.5 tells that foot-washing contains not only the meaning of humility but also of sanctification.

> 5. But there are those who try to excuse themselves by saying that it should not be performed as a mystery, not as part of the baptismal rite, not for regeneration, but that this washing of the feet should be done as a host would do it for his guests. However,

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[73] Philip Schaff, and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: The Christian Church vol. 10 St. Ambrose*, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 95.

[74] Edward Yarnold, S.J., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: Baptismal Homilies of the Fourth Century* (Middlegreen: St. Paul Publication, 1971), 121-24.

[75] Ibid., 122.

> humility is one thing, sanctification another. You must know that this washing is a mystery and sanctification.[76]

Furthermore, 3.7 explicates what the term "sanctification" means in this context. In this reference, sanctification is closely connected to the problem of sin, and foot-washing is described as a rite which sanctifies "the devil's poison" that contaminates human feet.

> 7. The Lord answered him after he had spoken of hands and head: 'He who has washed, does not need to wash again, except his feet only.' Why? Because in baptism all guilt is washed away. The guilt has disappeared; but Adam was tripped and thrown by the devil, so that the devil's poison infected his feet; so you have your feet washed, in order to receive the special help of sanctification in the place where the serpent lay in ambush so that he cannot trip you up again. You have your feet washed to wash away the serpent's poison. It also profits our own humility, in that we are not ashamed to do as a mystery what we might refuse to do as an act of homage which is unworthy of our position.[77]

Multiple meanings coexist in fourth-century Milanese foot-washing. Considering the fact that Ambrose comments upon the scripture reading of John 13 before foot-washing in the Milanese baptismal order, it is possible to deduce that its motif was derived from Jesus' instruction about foot-washing. Among the themes or emphases, the meaning of the forgiveness of sin is particularly specified, and this understanding was embodied in the liturgical practice. Since the time of Ambrose, the meaning of foot-washing was focused mainly on the inner spiritual part of a human person. For Ambrose, the cleansing of inherent sin, which cannot be washed out fully by baptism, was the primary concern, whether or not this was the principal theological understanding implicit

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[76] Ibid., 123.

[77] Ibid., 123-24.

in the Milanese rite that Ambrose inherited. The interpretation of foot-washing was largely limited to the problem of sin, in that it was related to the forgiveness of sin, and so performing this rite inside the church was important. The communal dimension which the original foot-washing had highlighted—as seen in the discourse of Jesus "you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14 NRSV)—was less emphasized, and the presider of this rite became one who required the permissions of priests and bishops.

Although Ambrose recognized that foot-washing should follow baptism as a post-baptismal rite, and regarded it as a sacramental act that embodies Jesus' forgiveness of sin, foot-washing rite was forbidden regardless of baptism at the Synod of Elvira in the fourth century,[78] and the practice of foot-washing declined. Although Ambrose insisted that its effect is to secure protection against the liability to sin inherited from Adam, his interpretation of it did not receive support from the wider church.[79]

[78] "Full text of "The synod of Elvira and Christian life in the fourth century: a historical essay," accessed December 23, 2017, https://archive.org/stream/synodofelvirachr00dale/synodofelvirachr00dale_djvu.txt.

[79] Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 27-8.

CHAPTER 4

Mennonite Foot-washing: Altered Meaning and Practical Concerns

Chapter 4 focuses upon the foot-washing practices of the Mennonites. The Mennonite tradition has accepted and utilized foot-washing, yet they have also undergone hardships because of the practice. Problems that have existed from the Reformation era, and several problems raised recently, are causing Mennonite congregations to deliberate whether or not to keep or discard foot-washing, and some have reconsidered whether the present observance is adequate even though they have decided to keep it. Certain scholars have proposed alternatives to the practice, and there have been arguments about the implementation of these alternatives. By delving into these inner problems, one can receive insights on the adaptation and implement of foot-washing. In other words, it is possible to get insight on what to consider when introducing foot-washing in contemporary contexts, and to gain clues on how to cope with potential problems that can occur. Furthermore, Mennonites' foot-washing can provide wisdom on how a sacramental practice might be embodied and persist in contemporary churches.

An understanding of the history of this denomination and the ability to discern distinctions based on their history is required, because there are several subdivisions by region and faith perspective within the Mennonite community. These subdivisions have different perspectives and practices regarding foot-washing.

Mennonites and other Anabaptist groups have been washing feet as a religious rite since the Radical Reformation began.[80] But, foot-washing existed in religious communities in the West prior to the Mennonites' appropriation of the practice. By the ninth century, post-baptismal foot-washing was virtually extinct, but medieval monasteries still practiced foot-washing. Benedict's Rule (529) made provision for communal washing representative of humility as well as hospitable foot-washing for visitors, and later Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) extolled the practice in a sermon to monastics.[81] The Albigenses and Waldenses, two medieval sects that arose in southern France in the eleventh and twelfth century, preserved the practice, which then influenced the early Anabaptists. Itinerant preachers among the Waldenses washed each other's feet upon arrival at congregations as a gesture of humility and hospitality.[82]

From the beginning period of the Mennonites, foot-washing was adopted; however, it was not done in every region: the practice was less common in Southern Germany and Switzerland than was the case in the Netherlands.[83] As Mennonites began to establish their formal statements of "confession of faith," some included mention of foot-washing.

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[80] Bob Brenneman, "Embodied Forgiveness: Yoder and the (Body) Politics of Footwashing," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 83, no.1 (January 2009): 26.

[81] Keith Graber-Miller, "Mennonite Footwashing: Identity Reflections and Altered Meanings," *Worship* 66, no.2 (March 1992): 156-57.

[82] Ibid., 157.

[83] Brenneman, "Embodied Forgiveness: Yoder and the (Body) Politics of Footwashing," 10.

