

DENIS S. KULANDAISAMY



WEDDING AT CANA

*Narrative Criticism and Theological
Interpretation of Jn 2.1-12*

Many of the Gospel narratives are in the form of “stories”. In presenting the life and mission of Jesus, the Gospel writers make use of literary techniques and the narrative strategy of “story-telling”. This is true for the Cana episode (Jn 2.1-12) as well, and the narrative method is therefore applied to interpret the text. The author examines its narrative components, such as characters, action, plot, time and space, irony, misunderstanding, symbolism, and author-reader communicative relationship. The book is divided into three main parts: Literary Analysis, Narrative Criticism, and Theological Interpretation. In the course of the book, the reader comes to understand the author’s appreciation of the craftsmanship and beauty of this biblical narrative and the profound theological message that lies behind the text.

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λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ
πρὸς αὐτόν,
Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν.
καὶ λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς,
Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι;
οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου.
λέγει ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ
τοῖς διακόνοις, Ὅτι ἂν
λέγη ὑμῖν ποιήσατε.
(Jn 2.3-5)

*Dedicated to my beloved parents
Kulandaisamy and Gnanammal
and my brothers Arul and Victor*

BOOK COVER

From a set of twenty mosaics representing the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary, made by the Centro Aletti of Rome, under the supervision of renowned Artist Marko Ivan Rupnik SJ on four circular walls round the open parvis of the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary of 'Ta' Pinu, Gozo, Malta. Thanks to Fr. Gerard Buhagiar, Rector of the Shrine for the permission to publish it. Book cover was designed by Daniel Afonso.

Denis Sahayaraj KULANDAISAMY

WEDDING AT CANA

**Narrative Criticism and
Theological Interpretation of Jn 21-12**

NSO

**Sivakasi
2019**

First Edition 2019

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INTRODUCTION

John, the fourth evangelist, has a unique and captivating way of presenting to his readers the 'Logos-Jesus' and his earthly mission, with his own particular literary style and highly elevated theological language. John is the only one among the New Testament writers to present the first sign of Jesus at the wedding at Cana. This important Cana episode has no parallels in any other gospel. At a first glance the Cana narrative might seem to be a very simple story to any reader but when one enters into the text to look for its meaning, one realizes that it is not so. The vast biblical literature and enormous amount of exegetical research done on this pericope by numerous biblical scholars explain that it is not so simple as it seems to be. It calls for scholarly attention to make intelligible the allusions, overtones, nuances of double entendres and polyvalent vocabularies, literary style, narrative techniques, literary structure, significance of the symbolisms and certain expressions that are highly loaded with theological meaning.

What is the scope of this exegetical study? This exegetical work is simply a humble attempt to deepen our understanding of how this episode has been narrated by the Evangelist and how this pericope functions in the

whole of the fourth gospel (in other words, on its 'role' in the gospel) and to interpret this text from the various possible exegetical and theological perspectives.

In carrying out this exegetical work, we will adapt the integral method proposed by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in the document *'The interpretation of the Bible in the Church'*. We will dedicate more space and time for the narrative analysis of the text. Both a synchronic and diachronic reading will be applied to the text in the process of exegesis.

This book is divided into three parts. In the first part, we will make some textual preliminary observations and will do a literary analysis of the text. The second part will be dedicated for the narrative criticism of the Cana story. In doing our narratological analysis, we will try to bring out the constituent narrative elements that are involved in the process of communication between the narrator and the reader. This will help us better understand the text and it will facilitate our interpretation. The third part deals directly with the theological interpretation of the gospel passage. In this part, we will also study the function and meaning of the pericope in the gospel of John. We will see the function of this text in its various contexts and we will interpret the text from different perspectives in order to bring out the theological meaning of this story.

Part One

LITERARY ANALYSIS OF JOHN 2.1-12

The first part dealing with the literary analysis of Jn 2.1-12, applies both a synchronic and diachronic reading to the text. The main objectives of this part are the following:

1. To make certain preparatory steps for our exegesis starting with some important preliminary observations on the Greek Text. These preparatory steps include Textual Criticism, Working Translation and Delimitation of the Text.
2. To make a linguistic and semantic analysis to obtain a clear understanding of the grammatical and syntactic particulars and on the meaning of the key words and of the whole text itself within its given linguistic structure and in its lexical-semantic fields.
3. A diachronic reading of the text, by means of a 'Religious Background Criticism' in order to understand the origin of the text.

Apart from these three objectives, this part also includes a pragmatic analysis. Towards the end of this part, we will also deal with various problems and opinions on the 'Gattung' (literary genre) of this text.

1. GREEK TEXT OF JOHN 2.1-12¹

¹ Καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ

² ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν γάμον.

³ καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν, Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν.

⁴ [καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἔκει ἡ ὥρα μου.

⁵ λέγει ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς διακόνοις, Ὅ τι ἂν λέγη ὑμῖν ποιήσατε.

⁶ ἦσαν δὲ ἐκεῖ λίθιναι ὑδρίαὶ ἕξ κατὰ τὸν καθαρισμόν τῶν Ἰουδαίων κείμεναι, χωροῦσαι ἀνὰ μετρητὰς δύο ἢ τρεῖς.

⁷ λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, γεμίσατε τὰς ὑδρίας ὕδατος. καὶ ἐγένισαν αὐτὰς ἕως ἄνω.

⁸ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἀντλήσατε νῦν καὶ φέρετε τῷ ἀρχιτρικλίνῳ· οἱ δὲ ἤνεγκαν.

⁹ ὡς δὲ ἐγεύσατο ὁ ἀρχιτρίκλινος τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον γεγεννημένον καὶ οὐκ ἤδει πόθεν ἐστίν, οἱ δὲ διάκονοι ἤδεισαν οἱ ἡντληκότες τὸ ὕδωρ, φωνεῖ τὸν νυμφίου ὁ ἀρχιτρίκλινος.

¹⁰ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Πᾶς ἄνθρωπος πρῶτον τὸν καλὸν οἶνον τίθησιν καὶ ὅταν μεθυσθῶσιν τὸν ἐλάσσω· σὺ τετήρηκας τὸν καλὸν οἶνον ἕως ἄρτι.

¹¹ Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐφάνερωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ,

¹ NESTLE-ALAND et al. (ed.), *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th Edition, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012) 296-297.

καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.

¹² Μετὰ τοῦτο κατέβη εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ αὐτὸς καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκεῖ ἔμειναν οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας.

2. TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Several witnesses of this pericope (Jn 2.1-12) present many variants. Almost every verse (except vv. 8 and 9) has one or more textual variants.

v. 1:

Some manuscripts [hereafter abbreviated as ‘mss’] (B Θ^{f3} pc) read τρίτη ἡμέρα instead of ἡμέρα τῆ τρίτη. But this variant does not make any significant difference in the meaning of the text.

P⁷⁵ has an insertion of the definite article τῆ before Κανά. No other mss. support this variant. This would have been a later insertion.

v. 2:

A few mss. (P^{66*} 579 pc it vg^{mss} bo^{ms}) omit καί.

v. 3:

The text of this verse is quite corrupt. Many witnesses (κ* it^{a, b, ff2, j, r} syr^{hmg} eth) read “Οἶνον οὐκ εἶχον ὅτι συνετελέσθη ὁ οἶνος τοῦ γάμου...” (“They had no wine, because the wine for the wedding was used up...”). In the opinion of G.R. Beasley-Murray, this seems to be a secondary explanation. C.K. Barrett comments, “The reading of κ* is probably a gloss,

though an early one [...] The use of ὑστερεῖν in the sense given it in this verse (the wine had run out) is late, and a copyist may have wished to make it quite clear that no wine at all was left”.² Two Old Latin witnesses (it^{e,l}) read as follows: et factum est per multam turbam vocitorum vinum consummari (It happened that, because of the great crowd of those who had been invited, the wine was finished). Several commentators (Lagrange, Braun, Bultmann, Boismard) prefer this longer reading of the original hand of Sinaiticus and of the OL. But both Bodmer papyri support the shorter reading.³

B.M. Metzger notes that P^{66,75} Ⲣ^a and all known uncial and minuscule mss. have the shorter reading.⁴ In line with the most exegetes⁵, I too prefer the shorter reading for our exegetical study.

² C.K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John*. An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text (London: SPCK, ²1978) 190.

³ R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John. A Commentary* (i-xii) (Anchor Bible 29; Garden City, New York, 1966) 98.

⁴ Cfr. G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, “John” in *Word Biblical Commentary* (ed. B.M. Metzger et al.) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987) 32; B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart ²1994) 172.

⁵ Cfr. S.A. PANIMOLLE, “Il segno di Cana. (Gv. 2,1-12)”, in IDEM, *Lettura pastorale del Vangelo di Giovanni*, I (Bologna: Dehoniane, ³1988), p. 206, footnote 1. He presents a list of exegetes who prefer the shorter reading: C.K. Barrett, R.E. Brown, R.T. Fortna, R. Schnackenburg, H. van den Bussche and B.F. Westcott.

ⲛ* reads Οἶνος οὐκ ἔστιν in place of Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν. No other mss. supports this reading.

v. 4:

A few mss. (P⁷⁵ ⲛ*² f¹ a j sy^p. omit the copulative coordinating conjunction καί. But several other mss. such as (Π⁸ ⲛ¹ A B K Λ Ω^p Δ Θ 0127 f³ 33. 892. 1241 al σψ⁹) include καί.

v. 5:

The following mss. (ⲛ 0127. 892 pc) have an alternative reading for the particle ἄν. As this difference in the variant is so light and negligible, no commentator takes note of it. Nor does it have strong witnesses to support this variant.

v. 6:

The participle κείμεναι is omitted by ⲛ* pc a e. Probably it could be a gloss, but the periphrastic construction (ἦσαν....κείμεναι) confirms the Johannine style.⁶

v. 7:

The copulative coordinating conjunction καί is inserted at the beginning of this verse by ⲛ w^s pc (e ff² 1) vg^{ms}.

v. 10:

A transposition of words ('τὸν καλὸν οἶνον πρῶτον' φορ 'πρῶτον τὸν καλὸν οἶνον') is found in P⁷⁵ 892 a e. Scholars ignore this variant as it is not considered to be so important. And there is also

⁶ C.K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 192.

another variant in this verse. B.M. Metzger comments on this second variant as follows: “The Textus Receptus (following \aleph^c A X Γ Δ Θ Λ Π and many other witnesses) makes a smoother reading by adding τότε. The shorter reading adopted for the text is decisively supported by P^{66, 75} \aleph^* B L 083 0141 57 248 573 579 1010 1279 l¹⁸⁵ it^{a, e, ff2, 1, q} syr^{pal} cop^{sa, bo} eth”.⁷

v. 11:

The following mss. \aleph^1 W^s f¹³ add the definitive article τῆν and thus read ἐποίησεν τὴν ἀρχὴν... Some other mss. P⁶⁶: f q read πρώτην ἀρχὴν ἐποίησεν. And \aleph^1 adds πρώτην. But the text adopted by us is strongly supported by the following mss. P^{66c, 75vid} A B L N Θ Ψ 083 f¹ 33. 565. 579 al.

v. 12:

Various mss. offer us many different readings of this text. The differences are found in the sequence of words and the omission of one or more words. B.M. Metzger presents a list of variants in his commentary as follows:⁸

- The αὐτοῦ following ἀδελφοί is lacking in P^{66*, 75} B Ψ 0162.
- The αὐτοῦ following μαθηταί is absent from L 0141.
- The phrase καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ precedes καὶ ἡ μήτηρ in W^{supp}.
- And the phrase καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ is lacking in \aleph al.

⁷ B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 173.

⁸ *Ibid.*

From the fact that καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ is lacking in \aleph , ω , some OL mss. and the Armenian, Bultmann and Lindars concluded that “in the original narrative no mention was made of the disciples of Jesus; the incident was related as occurring while Jesus lived at home, and is to be classed with the folk legends recounted in the apocryphal gospels”. This opinion is not accepted by G.R. Beasley-Murray, because these conclusions are not sufficiently warranted by the textual phenomena of v.12.⁹

Another textual variant to be noted here is that ἔμεινεν is read for ἔμειναν by P^{66c} A f¹ 565. In the opinion of C.K. Barrett (following Bultmann), this reading (singular form of the verb) is to be preferred because “this variant probably arose with the intention of emphasizing that the mother and brothers of Jesus remained permanently in Capernaum while he, when the hour struck, left to begin his public ministry”.¹⁰

This problem in the textual criticism of this verse (regarding αὐτοῦ that follows ἀδελφοί) does not find any permanent solution in *The Greek New Testament*, Nestle-Aland (28th edition). In the main text of this edition αὐτοῦ is given within square brackets. This means that in the present state of New Testament textual scholarship this cannot be taken as completely certain. *The Greek New Testament*, (ed. B. Aland et al.), 4th edition, rates the originality of this text as C. This indicates that it is subject to considerable doubt.

⁹ G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, “John”, p. 33, footnote c.

¹⁰ C.K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 194.

The text we prefer to choose for our study is the same text of *The Greek New Testament*, 28th Edition of Nestle-Aland: καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. Having examined the textual variants, now we pass on to the translation of the text as the next step.

3. WORKING TRANSLATION¹¹

¹ And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there.

² And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage.

³ And wine being deficient, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine”.

⁴ [And] Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come”.¹²

¹¹ As the Greek of St. John’s Gospel is full of symbolisms, overtones, double entendres, polyvalent vocabularies and idiomatic expressions, it is quite hard to translate John 2.1-12 into a smooth and literary English. Notwithstanding this fact, I have made an attempt here to translate this Greek text in English. In doing so, I have borrowed a few phrases and expressions from the translations of various bible versions. And it is this translation that we will be using in our exegetic work.

¹² Down through the years, there has been a lot of disagreement among the scholars upon the translation of Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι οὕτω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου. Most scholars, seeing the indicative mood of the verb ἤκει, prefer to render the translation as follows: ‘My hour has not yet come’. But this contradicts the fact that Jesus acts positively to the request of his mother. In order to resolve this problem,

some take these words of Jesus as a rhetorical question and translate: ‘Has not my hour come?’. T. STRAMARE, “La Risposta di Gesù a Maria alle nozze di Cana. Il test della ragionevolezza”, in *Biblica et Orientalia* 44 (2002) 179-192, suggests that given the context, the correct translation would be: “Ciò che è mio è tuo. Donna, è giunta la mia ora!”. Though this translation of T. Stramare (È giunta la mia ora) seems to contradict the majority of the translations (‘My hour has *not* yet come’), it is grammatically correct and also fits well in the context. E.J. GOODSPEED, “Problems of the New Testament Translation”, in *The Bible Translator* 3 (1952) 70-71, suggests that the word γύναϊ be left untranslated, because in his opinion there is no adequate English translation for gu,nai. And he translates: “Do not try to direct me. It is not yet time for me to act”. H.M. BUCK, “On the Translation of John 2.4”, in *Bible Translator* 7 (1956) 149-150, suggests that it be translated, “Madam, why is that our concern?”. Here is a list of a few different translations from various versions: Latin Vulgate: quid mihi et tibi est mulier?; Luther Unrevidierte (1545) (German): Weib, was habe ich mit dir zu schaffen?; King James Version (1611): Woman, what have I to do with thee?; Peshitta - James Murdock Translation (1852): What is [in common] to me and thee?; Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898): What to me and to thee, woman?; The Douay-Rheims American Edition (1899): Woman, what is that to me and to thee?; The New American Bible: Woman, how does your concern affect me?; Revised Standard Version (1951): O woman, what have you to do with me?; The Bible in Basic English (1949/64): Woman, this is not your business?; New King James Version (1982): Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?; New International Version (1984) (US): Dear woman, why do you involve me?; Revidierte Lutherbibel (1984) (German): Was geht's dich an, Frau, was ich tue? La Biblia de Las Americas

⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Whatever he might say to you, do it”.

⁶ Now standing there were six stone water jars according to the Jewish rites of purification, each containing two or three measures.

⁷ Jesus said unto them, Fill the water jars with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

⁸ He said to them, “Draw now, and carry to the

(1986): Mujer, ¿qué nos va a ti y a mí en esto?; Reina-Valera Actualizada (1989): ¿Qué tiene que ver eso conmigo y contigo, mujer?; New American Standard Bible (1995): Woman, what does that have to do with us?; Spanish Reina-Valera Update (1995): ¿Qué tiene que ver esto con nosotros, mujer?; NVB San Paolo Edizione (1995) (Italian): Che vuoi da me, o donna?; French Bible en français courant (1997): Mère, est-ce à toi de me dire ce que j'ai à faire?; Münchener *Novum Testamentum* (1998) with Strong's: Was (ist zwischen) mir und dir, Frau?; English Standard Version (2001): Woman, what does this have to do with me?; New Living Translation: How does that concern you and me?; New Revised standard Version: Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?; For further details regarding the translation of this verse, see C.P. CEROKE, “The problem of Ambiguity in John 2.4”, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 21 (1959) 316-340; J. MICHL, “Bemerkungen zu Jo. 2.4”, in *Biblica* 36 (1955) 492-509; J.C. QUIRANT, “Las Bodas de Canà: La respuesta de Cristo e su Madre: Jn 2.4”, in *Marianum* 20 (1958) 157-158; J.N. RHODES, “What do you want from me? (John 2.4)”, in *Bible Translator* 52 (2001) 445-447; A. VANHOYE, “Interrogation johannique et exègèse de Cana (Jn 2,4)”, in *Biblica* 55 (1974) 157-167; E. ZOLLI, “Quid mihi et tibi, mulier?”, in *Marianum* 8 (1946) 3-15.

steward”. And¹³ they carried.

⁹ And when¹⁴ the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom

¹⁰and said to him, “Every man sets out first the good wine, and when men¹⁵ have well drunk, then the inferior; you have kept the good wine till now”.

¹¹Jesus did this beginning of signs in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹²After this, he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother and his brothers and his disciples; and they remained there not many days.

4. DELIMITATION OF THE TEXT

The exact delimitation of the text, that is, specifying exactly the beginning and the end of the text for our exegesis, is very important. As the first stage when we did the textual criticism, we determined the text by simply following the segment of the text as found in *The Greek New Testament* (ed. Nestle Aland,

¹³ Some versions neglect the particle *de*, in the translation. Some translate this particle *δέ* as ‘so’. And some others translate it as ‘and’. I prefer to consider this simply as a particle of transition and translate it as ‘and’.

¹⁴ The particle *ὡς* followed by an aorist can be translated as ‘when’ or ‘after’.

¹⁵ The verb *μεθυσθησιν* lacks a subject. In my translation, I have rendered ‘people’ (indefinite) as the subject of this verb. But NIV renders ‘the guests’, taking into account the context of the episode.

28th edition, 2012). That segmentation was just taken without any investigation into the text. Now we would like to make a precise analysis in order to establish the boundaries of the text and to justify them.

The narrative of the changing of water into wine at the wedding at Cana serves as a conclusion to the vocation of the first disciples, Philip and Nathanael (Jn 1.43-51), and also as an opening section of the latter part which extends up to the healing of the official's son (Jn 4.46-54). What is mentioned in Jn 1.51 is actualized in the first sign of Jesus where He is glorified (cfr. Jn 1.12).¹⁶

This narrative is also chronologically connected to the preceding and the following units of the Gospel. The events are arranged in a clear chronological framework. The phrase τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ (Jn 2.1) is chronologically connected with Τῆ ἐπαύριον in Jn 1.43 (see also 1.29,35).¹⁷ And the spatial indicator 'Galilee' in Jn 2.1 links this event with the preceding event (cfr. Jn 1.43).

This narrative of changing water into wine as the first sign is not only linked with the book of signs (Jn 1-12), but also it is well linked with the book of glory (Jn 13-21) particularly with Jn 17.1 where Jesus prays to

¹⁶ J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino entra nel mondo: Gv 1-4* (La dispensa; Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005) 53.

¹⁷ Many scholars have claimed to demonstrate a seven-day scheme from the text. B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel. A Text-linguistic Analysis of John 2:1-11 and 4:1-42* (Coniectanea Biblica. New Testament Series 6; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1974) 23-25.

the Father ‘My hour has come’. Thus, this event is very much connected with the passion narrative.

With regard to the boundaries of this pericope (Jn 2.1-12), the commentators have diverse opinions. All of them agree that this pericope begins from Jn 2.1, as there is a clear change of subject matter (that is, the calling of Philip and Nathanael concludes in 1.51 and the change of subject matter situated in another context is very evident) and a new scene begins. There are three different opinions among the commentators:

1. Some consider v.12 as pertaining to the episode of the wedding at Cana.¹⁸
2. A few others who connect v.12 with the Cana-episode, consider it as some kind of an interlude for or a transition from one narrative to the other.¹⁹
3. Some other commentators consider v.12 as pertaining to the episode of the cleansing of the temple.²⁰

¹⁸ Cfr. B. LINDARS, *John* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 132; F. J. MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word. Reading the Fourth Gospel: John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 89.

¹⁹ Cfr. C.K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 194; G.R. O'DAY, *The Gospel of John* (The New Interpreters Bible IX; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) 536; R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii) (Anchor Bible 29; Garden City, New York, 1966) 112-113; E. HAENCHEN, *John. A Commentary on the Gospel of John 1-6*. vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 175.

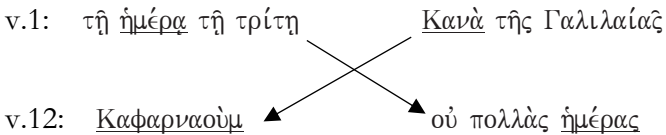
²⁰ Cfr. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1 (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 342-343; L.P. JONES,

Bultmann thinks that v.12 was already in the Evangelist's source and it probably led on to 4.46-54 (the healing of the royal official's son).²¹ But J.P. Meier says that "Bultmann is wrong on this point".²² In my personal opinion, v.12 pertains to the episode of wedding at Cana for the following reasons:

The narrator intends to close this narrative with temporal and spatial elements in v.12 as he began this narrative with temporal and spatial data. From this point of view, I see a very clear connecting link between

v.1 and v.12. Such a link presented in the diagram below shows that v.1 and v.12 serve as the beginning and the end of this narrative and make it a textual unit.

Temporal and Spatial Indicators

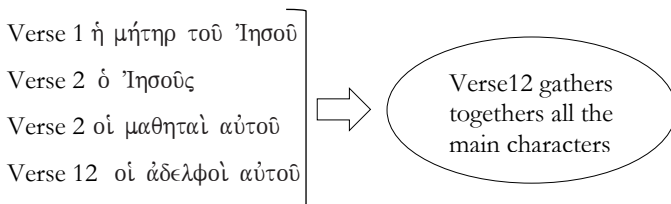


The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series) 145; Sheffield, 1997) 53.

²¹ R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (tr. G.R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), p. 114, footnote 4.

²² J.P. MEIER, "The Changing of Water into Wine at Cana" in IDEM., *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. II (New York: Doubleday, 1994) p. 101, end-note 199.

Besides Time and Space, another important co-ordinating element in the narrative is the Characters (*Dramatis Personae*). According to F. J. Moloney, “the major players in the dramatic narrative which the reader has just read are re-assembled in v.12: Jesus, his mother, his brothers, and his disciples. They journey away from Cana, and stay in Capernaum ‘for a few days’. The author provides these details to keep the narrative moving. Within the brief summary there is a gathering of the characters of the story that has just been read (with the addition of the brothers of Jesus)”.²³ Thus F. J. Moloney considers v.12 as the climax and the concluding summary of this narrative. This point has been illustrated in the following diagram:



Verse 12: “After this, he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother and his brothers and his disciples ...”

We note also that though v.12 does not include the minor characters like the steward, servants and the bridegroom in its summing up of the characters, this observation of F. J. Moloney is interesting and

²³ F. J. MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 89.

convincing.

On the basis of these arguments mentioned above, we can arrive at the conclusion that v.1 and v.12 function as the beginning and end of this narrative and make this pericope a unitary whole. Thus, this legitimates our designation of this pericope as extending from v. 1 to v. 12.

5. LINGUISTIC SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

Though Jn 2.1-12 is very familiar to us, the linguistic and syntactic analysis is inevitable to enter into our exegetical process of the text. In the following sections we are going to investigate the concrete linguistic forms and the linguistic devices used by the evangelist in this pericope.

A. Grammatical Statistics ²⁴

To understand the text in a more practical way, let us now pay attention to the grammar of this pericope. This twelve-versed text consists of 209 words. They are divided accordingly:

²⁴This model for the grammatical analysis has been adapted from the work of a doctoral dissertation published at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Urbe (Rome) in 2001. Cfr. L.J.W. SELUVAPPAN, *The Sinful Woman Accepts Jesus at the House of Simon the Pharisee: Text, Characters and Theology of Luke 7, 36-50* (Rome: Angelicum, 2001) 7-12.

Nouns	49	23.44%
Verbs	36	17.22%
Articles	39	18.66%
Conjunctions	27	12.92%
Pronouns	25	11.96%
Prepositions	11	5.26%
Adjectives	10	4.78%
Adverbs	8	3.83%
Particles	4	1.92%
	-----	-----
Total	209	100%

B. The Various Parts of the Speech

The statistical survey above opens up a way for us to understand better the linguistic character of the text. Now let us look into the various parts of the speech individually:

The Nouns

The nouns constitute the highest number of words used in this passage. The use of the nouns shows the narrator controls his material. He uses various nouns to indicate the substance of the story. He mentions the name 'Jesus' five times, 'the disciples' four times and 'mother of Jesus'²⁵ three times in order to show the importance of these characters. In fact there are also other significant nouns (a few words repeated many times, and a few others only

²⁵ John writes 'Mother of Jesus' in vv. 1, 3, 5, 12. Nowhere in the Gospel can we see John mentioning her name 'Mary'.

once) – Wine, Water, Day, Marriage, Cana, Hour, Servants, Steward, Glory, Sign. Each and every one of these nouns has its own importance in the meaning of this story. No noun is superfluous.

The Verbs

The total number of verbs in this text is 36. Most of them express action-relationships among the characters and their actions in the story. There are 13 aorist forms²⁶ and 13 present forms²⁷ of the verbs in this text. The aorist forms and present forms of the verbs are equal in number. The aorist tense serves here to express the punctiliar²⁸ nature of the action, whereas the use of the historical present makes the reader an active participant and makes him involved in the events of the story. Twice in the narrative, the evangelist shifts the verbal form from the aorist to the historical present (in v. 4 and then in v. 10).

The verbs are all in finite forms, with the exception of a few participles (vv. 3, 6 [twice], 9). The

²⁶ The evangelist uses the following aorist forms of the verbs: γίνομαι (v. 1), καλέω (v. 2), ὑστερέω (v.3), γεμίζω twice (v. 7), ἀντλέω φέρω (v. 8), γέυομαι (v. 9), ποιέω φανερόω πιστεύω (v.11), καταβαίνω μένω (v. 12).

²⁷ The present form of the verbs used in this narrative: λέγω ἔχω (v.3), λέγῳ ἤκω (v.4), λέγω twice (v.5), λέγω (v.7), λέγω, φέρω (v. 8), εἰμί φωνέω (v. 9), λέγῳ τίθημι (v. 10).

²⁸ The word “punctiliar” (very rare in common usage) has been taken from D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics. An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) 557.

imperfect forms used in vv. 1, 6 express an ongoing attitude. The author has not only carefully chosen the verbs but also artistically employs them to communicate his powerful message to the readers.

The Articles

The articles indicate that the nouns to which they correspond are definite and a particular reality. The qualifying article becomes a determinate entity in the story. The majority of the articles used in the text are in the nominative case. It is to be noted that the proper name Jesus always appears with the definite article (ὁ). Next the accusative form of the article is used to stress the miraculous action operated upon the water and the good wine being served later.

The Conjunctions

The conjunction καί is the most dominant conjunction. In the twelve verses, the conjunction καί is used 19 times out of the 27 conjunctions used in this pericope. And also it is to be noted that six verses begin with conjunctions (including v.9 which begins with ὡς). These occurrences help the flow of the narration and also bind each other. The presence of the conjunction δέ in vv. 2, 6, 8, 9 (twice) also helps the flow of the narration. The δέ is used in vv. 6, 8, 9 with ‘progressive’ or ‘explanatory’ force, according to Zerwick.²⁹

²⁹ Cfr. M. ZERWICK, *Biblical Greek* (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 114; Roma: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963) n. 467.

The Pronouns

There are 25 pronouns used in our text. The frequent use of pronouns expresses the relation of possession and plays an important role in the narration. The use of the genitive form of the personal pronouns used to refer to the mother of Jesus (vv. 1, 3, 5, 12), his disciples (vv. 2, 12), and his brothers (v.12) emphasize the relationship of Jesus with these characters of the narrative.

The Prepositions

The use of prepositions is very minimal. There are only eleven prepositions in this text.

The Adjectives

The adjectives used in this text are only ten. The narrator uses two of them for the temporal factor (vv. 1, 12), and four of them to describe the jars (v. 6). The steward uses four adjectives to emphasize the quality of wine (v. 10). Neither Jesus nor his mother uses any adjectives in this episode.

The Adverbs

We come across eight adverbs used in vv. 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (two adverbs) in the text. Out of these eight adverbs, the narrator uses six of them and Jesus uses two of them (οὐπω and νῦν). It is important to note that both the adverbs used by Jesus ('not yet' and 'now') refer to the temporal factor and insist on the present reality.

The Particles

There are four particles used in the narrative. Two of them are used by the mother of Jesus (vv. 3, 5), and the other two by the narrator (both being negative particles in vv. 9, 12). Jesus does not use any particle.

C. Concluding Remarks

As a result of this grammatical and linguistic study above, now we draw the following conclusions:

This narrative mainly focuses on the nouns (characters, place, time, and a few symbolic items and objects). This is evident from the fact that the nouns, the pronouns, and the adjectives taken together form 40.18% of the pericope.

The narrator prefers repeating the name of Jesus and the expression ‘mother of Jesus’. Apart from using five times the proper name of Jesus, he repeats ten times the personal pronoun αὐτός to refer to Jesus (in different cases). It shows that the main focus of the narrator is more on Jesus than on the other characters (‘mother of Jesus’ is given the second place).

The verbs and adverbs taken together constitute 21.05% of the vocabulary. In other words, the verbs and adverbs form more than one fifth of the vocabulary. It underlines the ‘actions’ in the narrative.

Except for a few occurrences, most times the proper name Jesus is presented in its nominative form as ‘the subject of the verb’ in the sentences.³⁰ This indicates that Jesus is the one who ‘acts’ or

³⁰ Cfr. Jn 2.2,4,7,11.

performs this miraculous phenomenon. Jesus is the agent of action. Every action in the story is centred around him.

Most of the sentences are linked with each other by the conjunction *καί* or *δέ*. Thus the story is well linked.

The narrator presents the phrase *τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον γεγενημένον* (the miracle that water was made into wine) within the subordinate clause, not in the main clause, whereas he presents the verbs *ἐποίησεν*, *ἐφάνέρωσεν* and *ἐπίστευσαν* in the main clause. This means that the narrative accent does not fall on the miracle itself but on the facts that this was the first sign, that he revealed his glory and that his disciples believed in him.

The maximum number of nouns and verbs as a whole, though disproportionate to the other part of the speeches, characterizes the whole passage.

All the imperatives in this pericope are in the aorist form (except in v.8). This confirms the Johannine style of writing (cfr. Jn 2.5,7,8,16,19; 4.16,35; 6.10; 7.24; 9.7; 11.39; 12.27; 13.27; 15.9; 21.10). Referring to these citations, J.H. Bernard remarks "...in Jn., the aorist imperative often occurs, as 'more authoritative than the present imperative, which may denote continuous action.'"³¹

The verb *ἦν* in v.1 is imperfect but the verb *ἐκλήθη*

³¹ J.H. BERNARD, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*. I (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburg: T & T. Clark, 1976) 76.

in v.2 is aorist. This change of verb may imply that the mother of Jesus had been there for some time and Jesus had been invited later on his return to Nazareth from the Jordan.³²

The conjunctions and the particles (14.84%) and the articles and the prepositions (23.92%) knit together the events and facilitate the narrative flow of the story. Thus the whole story is composed to underscore the characters and their mutual relationships in general.

This linguistic syntactic analysis reveals John as a great writer and a narrator. He is effective in the art of narration by applying such a beautiful linguistic style.

6. SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Semantic Analysis of the text is done by ascertaining the meaning of the key words and of the text itself. In the opinion of W. Egger³³, the understanding of the individual words and the whole text is interdependent; one cannot be done without

³² S.D. TOUSSAINT, "The Significance of the First Sign in John's Gospel", in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 134 (1977) 46.

³³ W. Egger says, "Verbal semantics is concerned with the meaning of a word, text semantics with the meaning of an entire text....From a semantic standpoint the text is the aggregate of relations (structure) between the elements of meaning in the text. The text is whole, a sort of 'semantic micro-universe'". Cfr. W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament. An Introduction to Linguistic and Historical-Critical Methodology*, (tr. Peter Heinegg; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1996) 84-85.

the other. In doing semantic analysis of our text, we shall follow the method proposed by W. Egger.³⁴

If we pay attention to the frequently used vocabularies, it would help us enter into the semantic fields of the text. The following important terms are arranged in the decreasing order of frequency:

7 times:	λέγειν (vv. 3,4,5,5,7,8,10)
6 times:	Ἰησοῦς (vv. 1,2,3,4,7,11)
5 times:	οἶνος (vv. 3,3,9,10,10)
4 times:	ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (vv. 1,3,5,12)
3 times:	ὔδωρ (vv. 7,9,9) ἀρχιτρίκλινος (vv. 8,9,9) οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ (vv. 2,11,12)
2 times:	γάμος (vv. 1,2) Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας (vv. 1,11) διάκονοι (vv. 5,8) ὑδρίαι (vv. 6,7) γемίζειν (vv. 7,7) ἀντλέω (vv. 8,9) φέρειν (vv. 8,8) οἶδα (vv. 9,9) καλῶς (vv. 10,10) ποιέω (vv. 5,11) ἡμέρα (vv. 1,12)

Having made a survey of the occurrences of the vocabularies used twice or more, we can now group them into meaning-related lexemes. The most important

³⁴ W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament*, 84-94.

ones are the following:³⁵ 1. The Wedding, 2. The Banquet, 3. The human relationships, 4. Temporal features, 5. Geographical indicators. A detailed analysis of these five semantic fields and of the characteristic vocabularies throws some light on the inner meaning of the text.