Among these confessions, the Dordrecht Confession of 1632, which stressed foot-washing's connections to sanctification and to humility, greatly influenced North American Mennonitism.[84]

Confessions of faith and the practices of foot-washing found among Mennonite groups in Europe were transferred to America through several channels. In a 1954 study, Clarence Hiebert named three primary factors contributing to the adoption of foot-washing among Mennonites in North America: exchange with the Amish; the migration of conservative Flemish Mennonites to America; and the widespread use of the Dordrecht Confession, which advocates the practice unequivocally.[85] The influence of the Dordrecht Confession and their interaction with other Anabaptist groups caused the Mennonites to become some of the most fervent advocates of foot-washing in North America. Since most of the Anabaptist immigrants to North America come from more conservative European groups escaping religious persecution, the practice of foot-washing was more common among North American immigrants than the generally more secularized groups who remained in Europe.[86] The practice of foot-washing was established during the nineteenth century as a key element of religious rite in the (Old) Mennonite Church at around the first half of the twentieth century.[87]

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[84] Graber-Miller, "Mennonite Footwashing: Identity Reflections and Altered Meanings," 165.

[85] Brenneman, "Embodied Forgiveness: Yoder and the (Body) Politics of Footwashing," 10.

[86] Ibid., 10.

[87] Ibid.

Foot-washing thus was implemented as a necessary and far-reaching rite in the Unites States rather than Europe. In order to identify whether the Mennonite communities and churches in the United States have performed foot-washing practices, it is appropriate to analyze an official document from the Mennonites that describes the shape of their faith and its characteristics. "Mennonite Church USA," which is gaining recognition as a united body of several Mennonite communities, indicates its position on foot-washing in "Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective" in Article 13.

> Just before his death, Jesus stooped to wash the disciples' feet and told them, "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." In this act, Jesus showed humility and servanthood, even laying down his life for those he loved. In washing the disciples' feet, Jesus acted out a parable of his life unto death for them, and of the way his disciples are called to live in the world. Believers who wash each other's feet show that they share in the body of Christ. They thus acknowledge their frequent need of cleansing, renew their willingness to let go of pride and worldly power, and offer their lives in humble service and sacrificial love.[88]

Dietrich Philips, a Dutch Anabaptist leader, gave significant influence on the inclusion of foot-washing in several "Confession of Faith" documents. After foot-washing was referred to from "The Seven Ordinances of the True Church" in his *Enchiridion* (c. 1560), twelve confessions of faith documents which contained three European Anabaptist-Mennonite confessions of faith that had not included foot-washing added the practice to their documents. Foot-washing in these documents was described as an "identity conferring ordinance."[89] From this period, foot-washing appeared as an

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[88] "Article 13. Foot Washing," Mennonite Church USA, accessed October 19, 2017, http://mennoniteusa.org/confession-of-faith/foot-washing/.

[89] Graber-Miller, "Mennonite Footwashing: Identity Reflections and Altered Meanings," 153-54.

ordinance rather than a sacrament, and this tradition continued until the aforementioned "Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective." The Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition locates ritual legitimacy in the apostolic church and the scripture rather than from the medieval era.[90] The "Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective" is based upon a commentary upon John 13, and it also refers to other scriptural texts such as 1 Timothy 5:9-10 and Luke 7:36-50. The commentary considers foot-washing as a proleptic action of Jesus' death by saying "He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross." The commentary also emphasizes foot-washing as a symbol of love for each other by stating that "'Washing the feet of the saints' (1 Tim. 5:10) is one way of representing Christ to each other in acts of hospitality, service, and love."[91] Meanwhile, the Mennonites highlight the close relationship between foot-washing and Lord's Supper according to the tradition of the apostolic church. For example, the Amish and (Old) Mennonite traditions combines communion and foot-washing.[92] It is presumed that these combinations stemmed from the observance found in John 13 and the apostolic church.

Recently, several scholars among the Mennonites, based on their research and statistical analysis, are identifying that there is a call for change on the observance of foot-washing emerging from inside of the individual communities. This request for change is embedded in the growing problems which foot-washing practice has brought

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[90] Ibid., 155.

[91] "Article 13. Foot Washing," Mennonite Church USA, accessed October 19, 2017, http://mennoniteusa.org/confession-of-faith/foot-washing/.

[92] Brenneman, "Embodied Forgiveness: Yoder and the (Body) Politics of Footwashing," 11.

about. Scholars are paying attention to the fact that the practice of foot-washing is declining in individual churches despite the language specified in their confession of faith. Bob Brenneman verifies this based on a survey of Mennonite congregations in which thirteen questions focused upon communion and foot-washing practices were sent to 163 congregations in the (Old) Mennonite Church tradition during 2007 and 2008. Responses came back from 117 congregational representatives. His findings: whereas eighty percent of the congregations in the sample hold a foot-washing service at least once a year, Brenneman found that only a minority of the Mennonites surveyed—roughly thirty-nine percent—actually wash the feet of another member in a given year.[93] This evidence proves the actual decline of the practice of foot-washing although the practice continues its existence in a perfunctory manner. Similarly, Keith Graber-Miller evaluates the current situation by saying that "only a smattering of congregations in the General Conference Mennonite Church, the second-largest Mennonite body, practice foot-washing" and "many Mennonite Church congregations have discontinued ritual foot-washing in the last half-century." [94]

Graber-Miller and Brenneman both suggest causes of the decline. Graber-Miller considers "acculturation" as a main cause of the decline:

> Many contemporary Mennonite congregations, uncomfortable with the cultural and liturgical peculiarity of foot-washing, have been dropping the practice from their celebration of the Lord's supper. Mergers of European and North American Mennonite churches have affected the cessation of ritual footwashing, but acculturation is likely the primary factor. "As groups which have been marked by

[93] Ibid., 14-5.

[94] Graber-Miller, "Mennonite Footwashing: Identity Reflections and Altered Meanings," 159.

> ethnic-exclusivity, language barriers, poverty, or isolation from others become more prosperous and more integrated into the dominant culture, they often begin to feel embarrassed about clinging to customs which others find peculiar," said one contemporary writer, reflecting the influence of the Troeltschian school.[95]

Brenneman, on the other hand, found the reason of the decline to be a reluctance to participate in foot-washing among congregations and the willingness of pastors to acquiesce to their preferences.