A. The Wedding

Even though the vocabularies concerning the wedding are limited in the text, the wedding theme is considered to be so important to the extent that the majority of the bible editions entitle this episode as 'The Wedding at Cana'. In fact the first subject of the first sentence in this text is γάμος. And the same noun is repeated in the accusative form in v.2. And in v. 9, bridegroom is mentioned. But it is surprising to observe that nowhere in the text does the bride appear in this scene though the whole episode takes place in the context of a marriage. Who is the bridegroom? Many commentators, giving a symbolic meaning, say that Jesus is the bridegroom there and the Mother of Jesus is the bride. And Marriage itself being a Covenant, some other commentators say that this sign of changing water into wine symbolizes the new covenant between God and His people and that is the reason why this first sign takes place in a wedding context.

³⁵ Four of these five semantic fields have been adapted from the model for the semantic analysis proposed by J. Beutler. For more details, see J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 54-55.

B. *The Banquet*

The concept of banquet (wedding-feast) and its meaning-related words play a vital role in this episode. A considerable number of vocabularies in this narrative belong to this semantic field: οἶνος (vv. 3,3,9,10,10), ὕδωρ (vv. 7,9,9), ὑδρίαί (vv. 6,7), γαμίζειν (vv. 7,7), ἀντλέω (vv. 8,9), φέρειν (vv. 8,8), καλός (vv.10,10). Now let us see the significance of a few important vocabularies concerning the banquet.

i) The Symbolism of Water

The word ‘Water’ occurs in the following verses of the Gospel of John: 1.33; 2.7; 2.9; 3.5; 3.23; 4.7; 4.10; 4.11; 4.13; 4.14; 4.15; 4.28; 4.46; 5.7; 7.38; 13.5; 19.34. Here water is associated with the baptism, the act of healing and to the words of Jesus affirming that He is the living water (cfr. Jn 4.13); and also the symbolism of water develops the point that the water baptism of John pre-announces that Jesus should be manifested thereby as the Bearer of the Spirit. And Jn 19.34 reads: “The soldier pierced his side with a spear and there came out blood and water”. Some commentators connect this symbolism of water and wine with the passion narrative. Some others say that the water symbolism in the first sign of Jesus is connected with the Sacrament of Baptism.

ii) The symbolism of Wine

A. Serra gives a very detailed explanation about the meaning of ‘wine’ in this episode.³⁶ He says:

³⁶ A. SERRA, *Maria a Cana e presso la croce*. Saggio di

L'insegnamento di Cristo Messia è paragonato al vino nuovo dai Sinottici. Gesù è lo Sposo delle nozze messianiche. Il vino nuovo è simbolo del suo Vangelo, della sua Rivelazione, che non può essere vanificata in un compromesso col vino vecchio del Giudaismo. (Mt 9,14-17; Mc 2,18-22; Lc 5,33-39;.....Nell'episodio di Cana il vino simboleggia, innanzitutto e in primo piano, *la Parola di Cristo, la sua Rivelazione, il suo Vangelo*.³⁷

The meaning of ἕξ (six jars) is very scholarly explained by A. Serra. Giving various symbolic meanings of the number six in the biblical and judaic tradition, he says that the six water jars made of stone symbolize the old laws of Moses written on the stone. And they have been fulfilled by Jesus with jars full of new wine. The number six can be compared with the six days of creation in the beginning (Gen 1.3-2.2) in reference to the beginning of Jesus's signs. And he continues further:

Le “sei giare” di Cana stanno in rapporto col “sesto giorno” (=il terzo), in cui Gesù dona il vino nuovo delle nozze messianiche, come figura profetica della sua Parola di rivelazione. e in prospettiva escatologica, le

mariologia giovannea (Gv 2,1-12 e Gv 19,25-27) (Serie pastorale e di studio 2; Roma: Centro di cultura mariana, ³1991) 39-53. The author presents a list of very interesting and important meanings of wine in the Old Testament, the Judaic tradition and the New Testament. He applies these meanings to the wine of the wedding at Cana to explain its figurative value.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

“sei giare” del banchetto di Cana puntano sul “sesto giorno” della passione di Cristo, che si sublima poi nel “terzo giorno” della Risurrezione. Cristo invase il mondo con la luce che emanava dal suo Vangelo rivelato in pienezza. Così le giare furono colmate “fino all’orlo”.³⁸

And the capacity of the water jars ‘μετρητὰς δύο ἢ τρεῖς’ (each containing two or three measures)³⁹ also contains a symbolic value. Some commentators (e.g.: J.H. Bernard) refuse this symbolism of the number six and the symbolical meaning of the measurement of these water pots.⁴⁰

³⁸ Cfr. A. SERRA, “Vi erano là sei giare...” in IDEM, *Nato da donna...* (Roma: Cens-Marianum, 1992) 141-188.

³⁹ In his interpretation on the measurement of the jars, A. Serra says: ‘Effettivamente in questo versetto l’evangelista menziona anzitutto le sei giare, e poi specifica che ciascuna di esse conteneva due o tre metrete. Con questa successiva aggiunta, Giovanni sembra voler scomporre la cifra del 6 nei numeri 1, 2 e 3, la somma dei quali equivale a 6; oppure nei numeri 2 e 3, la cui moltiplicazione dà ugualmente 6... Il codice numerico di Gv 2,6 (= 1 + 2 + 3; oppure 2 x 3)...potrebbe essere letto nel senso che ogni epoca della Torah, per quanto limitata e imperfetta, era tutta via ordinata intrinsecamente a Cristo. A lui tendeva, come a suo naturale e perfetto compimento’ (*Ibid.*, 183, 185).

⁴⁰ For example, J.H. Bernard comments: “Six, it is said, is a significant number - the perfect number - and so there are 6 water pots. But there is no number from 1 to 10 which could not be given a mystical interpretation; and the idea that 6 represents the 6 days of creation...is not much convincing...What the number 6 generated, that the number 7 exhibited in full perfection...the six...Philo’s principle that six is the “most productive”...of

But I agree with the interpretation of A. Serra that the number 6 and the measurement of the water jars have a significant symbolic meaning in this Cana narrative.

C. Human Relationships

The roles played by the various *'dramatis personae'* and their relationships are an important factor in any narrative. Though the length of the pericope (only 12 verses) is small, we encounter many persons in this Cana episode. The following are the active/passive participants of this narrative:

Jesus (mentioned 18 times)
The servants (12)
Mother of Jesus (7)
The steward of the feast (5)
The bridegroom (3)
The disciples (4)
The Jews (1)
Jesus' brothers (1)⁴¹

Jesus is presented as the central figure of the event. He is the main hero in all that happens in this story.

numbers... These are desperate expedients of exegesis, and if Jn. really had any such notions in his mind when he said there were *six* water-pots prepared for the use of the wedding guests, he wrote more obscurely than is his wont. The truth is that mention of this unusually large number of ὑδρίαῖς more reasonably to be referred to the observation of the eyewitness.....than to elaborate symbolism of the narrative". (J.H. BERNARD, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 82-83).

⁴¹ B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 85.

The narrator draws the attention of his readers towards Jesus. The very fact that Jesus has been invited to the marriage shows that the marriage party (the family which celebrated the marriage) is in close relationship with Jesus. Thus the word ἐκλήθη⁴² indirectly reveals this relationship to the reader. And the relationship between Jesus and his mother is important but commentators⁴³ have diverse opinions about their relationship. The following are the reasons for this diversity of ideas:

1. The idiomatic expression Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί is ambiguous and difficult to interpret. Another difficulty in this verse is the translation of οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου. The exegetes face the dilemma whether the phrase οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου is to be taken as a statement or as a rhetorical question. Some take it as a statement and some others as a rhetorical question.
2. Jesus refuses the request of his mother (v.4) but then he performs this miracle. Jesus' reply to his mother is not coherent with what he does later.
3. The term γύναι used by Jesus to address his mother raises various questions among commentators. Though this form of addressing is not hard and harsh, some commentators have difficulties in accepting this term.

For these three reasons, the relationship between Jesus

⁴² Though the subject is in the plural form (Jesus and his disciples), the corresponding verb ἐκλήθη is in the singular form.

⁴³ C.P. CEROKE, "Jesus and Mary at Cana: Separation or Association?", in *Theological Studies* 17 (1956) 1-38.

and his mother is always very much discussed among scholars.

The disciples follow Jesus but are not active participants in changing the water into wine. They are just onlookers (spectators) but seeing the glory of Jesus manifested in this first sign, they believe in him. They are not merely followers of Jesus but become believers in him. The narrator ignores the details about the relationship between the bridegroom and the bride. The bride does not appear at all in the story. The servants and the steward play an active role. The relationship between the mother of Jesus and the servants is one of mediation. She asks them to do whatever Jesus tells them. And they obey her and act upon the words of Jesus. In the opinion of M. S. Collins, the family level relationship or the maternal-filial relationship between Jesus and his mother is important for the narrator. This point is very evident in the expression ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (mother of Jesus). M.S. Collins says:

Thus it is not simply “Mary” for the narrator, but “the mother of Jesus”. She is never named in the Fourth Gospel and is referred to only by her social/gender role as “the mother of Jesus”. In terms of honour and shame, this may serve as an esteemed “title” of sorts, describing her status and/or relation to an honourable esteemed male. Brown notes, for example, that “among Arabs today ‘the mother of X’ is an honourable title for a woman who has been fortunate enough to bear a son.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ M.S. COLLINS “The question of Doxa: A Socio-literary Reading of the Wedding at Cana”, in *Biblical Theology*

As Jesus, his mother and his disciples are introduced in the setting of the scene (vv. 1-2), these same characters are again mentioned in v.12 (his brothers are included here) which serves as the concluding verse of the Cana event and introduces the reader to the next episode. Thus the ‘dramatis personae’ are programmatically arranged in the narrative. “The individuals in the text act as necessary agents in the events which together constitute the action”.⁴⁵ Looking at the ‘dramatis personae’ in this story with a overall view, we can say that all the characters move in a circle, of which Jesus is the centre, each one with his/her own specific role. Among all of them, the closest to Jesus is the mother of Jesus (see vv. 3,4,5).

D. Temporal features

In this Cana episode, the temporal features are very specifically mentioned. In the first verse itself, the setting of the event makes reference to the temporal indicator τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ and the very first verb ἐγένετο seems to contribute formally to the terminal feature of this event.⁴⁶ The other words explicitly referring to temporal elements are οὐπω, ὥρα, νῦν, ἄρτι, and οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας’.

Olsson observes that the whole episode is dominated by the temporal elements. Though this event takes place on a single day τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ (on the third day), he divides this narrative into various chronological segments and shows that one

Bulletin 25 (1995) 103.

⁴⁵ B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 87.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

event follows the other as a sequence. He comments that “judging by the wording of the text, all the events take place on one day (the third day) in the following sequence”:⁴⁷

- E1 The wedding at which Jesus’ mother was present (ἦν) –begins (ἐγένετο).
- E2 Jesus and his disciples are invited (ἐκλήθη).
- E3 The wine fails (ὑστερήσαντος).
- E4 Jesus’ mother speaks to Jesus (λέγει).
- E5 Jesus speaks to her (λέγει).
- E6 Jesus’ mother speaks to the servants (λέγει).
- E7 Jesus speaks to the servants (λέγει).
- E8 The servants fill the vessels which were standing (ἦσαν) there with water.
- E9 The water in the vessels become wine (γεγενημένον).
- E10 Jesus speaks to the servants (λέγει).
- E11 The servants draw water/wine (ἤντληκότες).
- E12 The servants take the water/wine to the steward (ἤνεγκαν).
- E13 The steward tastes the water/wine (ἐγεύσατο).
- E14 The steward summons the bridegroom (φωνεῖ).
- E15 The steward speaks to him (λέγει).⁴⁸

Since the pericope of our study goes up to v.12, I add three more events to the sequence above:

- E16 His disciples believe in Him (ἐπίστευσαν).
- E17 He, with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, go down to Capernaum (κατέβη).
- E18 They stay there (ἔμειναν).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

This sequence adapted from B. Olsson fits well into the chronological order in which the narrator presents the episode. It can be observed in the text that the main clause follows the main clause, connected by the conjunctions *καί*, *δέ* or sometimes without any conjunction. Syntactical constructions are used only in E3 (genitive absolute - *ὑπερήσαντος*) and in E13 (*ὥς* - clause) in order to show the temporal sequence of the narrative. The perfect tense used in the units E9 and E11 indicates that the events described with this tense appears later in the narrative. In fact it appears in v.9 where we read that the servants knew where the wine had come from but the steward did not know. In this way these two phenomena (E9 and E13) are linked (temporal link) with v.9 and this leads the reader to the steward's statement found in v.10.⁴⁹

B. Olsson observes that the temporal aspects are marked more in the speeches. He makes a list of six speeches found in the narrative and then shows how the temporal parallels are present in the scheme of events.

- | | |
|----|---|
| S1 | They have no wine (<i>ἔχουσιν</i>). |
| S2 | My hour has not yet come (<i>οὔπω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου</i>). |
| S3 | Do (<i>ποιήσατε</i>) whatever he tells you (<i>λέγει</i>). |
| S4 | Fill the vessels with water (<i>Γεμίσατε</i>). |
| S5 | Now draw some out (<i>Ἀντλήσατε νῦν</i>) and take it to the steward (<i>φε,rete</i>). |

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

S6 Every man serves the good wine first
(πρῶτον...τίθησιν) and when (καὶ ὅταν)
men have drunk freely, then the poor
wine. You have kept the good wine until
now (τετήρηκας ἕως ἄρτι).⁵⁰

The temporal parallelisms between these speeches and the scheme of events are as follows:

S1 = E3, S4 = E8, S5 = E1-12 and S3 includes E7-8 and 10-12.⁵¹

This is evidently a clear indication that the events and the speeches are interlinked and perfectly synchronized within their specific temporal aspects.

This analysis on the temporal elements present in the text provides us with the following conclusions.⁵²

The temporal features are very dominant in this narrative.

A temporal scheme ‘first this and then that’ predominates the text.

The three elements of the temporal indicators, ἡ ὥρα μου, νῦν, and ἄρτι can be grouped together into one category as all of them refer to the hour of Jesus.

All that takes place in this episode seems to revolve around the hour of Jesus. In the context of the fourth gospel, we can say that all the temporal indicators present in this in some way or other makes reference to the hour of Jesus, to his glorification and his works

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

before or after his glorification. Thus this temporal pattern is important to understand the entire Cana episode.

E. Geographical Indications

The names of a number of places are mentioned in the fourth Gospel mostly in connection with the journeys of Jesus, his actions, dialogues and discourses.⁵³ In the same way here in this story as well, the narrator provides his readers with geographic information at the opening and closing verses of this episode. As these occurrences of place-names are sometimes helpful to determine the structure of the whole Gospel,⁵⁴ it is also helpful to understand the individual texts in their specific spatial context. We note the following geographical indications present in this episode:

- v. 1: ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας
- v.11: ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας
- v.12: εἰς Καφαρναούμ

That this episode took place at Cana of Galilee is three times repeated (1.1; 1.11; 4.46). This repetitive mentioning of this place impresses the reader. This geographical indicator is considered to be an

⁵³ G. MLAKUZHYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome 1987, 101.

⁵⁴ Several scholars make use of the geographical indicators to determine the structure of the gospel though many other approaches are available. This shows that the mention of the names of the places are very important in the fourth gospel. See M. RISSI, "Der Aufbau des Vierten Evangeliums", in *New Testament Studies* 29 (1983) 48-54.

important element because many commentators⁵⁵ make use of this geographical indicator to connect this story with Jn 4.46 Ἦλθεν οὖν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ὅπου ἐποίησεν τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον. We also note another parallelism that as the narrator mentions Cana (1.11) and Capernaum (1.12) at the end of the Cana episode, in the same way the geographical indication about Capernaum (4.46) is found immediately after the mention about Jesus' coming to Cana in Galilee (See 4.46 and 4.54) where the second sign of Jesus takes place.

7. PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

In pragmatic analysis of the text, the author-reader relationship is analyzed. Here we look for the reasons why the author writes this text for his readers and the intended purposes or functions of the text.

Like all the other NT books, the gospel of John has been addressed to a particular audience to meet its pastoral needs. This applies to the Cana episode as well. Why did the fourth evangelist record the signs and present them to his readers? The most reliable answer for this question can be found in the gospel itself Jn 20.30-31:

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life

⁵⁵ Cfr. F.J. MOLONEY, “From Cana to Cana (Jn 2:1 – 4:54) and the Fourth Evangelist’s Concept of Correct (and Incorrect) Faith”, in *Salesianum* 40 (1978) 817-843.

in his name”.

This is the key passage which can help our pragmatic analysis. From these two verses we can deduce that the ‘gospel of John is a book as a whole, not in isolated passages... and the events narrated in the gospel about Jesus are deliberately selective, not comprehensively told... the ‘signs’ Jesus works in the gospel serve as a reliable pointers to be followed in faith if one is to arrive at true knowledge of him and his saving mission’.⁵⁶ Commenting on Jn 20.31, T. Okure says, “All the events narrated in the gospel have this one purpose, to persuade the reader to believe and confess along with others that Jesus is God’s Son and Christ, sent by God out of love for the world, to give enduring life to those who believe in him. Every episode in the gospel is an attempt to elaborate this thesis”.⁵⁷ This applies to this Cana event as well. And now the purpose for which the fourth evangelist presents this first sign to his readers is clear, that is, to convince them about the true identity of Jesus and to make them believe in him.

It is to be noted that the same verb πιστεύω (found in Jn 2.11) appears here twice in Jn 20.31. This could indicate that the fourth evangelist wants to insist on the faith element of his readers. It is evident from the narrator’s report that the disciples believed in him (v.11). This is a call for his readers to have faith in

⁵⁶ T. OKURE, *John* (International Critical Commentary [ed. W.R. Farmer et al.]; Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998) 1439.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Jesus as his disciples had.

8. THE 'GATTUNG' OF JN 2.1-12

At a first glance, this pericope would give a clear impression to the reader that it is a miracle story. Bultmann says that as far as its form is concerned it is a 'typical miracle story'. He refers to the structure of the text and justifies his statement in the following words:

vv. 1-2 give the setting, vv. 3-5 the preparation of the miracle, told, as is proper to the genre, so as to create a certain tension; vv. 6-8 contain the miracle itself, related only indirectly, without describing the actual miraculous process, which is again true to the genre; the same applies to vv. 9-10, which form the conclusion and emphasise the παράδοξον of the miracle.

But many deny this theory that it belongs to the literary genre of 'miracle stories'. One of these is B. Lindars. In his article "Two Parables in John",⁵⁸ he argues that Jn 2.1-12 contains all the important indications of a parable, but he does not negate the miracle elements present in this passage. B. Lindars also presents the difference between a parable and a miracle story. Focusing his attention mainly on vv. 9-10, he calls it "The Parable of the good wine".

F. J. Moloney also denies R. Bultmann's description of the event as a typical miracle story.⁵⁹ He says that a more detailed narrative approach to the

⁵⁸ B. LINDARS, "Two Parables in John", in *New Testament Studies* 16 (1970) 318-329.

⁵⁹ F. J. MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 90.

text would clearly show that it is not a typical miracle story. F. J. Moloney says that such a description of the passage fails to meet Bultmann's own description of a typical miracle story. Bultmann proposes the form of the Synoptic miracle stories in this way:

- a) A problem is described in some detail, so that the gravity of the situation will be clear.
- b) A request is made.
- c) The miracle is performed, and it is accompanied by the description of a gesture, a touch, a word, or a name.
- d) The miracle and its successful accomplishment are described.
- e) The miracle closes with the wonder of all who saw it or heard about it.⁶⁰

F. J. Moloney says that many elements present within this structure make it evident that this text is not a miracle story. When the mother of Jesus makes a request to Jesus, he rebukes her request in v.4. This refusal of the request to make a miracle breaks the regular form of the miracle story. In the miracle stories of the Synoptic gospels, this rebuke against the request does not happen. The following are a few other indications within the text that go against the regular form of a miracle story: "without being instructed in any way by Jesus, his mother is the one who turns and tells the attendants what to do...The final element in the Johannine story is also somewhat foreign. One does not read of the wonder of all who see or hear of the miracle. Nothing is said of the effect

⁶⁰ R. BULTMANN, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963) 218-231.

of the miracle upon the guests, who are never mentioned”.⁶¹ Presenting this evidence against the regular form of the miracle stories, F. J. Moloney raises many questions about R. Bultmann’s description of this passage as a ‘typical miracle story’. But I observe that F. J. Moloney fails to take into consideration the belief of the disciples (cfr. v.11).

B. Olsson, as a result of his scholarly research in the text-linguistic analysis of this passage, draws the conclusion that this text is a ‘symbolic narrative text with many allusive elements’ for the following reasons: 1) The entire text is coloured by dominant symbolic features; 2) This is basically a narrative text; 3) A large number of allusions of different kinds are made use of by the author in order to bring out the symbolic meaning. Therefore, B. Olsson calls this passage a ‘symbolic narrative text with many allusive elements’.⁶²

Having summarized above a few scholarly views of some exegetes about the literary form of this passage, I am not going to pass any decisive judgement on the ‘Gattung’ of this passage – for it is beyond the scope of this study despite its importance in our literary analysis – but I would say that in my opinion the textual description proposed by B. Olsson seems to be convincing and reasonable. It does not mean that the miraculous aspect of this event is denied.

⁶¹ F. J. MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 91.

⁶² Cfr. B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 114.

9. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND CRITICISM

Scholars believe that the fourth evangelist has taken a story from a religious tradition or from a written source containing many miracle stories. A story taken from a tradition or a written source was influenced by the cultural and religious background of the gospel of John.⁶³ The literary theories on the source of this narrative are numerous.

W. Lütgehetmann, in his doctoral dissertation 'Die Hochzeit von Kana (Joh 2, 1-11)' published in 1990, makes a thorough diachronic study of the question of various literary-redaction theories of the 20th century. He gives a brief review of the theories proposed by E. Schwartz, J. Wellhausen, F. Spitta, H.H. Wendt, E. Hirsch, R. Bultmann, P. Parker, W. Wilkens, S. Temple, R.E. Brown, R. T. Fortna, W. Nicol, H.M. Teeple, G. Richter, M.E. Boismard, A. Lamouille, W. Langbrandtner, J. Becker, U. Busse, A. May and H.P. Heekerens.⁶⁴

Among all the theories proposed by the scholars mentioned above, Bultmann's literary theory had a strong impact in the world of exegesis. According to him, the narrative of changing water into wine derives from the 'σημεῖα-source'. He justifies this point with

⁶³ J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 57.

⁶⁴ W. LÜTGEHETMANN, *Die Hochzeit von Kana (Joh 2, 1-11)*. Zu Ursprung und Deutung einer Wundererzählung in Rahmen johanneischer Redaktionsgeschichte (Biblische Untersuchungen 20; Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1990) 41-122.

many arguments in his commentary.⁶⁵ In his opinion, the dialogue between Jesus and his mother (vv. 3-4) has been taken from the original source. Bultmann and Becker propose that the words of Jesus (Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι οὐπω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου) can be / have to be understood only in reference to the “hour” of the death and resurrection of Jesus⁶⁶ – otherwise these words do not make any sense. But some authors like F. Spitta, G. Richter, R.T. Fortna and W. Nicol ascribe to the evangelist the whole dialogue between Jesus and his mother (vv. 3-4) or at least the reference to the “hour” of Jesus.⁶⁷

In the following sections, we shall examine how Hellenistic and biblical traditions have made an impact on the textual formation of this Cana episode.

A. Hellenistic Influence

Of the seven signs recorded by the fourth evangelist, R.E. Brown observes, there are miracles of a type found in the Synoptics, and three are variant accounts of incidents narrated in the Synoptics. But the Cana miracle alone finds no parallel in the Synoptic tradition.⁶⁸ For this reason some scholars like Bultmann, Becker and a few others propose that there was a strong pagan influence on this Cana miracle, especially the influence of Dionysiac cult. Apart from the mythology of Dionysos, there is a hypothesis that it would have also been influenced by

⁶⁵ Cfr. R. BULMANN, *John*, 113-115.

⁶⁶ Cfr. Jn 7.30; 8.20; 12.23; 13.1; 17.1.

⁶⁷ J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 57.

⁶⁸ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, p. 101.

some other Hellenistic writings (e.g.: the writings of Philo).

B. Mythology of Dionysos⁶⁹

The Cana narrative is interpreted as a ‘Christianized version of the Dionysos myth’. Dionysos was the Greek god of wine. It was believed that Dionysos supplied wine in abundance. According to C. K. Barrett, the god Dionysos was not only the discoverer of the vine (εὐρετής ἀμπέλου, Justin i *Apol.*, 54, *Trypho*, 69) but also the cause of miraculous transformations of water into wine (e.g. Euripides, *Bacchae* 704-707; Athanaeus i, 61 (34a); Pausanias vi, xxvi, 1f).⁷⁰

⁶⁹ On the Dionysiac background, see J. BEUTLER, ‘Johannes-Evangelium (u. -briefe) A-C’, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 18 (1998) 651-653; W. BAUER, *Das Johannesevangelium erklärt* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 6; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1933) 47; R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 118-119 and footnote 1 on p. 119. E. LINNEMANN, “Die Hochzeit zu Kana und Dionysos”, in *New Testament Studies* 20 (1974) 408-418; W. LÜTGEHETMANN, *Die Hochzeit von Kana (Joh 2, 1-11)*, 261-272; E. NOETZEL, *Christus und Dionysos. Bemerkungen zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund von Joh 2,1-11* (Arbeiten zur Theologie 1), Stuttgart 1960; M. HENGEL, “The interpretation of the wine miracle at Cana. John 2.1-11”, in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament. Gedenkschrift G. B. Caird*, (Oxford 1987) 108-112; A. SMITMANS, *Das Weingewand von Kana* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese 6; Tübingen 1966) 31-34.

⁷⁰ C.K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 188.

Another interesting factor that draws our attention is the connection between the feast of Dionysos and the Christian feast of Epiphany. The feast of Dionysos was celebrated on January 6th and even today the feast of Epiphany is celebrated on this same day (January 6th). “And the Cana reading became part of the Epiphany liturgy. During the feast the fountains of the pagan temples on Andros spouted wine instead of water”.⁷¹

R.E. Brown has difficulties in accepting the theory that the Hellenistic miracle stories could have influenced the Cana miracle. In his Commentary, he writes: “...obstacle to the thesis that the Cana story was borrowed from Hellenistic miracle legends is the modest and discreet way in which the miraculous is introduced into the narrative – so untypical of the atmosphere of the Hellenistic wonders”.⁷² Noetzel was the leading figure to strongly oppose the theory of Dionysos mythology.

J. Beutler says that in spite of the counter-arguments of Noetzel against the background of Dionysiac mythology, several authors accept the strong influence of the Dionysiac cult in the textual formation of the first sign of Jesus. M. Hengel and W. Lütgehetmann are notable authors among those who strongly believe in the influence of Dionysiac mythology in the textual formation of this Cana episode. Here I would like to quote J. Beutler who explains very well the influence of Dionysiac

⁷¹ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, p. 101.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 101-102.

mythology with many reference to the textual evidences:

Schon die klass. griech. Überlieferung kennt Dionysos als Spender von Wein: Seefahrer schwimmen plötzlich in ihm (Hymn. Hom. Bacch. 35/7 [77 Allen]), so wie die Bakchen in Ekstase Milch u. Honig aus einem Flusse schöpfen (Plat. Ion 534A). Nach Euripides läßt der Gott eine Quelle mit Wein aus der Erde hervorströmen, wenn eine Bakchantin den Thyrsosstab in die Erde stößt (Bacch. 706f); Milch, Wein u. Honig strömen, wo der Gott das Land betritt (ebd. 142f; vgl. 423f. 651. 773f), ja er ist selbst im Wein gegenwärtig (284f). Nach Diodor v. Siz. bringt in Teos eine Quelle in regelmäßigen Abständen Wein hervor, was die Teer als Bewies für die Geburt des Dionysos in ihrer Stadt werten (Diod. Sic. 3, 66, 3). Zwei weitere Texte gehören zwar dem 2. Jh. nC. An, enthalten aber Überlieferungen, die alter sein dürften: nach Lukian entdeckten Seefahrer bei den Säulen des Herkules eine Inschrift: ‚Bis hierher kamen Herakles u. Dionysos‘. In der Nähe floß ein Fluß von köstlichem Wein wie dem von Chios. Er gilt als shmei/on eines Aufenthalts des Dionysos (ver. hist. 1, 7). Nach Pausanias stellen die Priester in Elis am Fest der Thyrien im Tempel des Dionysos drei leere Krüge auf u. versiegeln den Tempel vor Zeugen; am nächsten Morgen sind die Krüge mit köstlichem Wein gefüllt (6, 26, 1f). Auf Andros fließt jährlich am Fest des Dionysos Wein aus dessen Tempel. Die gleiche Tradition kennt Plinius d. Ä. bereits im 1. Jh. nC. für die Nonen des Januar; das Fest werde *Qeodosi*,a genannt (n. h. 2, 231). – Nun ist freilich im Blick zu behalten, daß die griech. Sage selbst von der Herkunft des Dionysos aus dem Orient weiß. Dionysos ist der Sohn der Semele, die ihrerseits Tochter des thebanischen Königssohnes Kadmos ist,

der von Tyros (oder Sidon) nach Griechenland kam. Griechische Münzen aus Syrien-Palästina kennen dionysische Motive. Dies gilt u. a. von Skythopolis in Galiläa, das sich als die Stadt der Geburt u. frühen Kindheit des Dionysos sah (vgl. Plin. n. h. 5, 74). Ein Text aus Achilles Tatius verlegt die attische Legende von der Gabe des Weinstocks an einen gastfreundlichen Hirten durch Dionysos nach Tyros (Leuc. et Clyth. 2, 2, 1/6). Hinter Dionysos steckt dabei vermutlich eine alte oriental. Vegetationsgottheit, die durch Ovid auch für Phrygien bezeugt ist (met. 8, 679/83).⁷³

Thus, J. Beutler's numerous references to the textual evidence help us see clearly the relationship between the Dionysiac mythology and the Cana episode. Along with M. Hengel, we can also observe the influence of this Dionysos mythology in the narrative of turning water into wine. As Dionysos provided them with abundance of wine, so does Jesus, 'the new Dionysos', bringing abundance of Joy in the eschatological time.

C. Writings of Philo

Some scholars think that the writings of Philo of Alexandria had some impact on the formation of the text of turning water into wine. Philo of Alexandria, often called Philo Judaeus, was born around 20 B.C. and died sometime after 40 A.D. His voluminous works are mainly philosophical or allegorical exegesis of the Old Testament. He is said to be 'the first

⁷³ J. BEUTLER, "Johannes-Evangelium (u.-Briefe) A-C", in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christendom*, vol. 18, Stuttgart 1998, 652-653.

philosopher after Aristotle to be represented by a large body of writings. Philo described the 'Logos' as the mediator between God and the world, between God and mankind, between God and Israel.⁷⁴ C.H. Dodd thinks that some of the texts of Philo are the best key to understand the background of this Cana story. Here is an example of Philo's allegorical interpretation of the following text: "And Melkizedek King of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High" (Gen 14.18).

Melchizedek brings out wine instead of water. In his allegorical interpretation (leg. Alleg. 3,79- 83), Philo describes Melchizedek as 'Logos-Priest'.⁷⁵

And the other writings of Philo (De somn. 2,183. 190. 249; Quod sit deus immutabilis 158; Leg alleg. 1,84; De fuga et inveniione 166) show that the wine donated by the Logos is a symbol of grace, joy, virtue and wisdom (according to C.H. Dodd, Interpretation, 298f).⁷⁶

But this hypothesis of the impact of Philo's writings is not so much accepted as that of the Dionysiac cult.

D. Biblical Tradition

It is also believed that apart from these Hellenistic influences, the Old Testament and the Jewish writings

⁷⁴ F. C. GRANT, "Philo of Alexandria", in F. C. GRANT - H. H. GROWLEY (edd.), *Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, ²1963) 766-767.

⁷⁵ A. SMITMANS, *Das Weinwunder von Kana*, 34.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

would have also probably influenced the origin of this text, because some of the key themes we find in this Cana episode are very much typical of the Biblical tradition.

This first sign of Jesus is set in the context of a wedding. The symbolic meaning of the wedding is important in the Biblical tradition. The idea of relationship between God and His people, with matrimony as an analogy, already existed in pre-exilic period. This idea of infidelity of the people of Israel is found in Hos 2.1 - 3.5; and also in Ez 16. As we see in the Old Testament (Isa 54.4-8, 62.4-5), this is a symbol of the messianic age.

A. Serra has done a very scholarly study on the Jewish background predominantly present in this Cana pericope.⁷⁷ He finds a lot of similarities between the Sinai pericope in the book of Exodus and the Cana story. This Cana event is a reflection of the peak moment of the Covenant of Yahweh with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.⁷⁸

And in the Synoptics (Mt 8.11, 22.1-14; Lk 22. 16-18), Jesus uses the symbols of 'wedding' and 'banquet' to describe the future salvation.⁷⁹ In the context of the wedding feast (Mk 2.19), we see Jesus using the

⁷⁷ It is beyond our scope of study to enumerate here all the similarities and references proposed by the author, even though they are very interesting and convincing. Cfr. A. SERRA, *Contributi dell'antica letteratura giudaica per l'esegesi di Gv 2,1-12 e 19,25-27* (Roma: Herder, 1977).

⁷⁸ A. SERRA, *Maria a Cana e presso la croce*, 7-78.