> More recently, anecdotal evidence of a decline in footwashing among Anabaptist groups has coincided with skepticism toward the practice as some Mennonite academics and pastors have sought to replace this longstanding ritual with more "culturally relevant" and practical forms of humble service…The main reason for this decline in practice appears to be that pastors try to accommodate a reluctance to participate among members. Worried that younger members or new members feel uncomfortable with the rite, many pastors have moved the footwashing service from its more traditional positioning within the Lord's Supper celebration on Sunday morning to an evening service or another less conspicuous moment in the liturgy A few pastors even provide a benediction following the communion celebration so that "younger members" can easily exit before the footwashing takes place.[96]

Concern about the appropriateness of the practice of foot-washing is not new to Mennonites. Graber-Miller asserts that the Mennonites have encountered exclusion from other neighboring denominations since the sixteenth century for practicing the foot-washing.

> Anabaptists, unlike Catholics and most Protestants, never articulated a sacramental theology explicating outer-inner relationships in rituals, "and thus could never completely be at peace with their rites and institutions" …Because of persecution in the first century of Anabaptism, the splinter groups worshiped secretly in homes, caves, and cellars, and behind hedgerows. Frequent location moves and early deaths of church leaders hindered the development of a liturgy—a tradition about which

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[95] Ibid., 159.

[96] Brenneman, "Embodied Forgiveness: Yoder and the (Body) Politics of Footwashing," 7, 15.

> sixteenth-century Anabaptists already felt ambivalent because of their "againstness" toward some of the practices of their Catholic and reforming peers.[97]

Such a remark implies multiple factors that may deter both the preservation or the implementation of foot-washing. External factors include a sense of exclusion from other denominations who might question Mennonite liturgical theology. Among internal factors may be their ambivalence on the definition of worship. They show their equivocation on a deep understanding of sacraments by avoiding terms such as "sacrament" or "eucharist," but at the same time, they admit to using the term "symbols" in discussions about worship, and call "the Lord's Supper" a "remembrance."[98] Although the Mennonites embrace the concept of worship as an ordinance for the church's edification, they are skeptical about Scholastic definitions of sacrament which they consider to be departures from the apostolic tradition.

Mennonite scholars in recent years have proposed alternative meanings and approaches to foot-washing, and significant among them is theologian and ethicist John Howard Yoder. "Binding and loosing," which Yoder emphasizes, should be dealt with carefully as it not only has similar aspects to foot-washing, but also offers significant insight on the social-ethical dimension of foot-washing. There are few references that directly present negative views on foot-washing in his publications. Instead, he attempts to highlight the negative aspects of sacraments and instead advocate binding and loosing

[97] Graber-Miller, "Mennonite Footwashing: Identity Reflections and Altered Meanings," 149-50.

[98] Ibid., 150.

practice so that the attention of the Mennonites can naturally turn towards binding and loosing.

Skeptical views on sacraments can be found in Yoder's writings. Consideration of these views enable one to examine which aspects of foot-washing Yoder feels uncomfortable about, and provides clues as to his concerns about sacraments. The first thing that is noticeable is that Yoder does not deny sacraments themselves. Rather, he is suspicious of the negative aspects of sacraments. He criticizes that a social-ethical aspect of sacraments is vague, and that this feature has not developed due to "the special aura."[99] He says that the stratifications and classifications of sacramental realism can block the way to egalitarianism.[100] The sacramental definitions he finds most problematic are those used by Roman Catholics, particularly the inheritance of medieval penitential practice and that the sacramentally authorized priest constrains the forgiving function of the sacrament.

Yoder propagates binding and loosing. According to him, binding and loosing is "one of the three main functions of the church."[101] He also says it is "the first practice of the early Christians," and a practice directly mandated by Jesus. [102] The reason why Yoder emphasizes binding and loosing is because this practice speaks for the merits which foot-washing does not have. Moreover, Yoder stresses that binding and loosing is

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[99] John Howard Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood* (Waterloo: Herald Press, 1998), 364.

[100] Ibid., 367.

[101] John Howard Yoder, *Real Christian Fellowship* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2014), 95.

[102] Yoder, *Body Politics* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1989), 1.

a "social-ethical ritual."[103] Yoder emphasizes the ethical and political implications of worship. Worship, for Yoder, is itself ethical and involves politics.[104] He asserts that Jesus' foot-washing fundamentally bears social-ethical implications while at the same time he offers a reinterpretation of John 13. Moreover, based on his reinterpretation, he points out that the current Mennonite practice of foot-washing does not have this kind of social-ethical dimension: "while Jesus' act of washing the feet of his disciples may have had mostly symbolic meaning, its appropriation by his disciples and the church ought to have both symbolic meaning and immediate social-ethical impact.[105]

Yoder thinks binding and loosing plays the role of connecting the world and the church. He mentions that this is a way to "bridge that chasm between 'church' and 'politics' or between 'worship' and ordinary life." [106] He also states that the early church had concern for "both the internal activities of the gathered Christian congregation and the ways the church interfaces with the world." [107] Thus, he emphasizes this practice as a part of his hope to recover the church's social mission in imitation of that which the early church pursued. This has important implications for foot-washing, both conceptually and in practice.

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[103] Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 366.

[104] Brenneman, "Embodied Forgiveness: Yoder and the (Body) Politics of Footwashing," 19.

[105] Ibid., 23.

[106] Yoder, *Body Politics*, vii.

[107] Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 361.

Binding and loosing even enhances the existing value of foot-washing. According to Yoder, among several values of binding and loosing, one is that it contributes to the solidarity of the community. Binding and loosing resolves the offense and conflict between the community members, and increase mutual trust.[108] By saying that this, as a result, is a "sacramental works of the community," he shows that what he really is pursuing is a positive meaning of sacramental rite.[109]

Bob Brenneman, although aware of the positive aspects of foot-washing, leans towards the effectiveness of Yoder's "binding and loosing" practice. This can be visualized in Brenneman's comparison chart.[110]

	Binding and Loosing	Foot-washing
Key Text	As the Father has sent me, so I send you…If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. (Jn 20:19b, 23)	So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. (Jn. 13:14-15)

[108] Yoder, *Body Politics*, 1-6.