⁷⁹ J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 58.

symbolism of new wine in old wineskins in order to compare his new teaching with the old Jewish customs.⁸⁰ Comparing this verse (Mk 2.19) with the Cana episode, W. Lütgehetmann finds at least three similarities among them and he comments:

Dieses Wort ist uns in einem Zusammenhang überliefert (vgl. Mk 2,18-21 parr), der Jesus als *Bräutigam* und seine Jünger als "Söhne des Brautgemachs", d. h. als *Hochzeitgäste*, ausweist. Damit bieten sich einige Vergleichspunkte zur Kana-Perikope:

- Beide Texte enthalten das Thema Hochzeit;
- beide Texte nennen Jesu Jünger als Hochzeitgäste;
- in beiden Texten erscheinen die Begriffe "Wein" und "Bräutigam".⁸¹

Another important biblical background is the conversion of water into wine. This Cana pericope can be compared with the multiplication of bread. This tradition is found not only in the Synoptics (Mt 14.13-21; Mk 6.30-44, 8.1-10; Lk 9.10-17) but also in John's gospel itself (Jn 6.1-15). But it is to be noted that there are more differences than similarities in this comparison. For example: in the multiplication of bread Jesus multiplies something that was already in existence; but here in the Cana episode, Jesus donates a new wine which was not there before.⁸²

The Cana story has echoes in the Elijah-Elisha tradition in the books of Kings. In 2 King 4.42-44, we

⁸⁰ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, vol.1, p. 105.

⁸¹ W. LÜTGEHETMANN, *Die Hochzeit von Kana (Joh 2, 1-11)*, 152-153.

⁸² J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 58.

read that a man comes from Baalshalishah, with bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of grain. And Elisha performs a miracle. One hundred men eat and still have some left (וַיֵּאכְלוּ וַיִּזְתְּרוּ). And Jn 2.1-12 can be compared with two other narratives (1 King 17.1-16; 2 King 4.1-17). All these narratives come under the category of so-called “Geschenkwunder” (“Donation Miracles”). Many exegetes prefer to put the changing of water into wine under this category. There are also differences here: 1) In none of these miracles do we find wine being donated; 2) Unlike the Cana miracle, the multiplication is done out of some pre-existing material. Only in the Cana miracle, Jesus donates a new wine which was not there before.⁸³

All these biblical elements mentioned above contribute to the background of the Johannine narrative of the Cana episode.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Part Two

NARRATIVE CRITICISM OF JOHN 2.1-12

A narrative can be defined as “any work of literature that tells a story”.⁸⁴ In our day-to-day life, we make use of narratives in our conversations because certain aspects of life cannot be communicated except through narration or stories. In the same way, the evangelists themselves make use of narrative techniques and present the life and mission of Jesus in the form of narratives, because Gospels are ‘stories’. This is very true for the gospel of John as well. Many exegetes⁸⁵ are of the opinion that one of the important characteristics of the gospel of John is its vivid narrative nature.

Narratological analysis is very much suited to Jn 2.1-12 as this text displays a very clear narrative character. It fits well into the narrative framework outlined by Vladimir J. Propp.⁸⁶ In doing our

⁸⁴ M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 23.

⁸⁵ For example, R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*; V. MANNUCCI, *Giovanni. Il Vangelo narrante* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1993) 35-44.

⁸⁶ Vladimir J. Propp is a well-known Russian scholar who has contributed much to the narrative criticism (cfr. *Morfologia della fiaba*, Nuova Biblioteca Scientifica Einaudi 13; Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore,⁹1966). Within biblical studies, though his name is not so popular, his new contribution to the new methods of narrative analysis is of great help for the study of biblical narratives. When this

narratological analysis of Jn 2.1-12, we will basically follow the methods proposed by R.A. Culpepper, M. A. Powell, J.L. Ska and W. Egger⁸⁷ with some modifications.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission's document 'The interpretation of the Bible in the Church' explains well the function and purpose of narratological/narrative analysis: "Particularly attentive to elements in the text which have to do with plot, characterization and point of view taken by a narrator, narrative analysis studies how a text tells a story in such a way as to engage the reader in its 'narrative world' and the system of values contained therein".⁸⁸ A very careful attention will be paid to these guidelines of this document as we will proceed

book was first published in 1959, many scholars of narrative criticism welcomed his new ideas and insights, appreciated his new discoveries and contribution to the literary study of narratives and wrote many books about the new narrative theories discovered by Propp. Among them are: Melville Jacobs (1959), J.L. Fisher (1963), and Archer Taylor (1964). Cfr. P. J. MILNE, *Vladimir Propp and the study of structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature Series, ed. by D.M. Gunn; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1988).

⁸⁷ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*; M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*; J.L. SKA, "Our Fathers have told us". Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives (Subsidia biblica 13; Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990); W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament*, 111-124.

⁸⁸ PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1993) 46.

with narratological analysis of Jn 2.1-12.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, we will make an analysis of action-sequences and action-bearers of the Cana narrative. In the second section, we will analyze the individual scenes of the story. And the third section of this chapter will give an overview of the important narrative characteristics of the text.

1. ANALYSIS OF ACTION-SEQUENCES AND ACTION-BEARERS

The action-sequences and action-bearers are the two constituent elements of any narrative. According to V. J. Propp, “narratives are established combinations of actions and action-bearers”.⁸⁹ In the analytical procedure proposed by him, the actions of the *dramatis personae* are viewed from the standpoint of their connection with the course of the action.⁹⁰

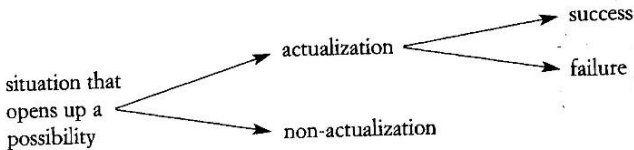
Among the various models developed in connection with V. J. Propp, are: C. Bremond’s action-sequence model and A. Greimas’ action-bearers model. In the following two subsections, we will apply these two models of analysis to Jn 2.1-12.

⁸⁹ Cfr. W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament*, 113.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

A) C. Bremond's action-sequence model of Analysis

All narratives are basically made up of a sequence of actions. Almost in every narrative, we can find turning points or crucial points in the action-sequence of the story. They are called “nodal points”.⁹¹ These nodal points open up new possibilities and offer alternatives for further development of the story. C. Bremond in his analysis of narrative texts focuses on the nodal points in the story because these important decisive moments play a vital role in our understanding of the narrative.⁹² He presents the basic scheme in the following diagram and calls it the “elementary sequence”.⁹³



Commenting on this model, W. Egger says, “this model invites us to reflect on what would happen if one of the action-bearers had decided otherwise... (and) is especially suitable for texts that deal with decisions. It clarifies the meaning of alternatives and

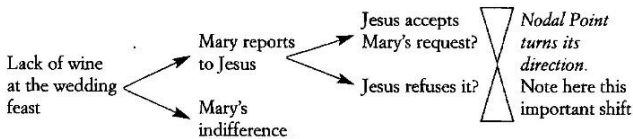
⁹¹ W. Egger says, “The passages of a narrative at which the action might have proceeded other than as told are the nodal points”. Cfr. W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament*, 118.

⁹² W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament*, 114.

⁹³ C. BREMOND, *Logique du récit* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973) 131, in W. EGGER *How to read the New Testament*, 114.

shows the consequences of a decision”.⁹⁴

Applying this model of analysis to our text, we can notice a number of nodal points present in Jn 2.1-12. According to me, the important nodal points are Mary’s⁹⁵ decision to inform Jesus about the lack of wine and Jesus’ decision to perform the miracle. In v. 4, Jesus apparently refuses the request of his mother. Here the nodal point seems to be unclear. Does Jesus accept the request of his mother or does he refuse it? The fact that afterwards Jesus changes the water into wine shows that the nodal point here takes another direction. His refusal is only apparent and not decisive.



The narrator presents a situation wherein wine is lacking at the wedding feast. The presence of Mary here opens up a new possibility. She could either take initiative to report it to Jesus or remain indifferent. If Mary had decided to remain indifferent, what would have happened at the marriage feast? Would the miracle have taken place? What direction would take this story further? The reader is invited to reflect on the choice that Mary makes in this story. The initiative taken by the mother of Jesus paves the way for the

⁹⁴ W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament*, 115.

⁹⁵ The evangelist never mentions the name of ‘the mother of Jesus’. But hereafter when we refer to ‘the mother of Jesus’, we shall call her with the proper name “Mary”.

further development of the story. Here Mary takes the opportunity to present the situation to her son. Thus the narrator tries to highlight the mediating role of Mary in the Cana story.

Jesus' reply to his mother is a crucial point in the narrative. Jesus says to his mother: *Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου*". Here Jesus seems to refuse the request of his mother. But later on, he changes the water into wine. Here it is to be noted that the nodal point changes its direction.

The same method can also be applied to the other nodal points of this story and thus the reader can reflect what would happen if the other action-bearers had decided otherwise and eventually see the consequences and meaning behind those actions. In my opinion, the other nodal points are not as important as the one that we analyzed.

B) A. J. Greimas' Actantical model of Analysis

In this 'Actantical model' (also called 'action-bearers model' or 'actants model') proposed by A.J. Greimas, we pay our attention to the action-bearers and the relationship between them. Thus the text is examined from the standpoint of the action-bearers themselves.⁹⁶

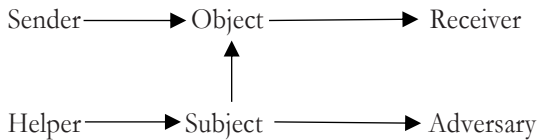
According to A.J. Greimas, the 'actors' ('action-bearers' / 'actants') can be reduced into three pairs:⁹⁷

⁹⁶ W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament*, 115-116.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 116.

Subject-Object (this pair shares the level of willing)
 Sender-Receiver (this one shares the level of communication)
 Helper-Adversary (this one belongs to the circumstances of
 the action).

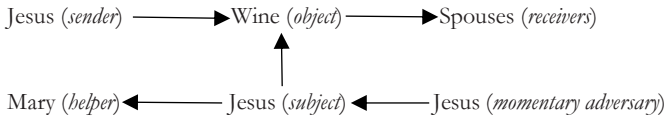
The pairing of the action-bearers is shown in the following diagram.⁹⁸



This model is very suitable for Jn 2.1-12, as this pericope comes under the category of “Geschenkwunder” (Donation Miracle). In the Cana story, wine runs out at the wedding feast and Jesus is presented by the narrator as the donor of wine to the spouses. Jesus is the sender. The wine which is the symbol of nuptial joy is the object. The spouses are the receivers. The mother of Jesus is the helper (collaborator). Jesus momentarily plays the role of the adversary (cfr. Jn 2.4) and then later on comes back to play the role of the subject and the sender (cfr. Jn 2.7-8). J. Beutler comments on this change of nodal point as follows: “Riflettendo sul livello teologico, si potrebbe vedere nell’ostacolo anche la volontà del Padre che collega l’esperienza della Gloria di Cristo all’ora dell’esaltazione di Gesù sulla croce e nel ritorno al Padre”.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 55.



It is to be noted that we have not mentioned here the steward, the disciples, the brothers of Jesus as they are only minor characters and their actions are of less importance in the mainline of the story. Nor do they fit well into this framework of ‘actantial model’ outlined by A. J. Greimas. But the relationship between them is of notable importance in this story. For example, the servants obey the words of the mother of Jesus (v. 4) and they carry out what Jesus asks them to do (vv. 7-8); the dialogue between the steward and the bridegroom makes the reader understand the quality of the new wine; the belief of the disciples again emphasizes more the miraculous nature of the event. The servants function as collaborators (helpers). The role of Jesus attracts our attention because he seems to play a double role (i.e. first as the adversary and then as the subject and sender). He is said to be in relation with every other action-bearer of the story.

Thus we note that the narrator presents Jesus as the principal and most important “actor / action-bearer” of the story. All the other acting persons are, in one way or other, participants (active or passive) in the miraculous act performed by Jesus. They are taken up by wonder and eventually Jesus’ disciples become believers, seeing the glory of Jesus manifested to them.

2. NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE INDIVIDUAL SCENES

In the following sections, we will divide the text into various scenes and apply narrative analysis to each single scene.

A. Division of the text into dramatic scenes

Commentators give a variety of divisions of the text, each one following a different literary criterion. We give a division based on ‘*dramatis personae*’ and the dramatic situations.¹⁰⁰

The *setup* (vv. 1-3a)

Dialogue between Jesus and his mother (vv. 3b-4)

The reaction of the mother of Jesus (v. 5)

Jesus and the servants (vv. 6-8)

The steward and the bridegroom (vv. 9-10)

Conclusion of the narrative (vv. 11-12)

i) The setup [vv. 1-3a]

Ἐκαὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ·² ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν γάμον.^{3a} καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου (Jn 2.1-3a).

The narrator provides a social setting for this episode: a wedding. He reports only what is absolutely essential. He provides information about when and where this event takes place.

The temporal indicator ‘on the third day’ raises a problem: Is the ‘third day’ to be counted from the first

¹⁰⁰ This division has been adapted from J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 56.

day mentioned in Jn 1.35? or from the second day mentioned in Jn 1.43? Theodore of Mopsuestia (In Joanne [Syr.] – CSCO 116:39) counts this day as the third day after the baptismal scene (Jn 1.29-34), but most exegetes count it from the day of Philip and Nathanael's call, suggesting that that day and the next were spent on the journey from the Jordan valley to Galilee.¹⁰¹

The narrator mentions that the marriage took place at Cana in Galilee. Apart from John, no other evangelists mention this town in the New Testament (cfr. Jn 4.46; 21.2). This Cana of Galilee was one of the important places where Jesus carried out his early activities.¹⁰²

The narrator locates the wedding in the broad geographical setting of Cana of Galilee. He does not give any details regarding the specificity of the physical setting of the place. Commenting over this point, M.S. Collins says, "Through this sparse physical reference, the narrator thus focuses the reader's attention on the potential interaction of the characters in the specifically designated social setting."¹⁰³

It is surprising to see that the mother of Jesus is

¹⁰¹ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 97, note 1.

¹⁰² Like John, the evangelist Luke also mentions that Jesus carried out his activities in the Galilean hill country near Nazareth immediately after his baptism (cfr. Lk 4.14-16). The evangelists Mark and Mathew begin the ministry at the Sea of Galilee.

¹⁰³ M.S. COLLINS, "The question of Doxa: A Socio-literary Reading of the Wedding at Cana", 103.

mentioned by the narrator even before Jesus himself comes onto the scene. R.E. Brown refers to an apocryphal tradition and says, “Mary was the aunt of the bridegroom, whom an early 3rd century Latin preface identifies as John son of Zebedee. This is to be associated with the tradition that Salome, wife of Zebedee and mother of John, was Mary’s sister, a relationship which makes John the cousin of Jesus. The presence of Jesus makes it not implausible that a relative was involved in the wedding, unless the invitation came through Nathanael, who was from Cana.”¹⁰⁴ J. Beutler gives a theological interpretation to this early mention about the presence of Mary, namely that she replaces the bride, who is never ever mentioned in the episode.¹⁰⁵ This interpretation of J. Beutler is very attractive and convincing.

The presence of the disciples as a group appears for the first time here in the gospel of John. Though they are not going to be active participants in this miracle, the narrator mentions their presence here because they will have an important role play towards the end of the story. They will give witness to the miracle and become believers in Jesus.

The lack of wine at the wedding feast opens up a new possibility for the miracle to take place. The reason why the wine ran out is not given. The narrator mentions the lack of wine in order to prepare his readers to understand later the abundance of the

¹⁰⁴ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 98, note 1.

¹⁰⁵ J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 56.

divine gift.¹⁰⁶

ii) Dialogue between Jesus and his mother (vv. 3b-4)

^{3b} λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν, Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν. ⁴ [καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι ὄψω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου (Jn 2.3b-4).

The role of the mother of Jesus in these verses is very significant. So much has been commented over this dialogue between Jesus and Mary. The narrator does not give any explicit details about Mary's concern with the lack of wine but he makes his readers understand the mediating role of Mary. It is evident that the narrator wishes to give a prominent and active role to Mary.

Does Mary ask her son for a miracle? or does she simply report to her son about the problem? Some exegetes say that Mary simply reports to her son about the desperate situation and does not seem to directly and openly ask Jesus to perform a miracle. Others say that Jesus' refusal to become involved gives us a clue that something was being asked of him by his mother. That means Mary is reporting this fact hoping that Jesus would intervene with some miraculous act to solve the problem.¹⁰⁷ The initiative that Mary takes here calls for our careful attention. It is at the request of his mother that Jesus begins to perform the first of

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, pp. 98-99, note 3.

the signs. T. Okure comments: “She serves as a midwife who helps a reluctant expectant mother to push and give birth. Her words in v. 3 are a most powerful prayer offered by way of information”.¹⁰⁸

Jesus’ reply to Mary (v. 4) has been very much discussed by many exegetes. Though the word γύναι gives us an impression that the way Jesus addresses his mother sounds strange, “it is not a rebuke, nor an impolite form, nor an indication of a lack of affection. It was Jesus’ normal, polite way of addressing women”.¹⁰⁹

The expression Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί is a semitism. Exegetes have very diverse opinions regarding the meaning of this idiomatic expression.¹¹⁰ In the Old Testament, the Hebrew expression מַה־לִּי וְלָךְ appears in 2 Chron 35.21, 1 Kings 17.18, 2 Kings 3.13, Hos 14.8. In some contexts this implies hostility and in other contexts it implies simple disengagement. In the New Testament usage it also has both these meanings (cfr. Mt 8.29). Most exegetes suggest that this expression does not express any hostility towards Mary but Jesus is just replying in another level referring to his mission. According to I. de la Potterie, “Gesù lascia intendere che egli si pone su un piano diverso da quello di Maria

¹⁰⁸ T. OKURE, *John*, 1464.

¹⁰⁹ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 99, note 4. The following are the references presented by R.E. Brown: Mt 15.28; Lk 13.12; Jn 4.21, 8.10; 20.13.

¹¹⁰ B. Olsson presents this problem in a very detailed manner with a lot of references and examples. For more details, cfr. B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 36-40.

e in un'altra prospettiva: questa pensa ancora al vino della festa, Gesù pensa ormai alla sua missione messianica che inizia. Quindi tra loro c'è una certa incomprendione, un equivoco".¹¹¹

The second part of v. 4 is closely connected to the first part. Two problems arise here. First: Is the expression οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου to be taken as a statement or as a rhetorical question? Second: What does Jesus mean by ἡ ὥρα μου? Most exegetes take it as a negative statement. But the discussion over this point is not yet resolved. There is a lot of disagreement among the scholars in deciding whether it is a statement or an interrogative. In our exegesis, we consider it as a statement. That is why in the previous chapter we rendered its translation as follows: "My hour has not yet come".

What is the meaning of this phrase 'my hour has not yet come'? It is quite clear that these words of Jesus point to the process of Jesus' glorification. The narrator presents these words of Jesus to prepare his readers to understand the link between the revelation of his glory (v. 11) and the hour of Jesus' exaltation on the cross and his return to the Father (cfr. Jn 12.23; 13.31ff).

iii) The reaction of the mother of Jesus (v. 5)

λέγει ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς διακόνοις, "Ὁ τι ἂν λέγη ὑμῖν ποιήσατε (Jn 2.5)

¹¹¹ I. DE LA POTTERIE, "La Madre di Gesù e il mistero di Cana", in *Civiltà Cattolica* 130 (1979) 430.

It surprises the reader to see why Mary behaves as if Jesus has replied 'yes' to her. Though Jesus has rejected her request (v. 4), Mary asks the servants to do whatever her son would tell them (v. 5). This means that Mary had no doubt about the intervention of her son though she was not sure about the way he would intervene. Maybe she did not know what her son would do, but she was confident that he would meet the need. That is why she says to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you".

Mary seems to have understood her son very well and thus she wants to indirectly communicate to the disciples that the hour of Jesus may come at any time and that they have to collaborate with him by obeying his words. The narrator here again in v. 5 stresses the active role of Mary as in v. 3b. The readers are expected to understand these words of Mary in connection with the reply of Jesus in v. 4 where the hour of Jesus is mentioned.

iv) Jesus and the servants (vv. 6-8)

⁶ ἦσαν δὲ ἐκεῖ λίθιναι ὑδρίαὶ ἕξ κατὰ τὸν καθαρισμὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων κείμεναι, χωροῦσαι ἀνὰ μετρητὰς δύο ἢ τρεῖς ⁷ λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Γεμίσατε τὰς ὑδρίας ὕδατος καὶ ἐγέμισαν αὐτὰς ἕως ἄνω ⁸ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἄντλήσατε νῦν καὶ φέρετε τῷ ἀρχιτρικλίνῳ· οἱ δὲ ἤνεγκαν (Jn 2.6-8).

The narrative is interrupted to point out the presence of the water jars. The presence of six water

jars sets the stage for what is about to happen. The narrator presents a very minute description of the water jars: their total number (six), what they are made of (stone), their quantity (two or three measures; one Hebrew measure = 39.39 litres)¹¹² and the purpose of these water jars (for Jewish purification). The fact that the narrator interrupts the story to provide additional information about the setting by means of this break in the narrative indicates that the narrator is inviting his reader to ponder its significance.¹¹³ The water jars were of stone, since stone utensils did not contract uncleanness.¹¹⁴ And the number six has a symbolic meaning.¹¹⁵ The large capacity of the water jars stands for the abundance and fullness of Jesus' glory yet to be revealed.

And now the narrative again moves quickly (v. 7). Jesus first asks the servants to fill the water jars with water and then, after they have filled them to the brim, asks them to draw some and take it to the steward of the wedding feast (v. 8). Here the narrator resolves the readers' difficulties in accepting the apparent refusal of Jesus to his mother's request (v. 4) and thus makes his readers understand that the "timely warning

¹¹² B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 52.

¹¹³ L.P. JONES, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, 55.

¹¹⁴ Some exegetes say that the material (stone) of which they were made refers to Ez 36.26. Some other exegetes comment that these six water jars symbolize the old Mosaic law (cfr. Ez 31.18; 32.15; 34.1,4; Dt 4.13; 5.22; 9.9-11; 10.1,3; 1 Kings 8.9).

¹¹⁵ To know more about the symbolic meaning of number six, read footnotes nn. 38-40.

uttered by the mother of Jesus was not superfluous”.¹¹⁶

v) The steward and the bridegroom (vv. 9-10)

ὥς δὲ ἐγεύσατο ὁ ἀρχιτρίκλινος τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον γεγενημένον καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει πόθεν ἐστίν, οἱ δὲ διάκονοι ᾔδεισαν οἱ ἡντληκότες τὸ ὕδωρ, φωνεῖ τὸν νυμφίον ὁ ἀρχιτρίκλινος ¹⁰καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Πᾶς ἄνθρωπος πρῶτον τὸν καλὸν οἶνον τίθησιν καὶ ὅταν μεθυσθῶσιν τὸν ἐλάσσω· σὺ τετήρηκας τὸν καλὸν οἶνον ἕως ἄρτι (Jn 2. 9-10).

Now that the water has become the most excellent wine, the narrator indicates to his readers the greatness of what has been done by Jesus, through the actions of the steward. Neither the steward nor the bridegroom knows where that excellent wine has come from. The steward attests to the outstanding quality and superiority of the new wine, though he knows nothing about the miracle. Commenting on these two verses, Schnackenburg says, “...the servants are mentioned because they can testify to the miracle (the interrogation of the man born blind in ch. 9 displays a similar interest). πόθεν has a deeper meaning; the question of ‘where’ Jesus’ gift comes from (4:11) and ‘where’ he himself comes from (7:27f.; 8:14; 9:29f; 19:9) is raised again and again throughout the Gospel. The mention of the source also serves as an indication of the (heavenly and divine) nature of the gift, or of the reality to which it alludes symbolically; and the gift raises the question (as in 4:11f.) of the giver

¹¹⁶ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1, p. 333.

and his significance.”¹¹⁷

A great deal of irony is involved in these two verses. The steward attributes the best wine to the bridegroom rather than the one who performed the miracle. The reader already knows that it was Jesus who changed the water into wine. The author makes the reader feel superior in front of the ignorance of the steward. The reaction of the steward makes the reader automatically compare the bridegroom and Jesus. It leads the reader to understand the symbolism presented by the narrator and its meaning that Jesus is the real bride groom. This is made explicit in 3.29.

vi) Conclusion of the narrative (vv. 11-12)

¹¹Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανᾷ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐφάνέρωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ¹² Μετὰ τοῦτο κατέβη εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ αὐτὸς καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκεῖ ἔμειναν οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας (Jn 2.11-12).

In these last two verses, the narrator makes use of *inclusio*¹¹⁸ to bring the narrative towards its close. These verses 11 and 12 contain very important remarks of the narrator:

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Inclusio* is a literary device that envelops a section by repeating something at the end of the section that has already been used at the beginning. Here in this narrative, *day/days* (2.1,12) and *Cana of Galilee* (2.1,11).

1. Jesus did this at Cana of Galilee
2. This is the beginning of the Signs.
3. He revealed his glory.
4. His disciples believed in him.
5. He goes down to Capernaum with his mother, brothers and disciples.
6. He did not remain there for many days.

Each and every piece of information presented here by the narrator is very important to bring the story to its close and also to bring to the readers' knowledge the deep theological significance of this story.

The second mention about Cana of Galilee in v.11, stresses the historical concreteness of the story. The narrator brings the story towards its close by emphasizing that it is the first of Jesus' signs. The theological meaning of 'sign' will be dealt with at length in the next chapter.

Jesus' revealing his glory at this Cana event has been the subject of scholarly attention on the part of many exegetes, because the 'glory of Jesus' is one of the main and important themes of the Johannine gospel.

Though the bridegroom and the steward are ignorant of the miracle, the disciples understand that it is Jesus who performed this miracle. And when Jesus manifests his glory they recognize the glory of Jesus and eventually believe in him. The words of Jesus addressed to Nathanael, "You will see greater things" (Jn 1.50) here become a reality here. In order to understand better the 'glory' of Jesus, we should also

refer to Jn 12.23, 7.39, and 17.24. The evangelist has already prepared the readers to ponder over the glory of Logos-Jesus in 1.14 and now here in 2.11 the narrator invites the reader to take part in the same glory of Jesus as did the disciples.¹¹⁹

Referring to Jn 7.39 which states that during the ministry Jesus had not yet been glorified, R.E. Brown presents two possibilities: “we are to think of vs. 11 either as referring to a partial manifestation of glory, or as being part of the capsulizing of the training of the disciples where their whole career, including their sight of the resurrected Jesus, is foreshadowed”.¹²⁰ In my opinion, the latter one is to be preferred because here in this Cana event was clearly an occasion for the disciples to foretaste the divine glory of the resurrected Jesus. R. Schnackenburg also comments that though the disciples were “still beset by misunderstandings in the supper room (cf. 14:5, 8; 16:12; 17f., 25, 29ff.).....their faith had received an essential impulse from the sign at Cana: their faith has grown stronger within them and richer in content....the faith of the disciples ...is also to be a headline to the readers of the Gospel”.¹²¹

In v.12 the narrator gathers together all the main characters of the story – though Jesus’ brothers were not presented in previous verses – in order to bring the story to its close and to prepare the readers for the

¹¹⁹ J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 56.

¹²⁰ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 101.

¹²¹ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1, p. 337.

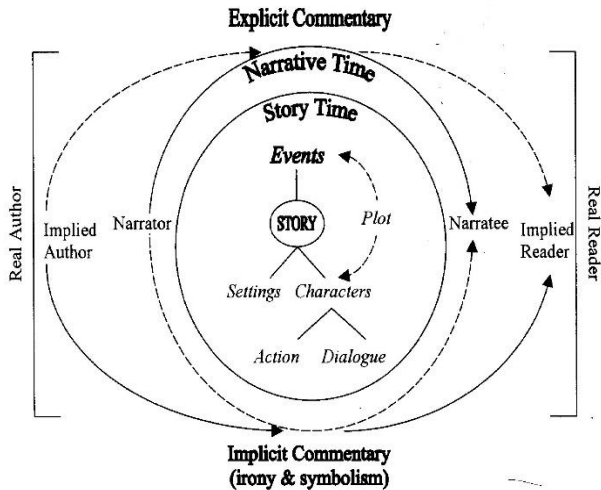
next event. Mentioning that they did not remain in Capernaum for many days, the narrator thus reminds his readers that the chronological sequence that was left in v.1 is now taken up again to pass on to the next event. Thus this Cana narrative is very schematically brought to the end by the narrator.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF IMPORTANT NARRATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF JN 2.1-12

Having made a brief narrative analysis of the individual scenes of the Cana story, now we are going to look into some important narrative characteristics of the Cana story and also how the author has utilized certain narrative techniques in organizing the events in the story and how he presents it to his reader.

We know that every story presupposes a story-teller, the story and the audience. In the process of communication, various narrative techniques are involved. These literary and narrative techniques are purposely used by the author in order to create an effective impact upon the reader. These narrative elements are interconnected with each other in the process of communication. R.A. Culpepper presents these elements in the following diagram and explains how these key-elements play their role in the communicative process of any narrative.¹²²

¹²² R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 6.



In the following sections, we will see how these narrative features in the Cana episode are made use of by the narrator to influence his reader. We will study in detail some important narrative features, namely Plot and events, Author – Reader communicative relationship (Real and Implied Author, Real and Implied Reader), Implicit commentaries (Misunderstanding, Irony, Symbolism), and characterization.

A) Plot and Events

Many literary critics have defined the meaning of ‘plot’ but they vary from one to another in their definitions. They all refer to one and the same element of narrative but define it in different ways. For example, Aristotle says, “The ordered arrangement of the

incidents is what I mean by plot”.¹²³

M.H. Abrams says, “A plot in a dramatic or narrative work is the structure of its actions, as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects”.¹²⁴ Scholes and Kellogg define it as “the dynamic, sequential element in narrative literature”.¹²⁵ According to R. A. Culpepper, the central features of ‘plot’ are the sequence, causality, unity, and affective power of a narrative.¹²⁶ The task of developing a plot has been wonderfully done by the fourth evangelist throughout the whole gospel as a narrative. The development of the plot involves the orderly arrangement of episodes. Every episode encompasses events, characters and setting.

The plot of John’s Gospel is basically the story of its central character, Jesus. The plot of John’s Gospel is episodic, and the episodes are inter-connected. According to R.A. Culpepper, the episode of the wedding at Cana (Jn 2.1-12) “provides a dramatic introduction to Jesus and his work. He is acclaimed by John the Baptist and some of the disciples and then

¹²³ ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 6, in J.L. SKA, “*Our Fathers have told us*”, 17.

¹²⁴ M.H. ABRAMS, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc., ³1971) 127, in R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 80. Compared with many other definitions of ‘Plot’, R. A. Culpepper says that M. H. Abrams’ definition is a concise synthesis of most of the elements of the other definitions.

¹²⁵ SCHOLES-KELLOGG, *Nature*, 207, in J.L. SKA, “*Our Fathers have told us*”, 17.

¹²⁶ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 80.

reveals his glory to the disciples through the sign at Cana (2:11; cf. 1:14)”.¹²⁷ R.A. Culpepper has analysed the development of Johannine plot in detail, connecting all the episodes as narrated by the evangelist and concludes:

The plot of the gospel is propelled by conflict between belief and unbelief as responses to Jesus. The centrality of this conflict is confirmed by the fact that almost half of the occurrences of the verb “belief” in the New Testament are found in John (98 out of 239). The repetitiveness of the gospel has also been noted by various critics...the author uses many episodes skillfully to enrich the texture as the whole....John’s persuasive thematic integration allows, furthermore, for readers who know the story to see its end and its meaning in each of the familiar episodes.¹²⁸

The power to create an effective impact upon the reader is an important characteristic of the episodes in the fourth gospel. Through every episode in which Jesus encounters a variety of individual persons in their day-to-day life situations, the plot constantly reminds the reader about the incarnation of the Logos and his presence in the midst of the humankind. In concrete situations (e.g. Jn 2.1-12), his disciples and other people gradually recognize his glory. The gospel is presented as a testimony of one who speaks for all those who recognized the Logos in Jesus and beheld his glory. The disciples, the Samaritans, the blind man, and the others recognised him and beheld his glory.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 89-97.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 89-97.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

The episode of the wedding at Cana is presented by the evangelist as part of the plot in his gospel with its own unique and important role. This episode has been very artistically and dramatically narrated by the evangelist in order to make an impact upon the readers to recognise Jesus' glory and believe in him as did the disciples. Therefore this Cana episode plays an important role in the development of Johannine plot and it serves its purpose by influencing the readers.

B) *Author and Reader*

A narrative is any story conveyed by an author to an audience (reader). Literary critics make a distinction between the real author and the reader and their counterparts within the story. "As the real author writes, he or she makes decisions about the narrative, constructs the story, and tells it through the narrator in such a way that the narrative projects an image of the author, but the image may not confirm to the identity of the real author at all"¹³⁰.

Now let us see the nuances in the meaning of the terms such as 'Real Author', 'Implied Author', 'Real Reader', 'Implied Reader'. The Pontifical Biblical commission's document '*The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*' defines these literary terms:

The "real author" is the person who actually composed the story. By "implied author" one means the image of the author which the text progressively creates in the course of the reading (with his or her own culture, character, inclinations faith, etc.). The "real reader" is any person who has access to the text—from those who

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

first read it or heard it read, right down to those who read or hear it today. By “implied reader” one means the reader which the text presupposes and in effect creates, the one who is capable of performing the mental and affective operations necessary for entering into the narrative world of the text and responding to it in the way envisaged by the real author through the instrumentality of the implied author. A text will continue to have an influence in the degree to which real readers (e.g., ourselves in the late 20th century) can identify with the implied reader.¹³¹

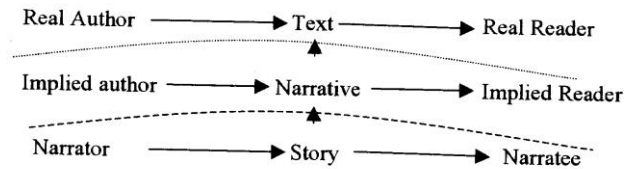
Literary critics say that there is always a narrator who is often different from the real author and the implied author. Some implied authors guide the reader through a narrator. Who is a ‘narrator’? The Narrator is the voice that the implied author uses to tell the story (for example Job 1.1). But, according to F. J. Moloney, ‘this is not the case with the gospels; the implied authors and narrators act as one’.¹³² The narrator and the implied author coincide with each other in the gospel of John.

Proper understanding of the distinction between real and implied author and real and implied reader is important to get into the deeper understanding of narrative dynamism involved in this process. The following diagram below shows this communication model:¹³³

¹³¹ PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 46-47.