[109] Ibid., 8.

[110] Brenneman, "Embodied Forgiveness: Yoder and the (Body) Politics of Footwashing," 20.

Result	"harmonization of community (Mt. 18); restoration of offenders	Spiritual cleansing (Jn. 13:8-10); reconciliation; practice of humility and mutuality (Jn 13:16)

There are scholars who oppose Yoder's position. Lisa P. Stephenson, while emphasizing the necessity of foot-washing, argues that "binding and loosing" is different from foot-washing and thus cannot substitute for foot-washing. Stephenson interprets Yoder according to the perspective of "political theology" of the mid-1960s. She adopts the terms "dominant tradition" and "emergent tradition" for two trajectories of political theology, the former referring to "politically indirect ecclesiology" and the latter to "politically direct ecclesiology."[111]

Stephenson classifies Yoder as a "postliberal theologian," and claims that postliberal theologians constitute the emergent tradition.[112] In addition, she asserts that Yoder's book *Body Politics* represents a significant contribution to envisioning how the church's worship constitutes a political reality.[113] However, she recognizes the absence of foot-washing in *Body Politics* and considers Yoder's disregard for foot-washing as a political practice not to be warranted biblically or theologically.[114] It is interesting that

[111] Lisa P. Stephenson, "Getting Our Feet Wet: The Politics of Footwashing," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 23, no.2 (2014): 157.

[112] Ibid., 158.

[113] Ibid., 159.

[114] Ibid., 160.

Stephenson also draws evidence from John 13 to criticize Yoder. Yoder and Stephenson both claim their suggestion to be based on John 13, but differences of interpretation on the scripture led them to have opposite opinions. Stephenson argues based on her literary analysis of John 13 that foot-washing is an additional act of cleansing, and cleansing could be considered as the primary meaning of foot-washing. She also asserts that there is the servant motif in foot-washing.[115] These suggestions which are based on scriptural analysis function as the evidence that foot-washing should continue to exist.

Stephenson stresses the necessity of foot-washing by asserting the significant discrepancy between Yoder's "binding and losing" and existing practices of foot-washing. She does acknowledge that there are some similarities between them. [116] However, she thinks that dissimilarities between them overshadow similarities:

> However, whereas binding and loosing emphasizes reconciling dialogue, footwashing emphasizes reconciling touch. With binding and loosing speech has been given a prime of place with respect to the senses, but in footwashing the physical contact that is required between persons possesses its own integral significance. Footwashing necessitates embodied forgiveness. It requires a very intimate act of touching that makes the persistence of grudges and individual or social enmity difficult. Bodies are exposed in ways that enable honesty and equality. Footwashing provides a regular setting in which members of the community are forced to interact in a sentient and personal way with one another. In footwashing, conflict resolution does not materialize through communication alone, but embracement.[117]

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[115] Ibid., 163.

[116] Ibid., 167. "When comparing the two rites there are a number of similarities: both practices are set forth by Christ; both practices include a connection between the action itself and the forgiveness, cleansing, and reconciliation that it mediates; and both practices involve physical dimensions, since footwashing is similar to the face-to-face encounter that one must engage in for binding and loosing" (166-67).

[117] Ibid., 167.

Stephenson continuously highlights the significance of foot-washing in direct manner. She claims that foot-washing needs to be performed repeatedly based on its relationship with baptism, for whereas

> water baptism is a one-time event, foot-washing is a repeated event that allows for the continual re-formation of the faith community. Water baptism is the formation of a new body (i.e. the body of Christ) and footwashing is the repeated reminder that we belong to this body rather than some other one. As such, and in conjunction with foot-washing's role in cleansing and reconciliation, foot-washing admits to the fact that being a part of this body is not without problems-there are growing pains. But the rite itself provides an opportunity to address any hindrances to the realization of that goal. Conflict resolution is a part of the ritual, which is necessary for the community to grow together.[118]

Finally, she emphasizes that the communal aspect of foot-washing cannot be supplemented to Yoder's practice. Footwashing serves as a reminder that believers have been baptized into the body of Christ, and out of that relationship "should be willing to shed their possessions out of love for their brothers and sisters (1Jn 3.16)."[119]

The opinions on binding and loosing are persuasive to some degree. This is because, according to *Body Politics*, this practice mostly proceeds with a dialogue or admonition as a conversation with a reconciling intent.[120] Because of the absence of a material aspect, binding and loosing might be difficult to categorize as a sacramental even though such a practice may have the capacity to be revelatory of the divine. Binding and loosing is an inward mental action, but it also has a spiritual nature.[121] In addition,

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[118] Ibid., 169.

[119] Ibid., 170.

[120] Yoder, *Body Politics*, 6.

[121] Ibid., 3.

this practice is implemented as an obedience to Jesus' command and concentrates on the unity of the community.

The Mennonite tradition, although may not be classified as a tradition that eagerly observed sacraments, has faithfully implemented foot-washing as an observance by drawing upon the practices of the apostolic church and the scripture. However, the practice of foot-washing has been decreasing in individual churches, and they have been facing several practical problems in contemporary contexts. In this situation, Yoder conceived an alternative practice called binding and loosing, which shares some thematic similarities with foot-washing such as reconciliation, mutuality, and group consolidation.

CHAPTER 5

The Implications which the Three Examples give to Contemporary Foot-washing

The previous three chapters focused on the meaning and practice of foot-washing through examining specific practices in three different historical periods. In each period, examination included consideration of foot-washing from the perspective of a "sacramental" rite as defined in Chapter 1.

I. An Evaluation of Modern Foot-washing Practice in Sacramental Aspects

What are the implications that these three foot-washing traditions give to modern foot-washing practice? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to investigate the meaning and practice of contemporary foot-washings. When looking at the books of worship of selected mainline denominations in the United States, foot-washing is used principally as a rite that is part of Maundy Thursday worship service. Nevertheless, it is important to see how these rites define and embody the meaning of foot-washing.

The *United Methodist Book of Worship* (2016) covers foot-washing in sections "III. The Christian Year," and "A Service of Worship for Holy Thursday Evening." This section uses "foot-washing" as an "alternative title" for Holy Thursday and it is defined as "a symbolic response to the Word, dramatizing the servanthood of Jesus," an "imitation of Jesus' actions," or "a response to Jesus' new commandment to love one another."[122] More specifically, the "Confession and Pardon" part in the order of worship

[122] United Methodist Church (U.S.), *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 286.

represents foot-washing as an example of humility by saying, "Christ shows us his love by becoming a humble servant," and it also implies the message of John 13:34 by mentioning, "where we have failed to love one another as he loves us."[123]

The Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) also understands foot-washing as one of the practices for Maundy Thursday. *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship* (PCUSA) describes Maundy Thursday as a "great absolution" of the penitential season of Lent and as a period when reconciliation with God and with neighbors happens.[124] The *Companion* defines foot-washing as an "act of professing faith," and states that foot-washing symbolizes servanthood, and that it is an act that well represents the intention of the "new commandment."[125] The fact that it connects foot-washing with the "Creed or Affirmation of Faith" is distinctive, and it is possible to see that the meaning of servanthood is highlighted.

In the *Book of Common Worship* (PCUSA, 1993), loving each other is emphasized as the meaning of foot-washing through the reading of John 13:34 in the "Call to Worship." In the prayer that follows the "Call to Worship," a motif of "servant" and "new commandment" appears.[126] The theme of John 13:34 is repeated in the "Confession of Sin" and in the "The Peace."[127] Here also a motif of cleansing of sin

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[123] Ibid., 287.

[124] Peter C. Bower, *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2003), 129.

[125] Ibid., 130.

[126] Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 271.

[127] Ibid., 271-72.

appears.[128] However, it is noticeable that these themes are not being embodied through the act of foot-washing. Foot-washing seems to be perceived as part of a sequence among various practices of Maundy Thursday. However, there is a possibility of delivering the meaning of foot-washing through the sermon.

The *Book of Worship United Church of Christ* is distinctive in that a separate order for foot-washing service is provided although the book also considers foot-washing as part of Lenten practices. In terms of meaning, this book highlights the theme of servanthood contained in the service of foot-washing.[129] Moreover, it states that foot-washing is "the example of Jesus whereby Christians may mutually observe the place of humility and service in the Christian life."[130] This book also indicates that foot-washing can be performed as a separate full worship service.[131] An "Introduction" is placed before the order of service in order to explain both the meaning and the practice of the rite. It is interesting that this order explains the intrinsic meaning of foot-washing while differentiating it from "baptism" and "Holy Communion." Moreover, this order introduces foot-washing as "Christ's command" as well as a symbol of humility.[132] There is a place in the order for "Telling The Story," which functions as a scripture reading,

[128] Ibid., 271.

[129] United Church of Christ, *Book of Worship United Church of Christ* (New York: United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership, 1986), 191.

[130] Ibid., 197.

[131] Ibid., 198.

[132] Ibid., 204.

during which the scene of the foot-washing in John 13 is read by the narrators or by several voices in a responsive reading.

The Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer* (1979) similarly places foot-washing in the context of Maundy Thursday. The meaning or definition of foot-washing itself is not directly mentioned, although the order provides the way to deliver the meaning of foot-washing by placing foot-washing after the scripture reading or homily. Considering the "anthems" that are included in the foot-washing rite, the motif of loving each other and peace are emphasized.[133]

The orders of service in these books of worship show similarities as well as distinctive characteristics. The order of the Maundy Thursday service in the *United Methodist Book of Worship* takes this shape: Entrance (Gathering-Greeting-Hymn-Confession and Pardon)->Proclamation and Response (Prayer for Illumination-Scripture Lesson-Psalm-Scripture Lesson-Hymn-Gospel Lesson-Sermon- Response to the Word-[Foot-washing]-Concerns and Prayers-The Peace-Offering)->Thanksgiving and Communion(Taking the Bread and Cup-The Great Thanksgiving-The Lord's Prayer-Breaking the Bread-Giving the Bread and Cup)->Sending Forth(Hymn-[Stripping of the Church]-[Tenebrae]-Dismissal with Blessing-Going Forth). The text provides the following guidelines in regards to foot-washing.

> It may be suggested that participants come without socks or hose and that persons are welcome to observe rather than participate. Representatives of the people or those volunteering to participate may come forward to the place(s) where chairs, a basin and pitcher of water, and towels have been placed. Mutual footwashing among pastor(s) and laypersons should be clearly visible, yet not overly dramatic. Love and care for

[133] Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 222.

> one another may be expressed in the gestures. During the footwashing the congregation or choir may sing, or the footwashing may be done in silence.[134]

The Presbyterian Church USA's order for Maundy Thursday worship follows this sequence: Gathering (Gathering of the People-Call to Worship-Confession and Pardon-The Peace)->The Word (Scripture Readings-Creed or Affirmation of Faith-Footwashing)->The Eucharist (Words of Institution-Serving)->Stripping of the Church. With regard to foot-washing, the supplemental *Companion to the Book of Common Worship* states that "depending on the size of the congregation and the amount of space available, either all who wish to may participate, or representative members of the congregation may be selected."[135] It emphasizes the wearing of removable footwear and socks for the preparation of foot-washing, and states the procedure of foot-washing as below:

1. People go to the location of a pitcher (ewer), basin, and towels.
2. A pitcher, basin, and towels are passed from one person to another.
3. People whose feet will be washed remove their footwear, while those who will wash the feet of others kneel before them, place the basin under the feet, pour the water over the feet, letting it cascade into the basin, "wash" the feet with the hands, dry the feet with the towel, and assist with replacing the footwear.[136]

The *Book of Worship United Church of Christ* states the order of foot-washing as follows: Call to Worship->Hymn->Confession of Sin->Assurance of Pardon->Telling the Story->Sermon->Hymn->Introduction->Foot-washing->Prayer of Thanksgiving. This order is flexible. The portion of the order for foot-washing before the introduction may be

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[134] *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 286.