¹³² F. J. MOLONEY, “Narrative Criticism of the Gospels”, in IDEM, *A Hard Saying: The Gospel and culture* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001), 93.

¹³³ M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 27.



In our narratological analysis, we the real readers are invited to read the text Jn 2.1-12 as the implied readers. If we succeed in doing it, then we become very close to the text and its right meaning. The text Jn 2.1- 12 assumes or presupposes its implied readers to know certain details but we the real readers may not know everything. The implied reader knows certain things that are not stated in the text.

For example, in Jn 2.6, the implied author presumes that the implied reader knows the meaning of Hebrew measures of quantity and the meaning of Jewish purification rites. The implied author does not mention these details, thinking that the implied readers know them. The narrator takes it for granted that the reader has a general knowledge about the geography of the gospel story (for example, v. 12 has no details about Capernaum, and then about Cana, it is simply in Galilee). According to R.A. Culpepper, “their places are either assumed to be known or regarded as unimportant to the story”.¹³⁴ I consider the first possibility to be true. The implied author assumes these places to be known to the implied reader. And the “hour” of Jesus is not explained in Jn 2.4. It shows

¹³⁴ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 216-217.

that either the author thinks that the implied reader knows its meaning or he expects the reader to infer it from successive references that he will come across in the later part of the gospel.¹³⁵

As F.J. Moloney says, an evangelist could not and did not compose the final version of a gospel with the modern reader in mind.¹³⁶ The relationship between the implied author and the implied reader in the process of communication has to be carefully studied. We must assume that “The ideal (implied) reader of John 2:1-11, then can be assumed to be one who is an early Christian member of the Greco-Roman community for which the Gospel was written. He or she has already read or heard the prologue, as well as the narratives regarding John the Baptist and the calling of the first disciples. At the same time, the reader may also be familiar with the basic gospel story as a whole and perhaps even the details of the Fourth Gospel, although this is not clear”.¹³⁷

Thus, our narrative analysis on Jn 2.1-12 from the point of view of author-reader relationship paves a way for us to identify ourselves with the implied readers in order to enter into the ‘narrative world’ of the text. This is very important to overcome the difficulties in understanding the implied author and what he really wants to communicate to us through

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹³⁶ F. J. MOLONEY, “Narrative Criticism of the Gospels”, 94.

¹³⁷ M.S. COLLINS, “The question of Doxa: A Socio-literary Reading of the Wedding at Cana”, 102.

this narrative.

C) *Implicit Commentary*

One of the important characteristics of the fourth gospel is that the evangelist communicates certain things to his reader without saying them. He does this by applying some narrative techniques of ‘silent communication’ to the narrative. This observation is very much true of the Cana narrative.

This implicit communication in Jn 2.1-12 adds real beauty to the narrative style and deep meaning to the text. In the following sections we shall see how these narrative techniques, namely ‘misunderstanding’, ‘irony’, and ‘symbolism’ have been utilized by the author in silently communicating the important themes of the narrative to the readers.

i) Misunderstanding

Reading the gospel of John, we come across many passages in which the interlocutors of Jesus misunderstand him. It is one of the distinctive features of the fourth gospel. R.A. Culpepper makes a list of eighteen misunderstandings in the gospel of John.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ The eighteen misunderstandings in John, as enlisted by R.A. Culpepper, are the following: Jn 2.19-21; 3.3-5; 4.10-15; 4.31-34; 6.32-35; 6.51-53; 7.33-36; 8.21-22; 8.31-35; 8.51-53; 8.56-58; 11.11-15; 11.23-25; 12.32-34; 13.36-38; 14.4-6; 14.4-6; 14.7-9; 16.16-19. It is surprising to note that these eighteen misunderstandings do not include Jn 2.4-5. R.A. Culpepper does not consider Jn 2.4-5 as a misunderstanding. In my opinion, R.A. Culpepper may be criticised for excluding Jn 2.4-5 from this list. Cfr. R.A.

And he finds a common and basic structure present in them and explains why it has been utilized by the author:

1. Jesus makes a statement which is ambiguous, metaphorical, or contains a double-entendre;
2. his dialogue partner responds either in terms of the literal meaning of Jesus' statement or by a question or protest which shows that he or she has missed the higher meaning of Jesus' words;
3. in most instances an explanation is then offered by Jesus or (less frequently) the narrator.

The misunderstandings, therefore, provide an opportunity to explain the meaning of Jesus' words and develop significant themes further. They are more, however, and their effect on the reader is greater than if the meaning had merely been stated plainly from the beginning.¹³⁹

In the Cana episode, the mother of Jesus misunderstands Jesus' words (v. 4) and she asks the servants to do whatever he tells them (v. 5), as if Jesus' reply to her request were positive. It is a very clear sign of misunderstanding between Jesus and his mother.

In v. 4, Jesus makes an 'ambiguous, metaphorical' statement with a 'double-entendre'. Mary reacts as if her son has positively accepted her request (v. 5). This misunderstanding takes place because Jesus is speaking

CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 161-162. But I. de la Potterie considers this dialogue between Jesus and Mary as one of the misunderstandings in the gospel of John. Cfr. I. DE LA POTTERIE, "La madre di Gesù e il mistero di Cana", in *Civiltà Cattolica* 130 (4) 1979, 431.

¹³⁹ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 152.

to his mother on a spiritual level, with reference to his passion, death and resurrection. Mary does not understand her son because she has not overcome the literal sense of these words and she reacts as if her son's reply were a positive one. Commenting on vv. 4-5, I. de la Potterie writes:

Dicendo a sua madre: «Che c'è tra te e me, Donna?», Gesù lascia intendere che egli si pone su un piano diverso da quello di Maria e in un'altra prospettiva: questa pensa ancora al vino della festa, Gesù pensa ormai alla sua missione messianica che inizia. Quindi tra loro c'è una certa incomprendimento, un'equivoco. Molte volte in san Giovanni si ripete una situazione del genere: l'interlocutore di Gesù si preoccupa unicamente di realtà materiali; ma per Gesù queste sono il segno dei beni salvifici che egli porta; così, in Gv 4,10-14 l'acqua del pozzo di cui parla la Samaritana diventa per Gesù l'occasione per promettere l'acqua viva della rivelazione e il dono dello spirito. Lo stesso vale per Cana: Maria parla di mancanza di vino; Gesù invece eleva subito il dialogo al piano della sua missione: egli pensa ai beni messianici che sta per portare, e che erano precisamente designati col simbolo del *vino* nella tradizione biblica.¹⁴⁰

The misunderstanding in the Cana episode, like any other in the fourth gospel, arises from an ambiguous statement of Jesus (v. 4). And the metaphorical meanings involved in the 'hour' of Jesus intensify this misunderstanding. The author makes his reader understand the meaning of Jesus' hour in the

¹⁴⁰ I. DE LA POTTERIE, "La madre di Gesù e il mistero di Cana", 431.

latter part of the gospel (cfr. Jn 4.23; 7.30; 8.20; 12.23; 13.1; 17.1).

According to R.A. Culpepper, "...the most significant function of the misunderstandings, however, is to teach the readers how to read the gospel. The misunderstandings call our attention to the gospel's metaphors, double-entendres, and plurisignations. They also guide the reader by interpreting some of these and ruling out the literal, material, worldly, or general meanings of such references"¹⁴¹.

Thus, this feature of 'misunderstanding' in the Cana episode invites the reader to pay attention to what is happening in the events. It makes the reader think more and ponder over the implications and significance of misunderstandings.

ii) Irony

Analytical study of 'irony' is an important element of narratological criticism. It is all the more true when we deal with Johannine passages like Jn 2.1-12 where 'the narrator draws the reader's attention to the irony in a way that is quite impossible to miss. Irony is a rhetorical device through which the implied author guides the reader in interpreting the story.¹⁴²The fourth evangelist is known as a 'master of irony'.¹⁴³

It is impossible for the reader to miss the important irony involved in Jn 2.9-10 ("When the

¹⁴¹ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 165.

¹⁴² M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 31.

¹⁴³ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 166.

steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from [the servants who had drawn the water knew] the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Every man sets out first the good wine, and when men have well drunk, then the inferior; you have kept the good wine till now”). Here the irony is that the steward attributes the good wine to the bridegroom instead of Jesus who changed the water into wine. We can note the typical Johannine irony here: those who know (the servants) do not say anything but the one who knows nothing about the miracle (the steward) speaks; the one who does not deserve this honor (bridegroom) is praised but the one who deserves it (Jesus) is not.¹⁴⁴ The steward’s comment immediately provokes the reader to raise questions such as ‘why does the steward attribute the good wine to the bridegroom?’ and ‘who is the real ‘bridegroom’ here?’. In the following paragraphs, we shall see how the reader overcomes such initial difficulties in understanding the narrative which makes use of such powerful irony.

First of all we shall see the meaning of ‘irony’ and the dynamism that is inherent in any irony. Irony is described by D.C. Muecke and W. Booth as a “two story” phenomenon.¹⁴⁵ “Below is the appearance or apparent meaning. Above there is a meaning,

¹⁴⁴ C. BAZZI, *Il vangelo di Giovanni. Testo e Commento* (Casale Monferrato, AL: Piemme 2000) 38, note 10.

¹⁴⁵ D.C. MUECKE, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen & Co., 1969) 19 and W. BOOTH, *The Rhetoric of fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 36-39 in R.A., *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 167.

perspective, or belief that is contradictory, incongruous, or incompatible with the lower level. The victim, where there is one, is unaware of the higher level or blindly hostile to it. The reader is invited by the irony to leap to the higher level and share the perspective of the implied author.”¹⁴⁶ In Jn 2.9-10, the steward of the feast speaks from the lower level out of his ignorance and praises someone who does not deserve his praise. The steward becomes the victim of the evangelist’s irony.

The implied reader invites the reader to go beyond this lower level and see Jesus as the ‘real bridegroom’ who deserves this praise. The implied author communicates to his readers that the most excellent wine is a sign of the greatest glory of Jesus.

Thus the implied author guides the reader through this irony in interpreting the story. According to W. Booth, there are four steps through which the author guides his reader: “The reader (1) rejects the literal meaning of the words in response to internal or external clues, (2) tries out alternative explanations, (3) evaluates these in terms of what he or she believes about the implied author, and (4) makes a decision based on the assumed intentions of the author”.¹⁴⁷ By means of these steps, the reader discovers the deep meaning of the story which the implied author wants to communicate and shares his ‘higher vantage point’.

¹⁴⁶ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 167.

¹⁴⁷ W. BOOTH, *The Rhetoric of fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 10-13, in M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrativ Criticism?*, 31.

iii) Symbolism

A reader may be misled if he or she reads a narrative in the literal sense of every word. It is because the implied author employs symbols in the narrative to add flavour to its narrative style and also provides “implicit commentary and directional signals for the reader”.¹⁴⁸

The noun σύμβολον is derived from the verb συμβάλλω with the meaning ‘to put together’. This etymological origin of the word ‘symbol’ explains its function. In the gospel of John, the symbols employed by the evangelist are “a connecting link between two different spheres”.¹⁴⁹ The implied author employs certain symbols in his narrative in order to connect the things that are known to the reader with the things that are unknown to him. In other words, the symbols function as a bridge that helps a reader to cross from a known reality to an unknown one. The study of the symbols in the narratives helps the reader “uncover the meaning intended by the implied author, a meaning that is not esoteric but that the implied reader is expected to grasp”.¹⁵⁰

In the Cana narrative, the implied author makes use of a good deal of symbolism. The important symbols in this narrative are: 1) Wine, 2) Hour, 3) Water-jars made

¹⁴⁸ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 181.

¹⁴⁹ H. LEVIN, *Contexts of Criticism* (Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 22; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957) 200, in R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 182.

¹⁵⁰ M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 29.

of stone, 4) Number six, 5) Water, 6) Wedding feast, 7) Bridegroom and 8) Sign. It is difficult to make a thorough study of the meaning of these symbols here. In the first chapter, we have already seen the meaning of a few symbols, namely, the wedding feast, number six and so on. When we deal with the function and meaning of the text Jn 2.1-12 as a whole in the next chapter, the meaning of the rest of the symbols will be explained.

As the real reader reads the narrative, he or she may not be aware of the richness of these symbols employed by the implied author. In order to get into the symbolic world of the implied author, one has to repeatedly read the narrative and discover the inner meaning of the symbols. P. Wheelwright suggests four categories from which the reader may derive the meaning of symbols.¹⁵¹ Whatever category a symbol may belong to, the most important thing is not to over-exaggerate the symbolic

¹⁵¹ The following are the four categories that P. Wheelwright suggests: "1. *Archetypal symbols* derive their meaning from contexts that are virtually universal, such as the basic opposition of light and darkness. 2. *Symbols of ancestral vitality* derive their meaning from earlier sources. In our Gospels, these include images drawn from the Old Testament: the wilderness as a place of testing, the number 12 as suggestive of Israel, and so on. 3. *Symbols created by the implied author* can be understood only within the context of the particular narrative....4. *Symbols of cultural range* derive their meaning from the social and historical context of the real author and his or her community" (P. WHEELWRIGHT, *Metaphor and Reality*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1962, 99-110, in M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 29).

meaning to an extent that the reader may even ‘invent’ some new meaning that the implied author himself did not intend to communicate to the implied reader.

Looking for the meanings of the symbols employed by the author in Jn 2.1-12, we get new insights about the meaning of the whole narrative. In our understanding of the text, these symbols help us unite the concrete with the abstract, the known with the unknown (for example, the number six with the fulfilment of the Mosaic law; new wine with the glory of Christ and so on).

Thus, misunderstanding, irony and symbols are interwoven with each other in Jn 2.1-12. They all play their vital role in the effective communication between the implied author and the implied reader. These three important features of Jn 2.1-12 constitute the ‘silent communication’ of the implied author and they function as ‘implicit commentary’.

D) Characterization

Characters are actors who perform various actions and activities that constitute the story. In every narrative, characters are as important as the events. The events portray the characters and *vice versa*. Characters and events are two sides of a coin in any narrative. It is well expressed by Henry James, “What is character but the determination of the incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?”¹⁵²

¹⁵² H. JAMES, “The art of fiction”, in *Partial Portraits* (London: MacMillan, 1888), in M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 51.

The term “characters” is normally used by literary critics to refer to the imaginary actors presented in fictions. It is unusual and hard to see someone apply this term to historical figures. So, here we are facing an important and difficult question: Can we speak of “characterization” in Jn 2.1-12 where the ‘actants’ are all historical persons? or in other words: Is it legitimate to apply the usual and same concepts of fictional characterization to “real figures”? To answer this question, first of all, we have to be clear about what we mean by “characterization”. R.A. Culpepper defines this term and he himself presents us with a satisfactory answer:

Characterization . . .(is) the art and techniques by which an author fashions a convincing portrait of a person within a more or less unified piece of writing. Even if one is disposed to see real, historical persons behind every character in John and actual events in every episode, the question of how the author chose to portray the person still arises. With what techniques or devices has he made a living person live on paper, and how is this “person” related to the rest of the narrative? Even if the figure is “real” or “fictional”, it has to pass through the mind of the author before it can be described. It is, therefore, for our present purposes, immaterial whether the literary character has its origin in historical tradition, memory, or imagination. . . .we are presently interested in the relationship between author and text and text and reader rather than the origin of the characters or the relationship of historical persons to the author.¹⁵³

So, we can very well call the ‘actants’ of the Cana story ‘characters’ as far as the motif of our

¹⁵³ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 105.

narratological analysis is concerned. These characters are “constructs of the implied author, created to fulfil a particular role in the story”.¹⁵⁴

In the following paragraph, we shall see the role of these characters and how they are presented by the implied author to his reader. The characters presented in the Cana episode are: 1. Jesus, 2. Jesus’ disciples, 3. The Mother of Jesus, 4. The Servants, 5. The Steward, 6. The Bridegroom, 7. Jesus’ brothers.

In vv. 1-2, the mother of Jesus is introduced first, and then Jesus with his disciples. This initial presentation of these three characters already gives a clue to the reader that these three (Jesus’ mother, Jesus, and Jesus’ disciples) will be the main characters. They are presented “as a triad with Jesus in the centre, the others being designated by their relationship to him”.¹⁵⁵ Then, in the course of the story, the reader finds the secondary characters (the servants, the steward, the bridegroom and Jesus’ brothers) later in the narrative. It is very clear that the presentation of these characters depend on the order of events.

According to W. Booth, the implied authors have two choices of techniques in revealing the characters: 1. Telling or 2. Showing.¹⁵⁶ The technique of *telling* is very explicit. The narrator speaks directly to the reader about the character (for example, Mathew tells his reader that Joseph is a “just” man. Cfr. Mt 1.19). But

¹⁵⁴ M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 51.

¹⁵⁵ B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 87.