[135] Bower, *Companion to the Book of Common Worship*, 130.

[136] Ibid., 130.

omitted in case of a service of the Word or a service of the Word and Sacrament.[137] This book gives detailed instructions for foot-washing:

> The People may be seated for the footwashing. Those who wish to participate may remove their footwear and place it under their chairs. If the footwashing is to be done by representatives only, those chosen to have their feet washed may move to the front of the congregation, be seated in chairs provided, remove their footwear, and place it under their chairs. To begin the footwashing, a deacon or another appointed person knees before the person in the next seat, places that person's feet in the basin one at a time, lifts and dries each foot, and rises. The person whose feet have been washed also may rise, exchange the peace with the one who did the washing, and likewise turn to the person sitting next, kneel, and repeat the footwashing. People who have their feet washed and have washed the feet of feet of the one who began the footwashing are to be washed before the cycle is completed. Adjustments will need to be made for those whose abilities do not include some of these physical movements. If this is to be done by representatives only, the one presiding or another appointed officer of the church may wash the feet of each of the representatives and may also greet each in an exchange of peace.[138]

The Episcopal Church's Prayer Book does not state special guidelines on foot-washing. *The Book of Occasional Services* (2003) does not say much, but provides an example, and mentions that there can be a brief address on the meaning and practice of foot-washing prior to the actual washing. [139]

To summarize the foot-washing rite of several denominations, in terms of meaning: foot-washing is practiced within the context of the Maundy Thursday worship service, and even though there are certain meanings given in foot-washing, it is unlikely for its meaning to be fully delivered to the congregation considering the service order. Moreover, the service itself is not focused on foot-washing, and foot-washing is only

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[137] *Book of Worship United Church of Christ,* 198.

[138] Ibid., 204-05.

[139] Episcopal Church, *The Book of Occasional Services* (New York: Church Publishing, 2004), 93.

considered as part of a sequence for the Maundy Thursday worship service. Considering that "Maundy" signifies Jesus' new commandment in John 13, it is true that the core meaning of foot-washing is being delivered through Maundy Thursday. However, the sacramental meaning which should be embodied through foot-washing seems to be revealed through other actions such as the eucharist or the "peace."

In terms of practice, the majority of the churches supply instructions regarding the practical aspects. Selecting the foot-washing representatives according the congregation's size and the ways to save time such as removing socks for efficiency are their concern. Moreover, sensitivities are expressed for the care for members who are reluctant to do foot-washing.

The situation of the Korean churches is not much different from the American churches. Korean churches take a rather lukewarm position on the practice of foot-washing during worship, as can been seen by two representative denominations, Presbyterian and Methodist. *The Book of Common Worship* (2008) published by the Presbyterian Church of Korea does not include foot-washing in the Lenten season, and a Maundy Thursday service is not included. Foot-washing is not mentioned in other parts of this book as well. *The Korean Methodist New Book of Worship* (2001) shows a similar tendency. In the table of contents of this book, ordinary worship and the liturgy for the sacrament is divided, but neither part mentions foot-washing nor Maundy Thursday. Only a brief explanation of the liturgical calendar is presented. This demonstrates that foot-washing stands on the periphery of ordinary corporate worship in Korean churches.

In Korea, foot-washing is more often practiced at retreats or in pastoral nurturing programs as a form of special worship or ceremony. At retreats, foot-washing is usually practiced as a way to encourage conversion through the example of the servanthood of Jesus before his crucifixion. During some retreats, teachers wash the feet of the students to show a good example of servanthood. In some nurturing programs, foot-washing was practiced for children more than for adults. On occasion, the practice provides parents the opportunity to confess their faults to their children and to reconcile with them. After the reading of a letter written by the parents, foot-washing follows, and it ends with the parents' asking for forgiveness of their mistakes to their child. Through this foot-washing, reconciliation and pardon within the family is achieved. These practices were all performed outside of the ordinary worship context, and were implemented as a meaning of forgiveness or servanthood. However, in most cases, it is the minister or the teacher who washes the feet.

Although it was close to an occasional worship service for Maundy Thursday, an ordinary worship service was designed with the theme of foot-washing. A worship order for Maundy Thursday appeared in the Worship and Preaching handbook published in 2003 by the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary. It is meaningful in that it presents an alternative worship pattern to Korean Presbyterian churches that are not familiar with this kind of worship. The order of this worship is: Gathering (Call to Worship-Prayer of the Day-Hymn-Confession and Pardon-Hymn)-> The Word (Prayer for Illumination-First Reading-Psalm-Second Reading-Gospel Reading-Sermon-Hymn)->Foot-washing (Creed or Affirmation of Faith-> Foot-washing)-> The Eucharist (Peace-

Offering-Offering Prayer-Great Thanksgiving-Words of Institution-Eucharist-Prayer After Communion)-> Stripping of the Church->Benediction. Although this order seems to have derived from the Maundy Thursday worship order of the PCUSA, it was altered to fit the context of the Presbyterian Church of Korea.[140]

II. Suggestions for Modern Application based on the Implications of Foot-washing

What are the implications that the three historic foot-washing traditions give to contemporary foot-washing practices in the United States and Korea? First, foot-washing and Maundy Thursday practices should be distinguished from one another in order to express foot-washing as a sacramental even though these two have been associated with each other since the medieval era. Although Maundy Thursday worship services include foot-washing, the culmination of Maundy Thursday worship service lies in the eucharist as a remembrance of the Last Supper. There is a possibility of the main theme of foot-washing being diffused or overlooked by dealing with the various traditional subjects of Maundy Thursday. According to the United Methodist rite as an example, these include confession and pardon, the reading of scripture and preaching, foot-washing, remembrance of the Last Supper (Lord's Supper), stripping of the church, and Tenebrae in one service.[141] Moreover, in this flow of worship, foot-washing, which is placed in the middle, may lose its significance as a strong sacramental act. Therefore, the sacramental

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[140] Jang-bok Chung 정장복, *Yaebae wa seolgyo handbook*『예배와 설교 핸드북』[The Worship and Preaching handbook] (Seoul: Hongsung sa 홍성사, 2003), 88.

[141] *United Methodist Book of Worship,* 286.

meaning of foot-washing can be properly delivered when foot-washing takes place on a separate occasion or when emphasis is put on foot-washing although it is performed as a part of a Maundy Thursday worship service.

Second, foot-washing should be distinguished from the eucharist, and even though they may be performed together, the themes emphasized for the eucharist should be adjusted to the same themes of foot-washing as a sacramental act. Moreover, the characteristics of the eucharist overlap with that of foot-washing in that both have a communal aspect, are considered aspects of a new covenant with Jesus, and signify union with Jesus Christ. Therefore, when arranging eucharist and foot-washing in a single worship event, one must be careful to make sure that foot-washing is not overshadowed by the eucharist, but forms a complementary relation.

Third, the value of equality should be reflected in foot-washing practice. The exegesis of John 13 emphasizes that Jesus aimed to establish a fraternal relationship with his disciples through foot-washing rather than a master-servant relationship. Furthermore, it was identified that Mennonites understand foot-washing to strengthen the bonds of the community. Therefore, this sense of parity should be manifested through foot-washing. Taking a step forward from the medieval tradition of superiors of a monastery or bishops washing the congregation as an example of humility, it would be better if one of the laity volunteers to wash the feet of a small group or if all members wash each other's feet mutually.

Fourth, connecting foot-washing with baptism can vitalize foot-washing. As seen in the Ambrosian practice, foot-washing has formed a close relationship with baptism.

One should not overlook the fact that the meaning of water and reconciliation with God through baptism can also be revealed through foot-washing. The pardon of Jesus that recovers the solid bond with his disciples and forgives Judas Iscariot in John 13 should be manifested through foot-washing.

Fifth, the practice of foot-washing would encourage more attention to the ethical dimension or the duty of a Christian toward the world. John 13:34 contains the mission of Christians which is to love the neighbor through action in imitation of Jesus' sacrificial love. Moreover, through Mennonite foot-washing and Yoder's considerations, we have learned that the value which is manifested in foot-washing should be fulfilled towards the world. Foot-washing cannot achieve its sacramental function when it stops at the implementation of the foot-washing practice itself. It can only be achieved when the value of love and dedication which foot-washing embodies is practiced through the loving of neighbors.

Lastly, sacramental acts reveal Jesus' work and presence to the congregation not only through what can be seen, but through action. Jesus poured water on the disciples' feet and cleansed their feet with his hand. Through this contact and the feeling of the water, the participants can experience the sacred. Direct encounter between the performer and the receiver and the symbolism of the action of washing the feet is an essential prerequisite to make foot-washing a sacramental act. Rather than simply observing the performance, the experience of giving and receiving is necessary.

I here propose an example of how foot-washing can be applied in contemporary practice. Earlier in this chapter, I introduced a model for a Maundy Thursday worship

service created by Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary in Korea. By revising this model, I test how my implications may be applied and how they can complement existing contemporary foot-washing practices.

An Example of a Foot-washing Worship Service **(The Order of Foot-washing)**
GATHERING
Call to Worship
So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13:14) NRSV I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. (John 13: 34) <Read the two verses from John 13 at the beginning of worship. Although John 13:34 is the main verse of John 13 and is usually read on Maundy Thursday, John 13:14 appears in the order to introduce the motif of foot-washing and differentiate this alternative worship service from the traditional Maundy Thursday worship service.>
Prayer of the Day
<Remind those gathered that the purpose of this event is to worship God through the sacramental of foot-washing, which reveals God and God's purposes for us.> Example: Loving God, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood and implemented foot-washing: Mercifully grant that we may receive them thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a new commandment, to love one another as he manifested his sacrificial love through washing his disciples' feet and forgiving their betrayals; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.[142]

[142] Excerpted from "Prayer of the Day" in the bulletin for the Maundy Thursday worship service held at Trinity Church in the City of Boston, Massachusetts, on April 13, 2017; adapted for use here.

Hymn

<Choose hymns that are related to sacrificial love and the forgiveness of Jesus, and the practice of love towards neighbors. It is even better if a hymn that directly mentions foot-washing is chosen, e.g. "Jesus took a towel," "Here in our upper room," "How pleasant is it,"[143] "You laid aside your rightful reputation," "As in that upper room you left your seat."[144] >

Confession and Pardon

<The prayer of Confession and the assurance of Pardon should reflect the context of John 13. Particularly, the prayer should be in the spirit of requesting forgiveness from Christ, who pardons Judas Iscariot and his disciples.>

Example:
(in unison)

Confession

Merciful God,
we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.
Though you bound yourself to us in an unbreakable covenant, we have not kept our promises to you.
We have not reconciled with our neighbors in our church community,
and we have not listened to the voices of our neighbors in our society who are in pain and sorrow.
Lead us to your table to take the bread of life.
Wash our feet so that we may be purified in your love.
Bind us to you and to each other, that we may walk in your way of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray, Amen.

Pardon

Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;
That proves God's love toward us. (Romans 5:8)
Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down
The dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. (Ephesians 2:14)

[143] Church of the Brethren, General Conference Mennonite Church, and Mennonite Church in North America, *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1992), #449-451.

[144] *Wonder, Love, and Praise: A Supplement to The Hymnal 1982* (New York: Church Publishing, 1997), ##729, 734.

Glory to God. Amen.
THE WORD
Sermon
<The sermon should be short; however, it should include contents on the meanings of foot-washing with regard to John 13. This order is for meditating on the sacramental meaning before the implementation of foot-washing.>
THE EUCHARIST
Eucharist
<The order of the eucharist in this worship service is same as that of the normative Sunday eucharist. However, the themes elevated in the eucharistic prayer should focus more on the Passover dinner of John 13 than on the synoptic style of the Last Supper. This dinner was held before and after foot-washing. Therefore, references about foot-washing should be made and the transition to foot-washing should be kept in mind. In the case of a worship service for foot-washing, it is better to place foot-washing before the eucharist rather than after the eucharist. This sequence is effective as Jesus performed foot-washing in the midst of the dinner in John 13. Foot-washing took place before the meal in the tradition of ancient Palestine of that time. However, Jesus implemented this practice in the middle of the meal. It must be a meaningful act. Moreover, the meaning of foot-washing can be overshadowed or absorbed by the meaning of the eucharist if the meal is placed at the end of the service. Therefore, eucharist should be observed before foot-washing in this worship setting.>
FOOT-WASHING
Introduction
<This component is a time of briefly introducing the practice of foot-washing.>
Foot-washing

<Perform foot-washing as a threefold rite. This is to embody three implications of foot-washing as a sacramental. This rite is composed according to the narrative in John 13. The congregation does not receive foot-washing three times, but only one time although divided into three groups. Although they receive foot-washing once, they can experience the three sacramental meanings of foot-washing through becoming attentive participants of worship.>

1	Jesus' foot-washing and the denial of Peter	John 13:1, 3-8	Foot-washing as a proleptic action of Jesus' humiliation of crucifixion	The theme of forgiveness
2	The betrayal of Judas Iscariot and Jesus' forgiveness	John 13:2, 9-15	Foot-washing as reconciliation within church community	The theme of reconciliation and fraternity
3	New commandment and love	John 13:34-35	Foot-washing as love reaching out to the neighbors outside of the church community	The theme of love

<Foot-washing can be implemented in diverse ways. Particularly, the sacramental meaning of foot-washing can be experienced by seeing and performing/receiving foot-washing practice. The presider can choose one of four methods for foot-washing.>

1	[Presider – One of layperson] -> [mutual foot-washing in small group]	Presider shows an example and the laity groups follow the practice.
2	[Presider – One of layperson] -> [layperson in small group-ministers]	Presider shows an example and then ministers perform the practice to laity in small groups.
3	[Presider – One of layperson] -> [all layperson-ministers]	Presider shows foot-washing and then the whole congregation receives foot-washing from the ministers.
4	[Presider-One or some of layperson]	Presider reveals the meaning of foot-washing by showing the practice.

Peace
<Normally, “Peace” is located before foot-washing. However, here it appears as the final action of in the eucharist–foot-washing sequence as the meaning overlaps with foot-washing, and it shows reconciliation, love and forgiveness. The one who performed foot-washing may share peace with the receiver.>
SENDING FORTH
Hymn
<This order is identical to the instruction mentioned above.>
Benediction

CONCLUSION

This thesis explored foot-washing as a sacramental, and examined sacramental theologies contained in historic Christian traditions. Chapter 1 identified the concepts of sacrament, sacramental, and sacramentality. As a result, I drew a conclusion that the concept "sacramental" accords with practices of foot-washing. Foot-washing shares characteristics with sacraments; for example, both use physical mediums that make manifest God's grace or God's divine presence. In addition, the action of foot-washing itself plays a primary role as a medium of revealing God's mysteries. Because of its particularity and its expression in the form of ritual, foot-washing fits quite well the category of sacramental.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4, explored the foot-washing of the Johannine community, the Milanese congregation in the fourth century, and the Mennonites. Johannine foot-washing represented the prototype of foot-washing. Exegesis of John 13 was necessary for the understanding of foot-washing in that context and community. The meaning of foot-washing in this community encompassed Jesus' death, humility, forgiveness, reconciliation, and the new commandment of loving each other.

Foot-washing in Ambrose's community at Milan functioned as a post-baptismal rite. This foot-washing, along with the baptismal act, played the role of purifying a person's sin. Foot-washing was regarded as a sacramental in this tradition, and as a practice that generates efficacy. Ambrosian foot-washing emphasized the personal dimension rather than the communal aspect of foot-washing as it dealt with the matters of a person's sin.

Mennonite foot-washing appeared as an ordinance rather than a sacrament, and it revealed the themes of sacrificial love, humility, and servanthood which Jesus' foot-washing contained. As Mennonites experienced a decline in the frequency of the practice of foot-washing, they began to consider several alternatives for this tendency. As part of their endeavors, John Howard Yoder conceived an alternative practice, that of "binding and loosing." "Binding and loosing" is a social-ethical practice, and it can embody one of the meanings of foot-washing, which is the solidarity of the community.

Chapter 5 observed that mainline denominations in the United States and Korea generally restrict foot-washing to Maundy Thursday, and that, in certain cases, it is performed at retreats or as part of faith-nurturing programs. To broaden the use of foot-washing, I proposed six suggestions for contemporary foot-washing practices. First, I suggested the possibility of performing foot-washing in a broader context other than Maundy Thursday. Second, I emphasized that foot-washing should be distinguished from the eucharist even though they may perform together. Foot-washing should not be clouded by the eucharist, and the connections between the eucharist and foot-washing should be improved. Third, I highlight that the value of equality should be revealed in foot-washing. Foot-washing should symbolize a fraternal relationship. Fourth, I encouraged foot-washing to be connected with baptism in terms of sacramental meaning as seen in the case of Ambrosian foot-washing. Fifth, I noted that foot-washing should focus more on societal and ethical meanings. Although foot-washing looks like a one-on-one rite, it pursues communal value and delivers a communal message. Lastly, I asserted that foot-washing should be experienced in a multisensory manner. The last part of

Chapter 5 offered my own foot-washing worship service model that reflects these suggestions.

Foot-washing is an uncomfortable rite in that it is demanding to perform, ambiguous to define and it stand in the borderline. At the same time, foot-washing is a powerful tradition that can embody the sacred if implemented deliberately with consideration of its sacramental value. The congregation may consider foot-washing as an embarrassment as the apostle Peter was embarrassed when Jesus washed his feet. However, foot-washing, as a dramatic sacramental practice, can transform congregational lives as the disciples got profound insight from that embarrassment. It is our assignment to preserve this sacramental and adapt it to the modern context.

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