¹⁵⁶ W. BOOTH, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 3-20, in M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 52.

the technique of *showing*, though less precise than that of *telling*, is more effective because it involves the reader's participation in keenly observing what the characters do and what is done to them in order to discover the implied author's point of view of the characters.¹⁵⁷ In Jn 2.1-12, the implied author does not 'tell' anything about any of the characters but rather 'shows' these characters to the reader. This creates a need and an interest in the reader to make his own evaluation about the characters from various data and information provided by the implied author. This "compels the reader to compare and evaluate different kinds of evidence".¹⁵⁸ In the following paragraphs, we shall see how these techniques have been applied to the three main characters (Jesus, his mother, and his disciples) and also the point of view of the implied author in presenting to his reader these characters in this Cana narrative.

i) Jesus

There is no doubt about the centrality of this character in the whole gospel of John. As R.A. Culpepper observes, "there is hardly a scene in which he does not appear."¹⁵⁹ There is a very clear and programmatic plot in the mind of the author as he presents Jesus from the prologue to the epilogue. The author has the intention of introducing Jesus as a divine being (Logos-Jesus) in the prologue and then he develops his plot and gradually presents this

¹⁵⁷ M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 52.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁵⁹ R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 106.

character to his reader through his words and actions. In the characterization of Jesus, the author considers this Cana episode an extremely important event in the life of Jesus as he begins his ministry at Cana and this is the first among the signs.

Jesus' presentation in the fourth gospel progressively reveals his communion with the Father (cfr. Jn 4.34, 5.19, 5.36) and also from the beginning he knows about his future, that is his passion, death and resurrection; this is clear from v. 4 in which Jesus speaks to his mother about his 'hour'. The characterization of Jesus' future already begins here in this Cana episode (v. 4). Mentioning the 'hour' in v. 4, the implied author indirectly leaves a slight clue to his reader about what is going to happen to Jesus in the latter part of the gospel. Besides this, the author is also depicting Jesus as an omniscient character, the one who knows about his hour of death; this omniscient power of Jesus is repeated by the author in 1.47-48, 2.24, 6.15, 6.64, and 13.32.

The range of emotions and motives ascribed to Jesus is an interesting and important aspect of the fourth evangelist's characterization of Jesus. The author of the fourth gospel presents the emotions of Jesus in a manner that is much different from the other evangelists' way of characterizing Jesus.¹⁶⁰ According to R.A. Culpepper, "while Jesus is not entirely lacking in human emotions, his emotional responses are noticeably different and therefore convey a sense of his being distant or aloof. Whatever

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

the precise connotation of his words to his mother during the wedding at Cana (2:2) [*sic*], there is a certain coldness about them....in John, therefore, Jesus is demonstrably less emotional than in the synoptic gospels....this aspect of his characterization fits with John's insistence that Jesus was the incarnation of the pre-existent logos."¹⁶¹ Adding to this opinion of Culpepper, I observe that Jesus is characterized not only in reference to his pre-existence, but also in reference to his future glorification after his death, passion and resurrection (cfr. vv. 4 and 11).

This peculiar way of characterizing Jesus with his strange emotional reactions and with non-straight answers (v.4)¹⁶² fascinates the reader in understanding how the implied author characterizes Jesus.

With all these particular aspects of characterization, the author's eye is fixed on this character throughout this episode. Jesus is the central figure around whom every action takes place during the wedding feast at Cana. So, the reader has to pay special attention to the characterization of Jesus in the Cana episode to understand the author's point of view and the most important role of Jesus.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 110-111.

¹⁶² The following are some examples given by R.A. Culpepper for Jesus' non- straight answers: Jn 4.9-10, 6.26, 6.53, 13.36-38, and 14.8-10 (cfr. R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 112).

ii) The mother of Jesus

The author directly does not *'tell'* anything about the mother of Jesus, but he *'shows'* to his reader the importance of her role in reference to her relationship with Jesus in vv. 3-4 and her reaction in v. 5. So, the reader is here compelled to make a reference to Jn 19.26 to understand better the character of Mary.

In vv. 3-5, the author does not give any clear picture of Mary. Jesus' response to his mother is ambiguous. The author does not directly explain what Jesus means by such an enigmatic reply. Nor does he give any explicit commentary about the reaction of Mary. The reader finds that there is something missing here in the narrative. The author has purposely avoided clarifications and explanations. This lack of information in narratives is called a "gap". M. Sternberg defines, a gap is "...a lack of information about the world...an event, motive, causal link, character trait, plot structure, law of probability...contrived by a temporal displacement."¹⁶³ 'Gaps' are different from 'blanks' in narratives.¹⁶⁴

The reaction of Mary is purposely left without any explanation in order to kindle the thoughts of the reader in identifying the character of Mary. The only another reference in the gospel of John to understand

¹⁶³ M. STERNBERG, *The Poetics of Biblical Narratives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 237, in J.L. SKA, *"Our Fathers have told us"*, 8.

¹⁶⁴ For more details about "gap" and "blank" and their functions in narratives, see J.L. SKA, *"Our Fathers have told us"*, 8-9.

the character of Mary is Jn 19.26. This gap in vv. 4-5 compels the reader to refer to Jn 19.26. Most mariologists have done academic research on the basis of the link between these two passages.¹⁶⁵ This gap (vv. 4-5) is filled in by Jn 19.26. The reader now understands that the presence of Mary at Cana and at the foot of the Cross have some common elements that explain these enigmas. 1. Mary is present at the beginning and at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. 2. Jesus addresses his mother as "woman". 3. Jesus' reply to his mother "my hour has not yet come" has a very strong link with the "hour" of his death on the cross.

The fact that the author refers to Mary as "the mother of Jesus" instead of mentioning her proper name shows that the author chooses to characterize

¹⁶⁵ Aristide M. Serra is one of the well-known mariologists who has contributed a lot for exegetical research of in 2.4 and 19.26. cfr. A. SERRA, *Contributi dell'antica letteratura giudaica per l'esegesi di Gv 2, 1-11 e 19, 25-27* (Herder: Roma, 1977); IDEM, *Maria a Cana e presso la croce. Saggio di mariologia giovannea [Gv 2,1-12 e Gv 19,25-27]* (Centro di Cultura Mariana "Madre della Chiesa", Roma, ³1991) 7-78; IDEM, "...ma lo sapevano i servi che avevano attinto l'acqua". Gv 2, 9c e le tradizioni biblico-giudaiche sul pozzo di Beer (Num 21, 16-20)", in *Marianum* 53 (1991) 435-506; IDEM, "Vi erano là sei giare...". Gv 2,6 alla luce di antiche tradizioni giudaico-cristiane relative ai 'sei giorni' della creazione" in *Nato da donna...* (Roma: Cens Marianum, 1992) 141- 188; IDEM, "Temi di Gv 2,1-12 alla luce della letteratura giudaica", in *Theotokos* 7 (1999) 195-212; IDEM, "Giovanni 1.19-2,12. Cana e il Sinai. Cana e la creazione" in *Maria e la pienezza del tempo* (Maria di Nazaret 8; Milano: Paoline, 1999) 76-90.

Mary only in reference to Jesus. This shows the author's Christ-centered theology in the fourth gospel. This way of characterizing Mary stresses her identity as 'mother of Jesus'. It shows that her role is very important because she has given birth to Jesus. This way of characterization keeps Jesus at the center and Mary as his collaborator in the work of salvation.

iii) The disciples

The disciples are mentioned in the introductory (v. 2) and concluding part (v. 11-12) of the story. They are just 'on-lookers' or 'passive participants' when the miracle takes place. When Jesus reveals himself through this first 'sign', the disciples believe in him. They are characterized as "models of faith" in Jesus. The author expects his reader to identify himself / herself with the disciples in the act of believing in Jesus.

iv) The minor characters

In narratives each and every minor character has also a particular role to play. The secondary characters are made use of by the author to keep the plot of the story moving and through them the author provides his reader with important information needed to understand the story. The role of minor characters cannot and should not be ignored just because they are considered to be secondary.

In the Cana episode, the steward, the bridegroom and the servants have their own role to play. As has been already mentioned in the previous sections, the author makes use of the character of the steward to

underscore the high quality of the new wine. The steward becomes a victim of the author's irony. And the characterization of the bridegroom is extremely important, because the author expects his reader to identify Jesus as the 'true bridegroom' in the story. The servants are active participants in the miracle. They are presented as being so obedient to the commands of Jesus. The brothers of Jesus are just mentioned in the concluding verse. The role of Jesus' brothers in the Cana story, from the narratological point of view, does not seem to be as significant as in the other episodes (cfr. 2.23-25, 7.2-10).

In short, the characterization in the Cana episode helps the reader identify the particular roles of the characters and the intention of the implied author in his manner of presenting and depicting them through their words and actions. We also made a brief study of characterization on the basis of the traits attributed to each character.¹⁶⁶ This has helped us get closer to the mind of the implied author. This is essential for our understanding of the narrative text of Jn 2.1-12.

¹⁶⁶ M.A. Powell distinguishes different kinds of characters on the basis of their traits. The following are the best-known distinctions, as presented by him: 1. Round Characters, 2. Flat Characters, 3. Stock Characters, 4. Static Characters, 5. Dynamic Characters. For more details on these different kinds of characters, see M.A. POWELL, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 55-56; J.L. SKA, "Our Fathers have told us", 83-85.

4. CONCLUSIONS OF NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Having done this narratological analysis, we can draw some conclusions:

i. The Cana story is predominantly narrative in its literary character.

ii. The actants and their actions woven together function as backbone of the narrative mainline of the story.

iii. The Cana story plays a vital role in the Johannine plot of presenting Jesus in the gospel of John.

iv. Every character has a role to play in the story and his/her character has something to contribute to the dynamism of the story and it influences the deeper understanding of the narrative.

v. The dynamism of the communicative model between the author and the reader is a process of understanding that calls for the attention of the reader. It demands that the real reader become as close as possible to the implied reader.

vi. The literary narrative techniques utilized by the implied author engage the reader in the quest to understand the inner meaning of the story.

vii. Though the story seems to be simple and straightforward at first glance, the narratological analysis makes us aware that it is not so simple in its presentation, rather the author hints at still deeper truths.

viii. A number of important pieces of information and messages is explicitly communicated through plot, setting, events, characterization and narrative asides. At the same time, many other messages are implicitly or silently communicated through ‘implicit commentaries’ namely irony, misunderstanding, double entendre, polyvalent words and symbolism. These literary devices employed in the narrative invite the reader to “read between the lines” to understand the inner meaning of the story.

Part Three

THE FUNCTION AND THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF JOHN 2.1-12

This third chapter has two parts. In the first part we shall see the function of this Cana episode in the proximate context (Jn 1.35-2.12), in the immediate context (Jn 2.1-4.54), in the context of ‘the book of signs’ (Jn 1-12) and in its connection with “the book of Jesus’ hour” (Jn 13-21). The second part of this chapter will deal with some theological themes that are prominent in the Cana episode.

1. THE FUNCTION OF JN 2.1-12 IN ITS CONTEXTS

This pericope Jn 2.1-12, though a unitary whole text, is not an autonomous and isolated text. It has strong links with many of the preceding and following passages in the gospel. In order to obtain a holistic view of its meaning, it has to be studied in its contexts. In the following sections, we shall see the function of this pericope in its various contexts from a thematic and literary structural point of view.

A. In the proximate context (Jn 1.35 – 2.12)

This narrative of changing water into wine functions as a closing section of the call of the first disciples of Jesus. This link is evident from temporal

indicator τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ. The narrator is following a schematic presentation of the series of events in chronological order. In 2.1, the evangelist “relates it to what precedes by dating it in reference to the call of the disciples”.¹⁶⁷

At the end of the call of Philip and Nathanael, we read: ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (Jn 1.51). This promise is fulfilled for the first time in this first sign of Jesus. As Jesus told his disciples that they will see the angels ascending and descending and will see the glory of the son of man (Jn 1.51), Jesus reveals his glory and his disciples believe in him (Jn 2.11).¹⁶⁸ According to R.E. Brown,

By emphasizing the reaction of belief on the part of the disciples, the evangelist shows that he has not forgotten the theme of evolving discipleship that was elaborated in ch. i. Belief is the culmination of the following that began in i 37; what they see at Cana fulfils the promise of i 50 (and 51).¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 105.

¹⁶⁸ Cfr. J. BEUTLER, *Il Verbo divino*, 53.

¹⁶⁹ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 105. In his commentary, R.E. Brown presents two more arguments to connect the wedding at Cana with the first chapter of the gospel. 1) The theory of *seven days* to open the ministry of Jesus, in comparison to the seven days of creation in Gen 1-2. The wedding at Cana concludes these seven days and opens up the ministry of Jesus. Though this theory is attractive, it is not without problems. 2) Another theme that links the wedding at Cana to the first chapter is

So, this first sign performed by Jesus (Jn 2.1-12) is a conclusion of the call of the first disciples (Jn 35-42). Thus, we can conclude that this narrative of changing water into wine functions as a conclusion¹⁷⁰ in its proximate context.

B. In the immediate context (Jn 2.1 – 4.54)

This pericope, Jn 2.1-12, functions not only as a conclusion but also opens up another section,¹⁷¹ which

the Wisdom motif. For more details about these two themes, see R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, pp. 105-107.

¹⁷⁰ G. Mlakuzhyil has a different view about the function of Jn 2.1-12 in its connection to the first chapter. According to him, the narrative of the wedding at Cana is not only the conclusion of the call of the first disciples but it is the conclusion of the introduction (Jn 1.1-2.11) to the gospel as a whole. Though many exegetes have various opinions about the delimitation of the introduction to the gospel as whole, G. Mlakuzhyil is of the view that Jn 1.1-2.11 is the introduction to the gospel of John. As a result of his observation that the ‘historical sign-introduction’ (2.1-11) corresponds to the ‘historical sign-conclusion’ (20.30), he arrives at the conclusion about the extent of the introduction (Jn 1.1-2.11). So, in the opinion of G. Mlakuzhyil, the wedding at Cana functions as the concluding part of the general introduction to the gospel as a whole (cfr. G. MLAKUZHYYIL *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 91-92, 149). But C.H. Dodd does not consider the first sign of Jesus as part of the general introduction to the gospel (cfr. C.H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 297).

¹⁷¹ We follow the Christocentric structure proposed by G. Mlakuzhyil. He applies various criteria and finds that “the

ends with the second sign of Jesus at Cana (the healing of the official's son; cfr. Jn 4. 46-54).

In Jn 4.46, we read: Ἦλθεν οὖν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ὅπου ἐποίησεν τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον καὶ ἦν τις βασιλικὸς οὗ ὁ υἱὸς ἠσθένει ἐν Καφαρναούμ.

The spatial indicator 'Cana of Galilee' and the specific mention of Jesus' changing the water into wine, is a clear indication that the evangelist makes a connection between the wine miracle and the healing of the official's son. In the same way as he concludes the episode calling it the first 'sign' in 2.11, so does he call it the second 'sign'. This link between the wedding at Cana and the healing of official's son has been studied by many exegetes¹⁷² and this long section (2.1-

Gospel of John consists of two major parts: 1) the Book of Jesus' signs (2,1-12,50) and 2) the Book of Jesus' Hour (11,1-20,29), preceded by a Christocentric introduction (1,1-2,11) and followed by a Christocentric conclusion (20,30-31) and an appendix (21,1-25). The book of Jesus' signs is composed of *three sections*: 1) *Jesus' initial Signs and Encounters (from Cana to Cana)* (2,1-4,54), 2) *Jesus' Works, Signs and Discussions (at Jewish Feasts)* (5,1-10,42), 3) *the Climatic Sign and the Coming of Jesus' Hour (Bridge Section)* (11,1-12,50)". (G. MLAKUZHYYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 237).

¹⁷² G. Mlakuzhyil gives a survey of the structures formed by many exegetes, namely Mollat, Guilding, Goulder, Lohmeyer, Defourney, Sahlin, Mateos & Barreto, Boismard, Puigdollers, Webster, Deeks, Willemse, Rau, Kammerstätter, Prete, Dodd, Tenney, Culpepper, Westcott, van de Bussche, de la Potterie, Caba, Gourgues, Pasquetto, Segalla, Brown and Rissi. Many of these exegetes connect the wedding at Cana to the healing of the

4.54) forms a unit within the 'book of signs'. According to G. Mlakuzhyil, Jn 2.1-4.54 forms a chiasmic structure:¹⁷³

- A (2.1-12): The beginning of the signs at Cana in Galilee: the changing of water into wine.
- B (2.13-25+): The cleansing of the Jerusalem temple and dialogue with the Jews about the new temple.
- C (2.23-3,21): Dialogue with Nicodemus on birth from above and discourse on eternal life.
- C' (3.22-4,3+): Dialogue of John the Baptist with his disciples on the groom from above and discourse on life. (Bridge-verse: 4.1-3)+
- B' (4.1-42): Dialogue with the Samaritan woman on living water and true temple worship. (Transition: 4.43-45)
- A' (4,43-54): The second sign at Cana in Galilee: the healing of the royal official's son.

The first sign of Jesus (2.1-12) corresponds to the second sign of Jesus (4.43-54) in the chiasmic structure of the pericope (2.1-4.54). There are a number of

official's son, in presenting the structure of the fourth gospel (cfr. G. MLAKUZHYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 17-86).

¹⁷³ G. MLAKUZHYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 239.

similarities between these two subsections of the pericope 2.1-4.54.

- 1) Both the Cana-signs end with similar statements, using the same key words in common.¹⁷⁴

2.11a: Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς

4.54: Τοῦτο δὲ πάλιν δεύτερον σημεῖον ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς

2.11a: ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας

4.54: ἐλθὼν...εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν

2.11c: καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ

4.53d: καὶ ἐπίστευσεν αὐτὸς καὶ ἡ οἰκία αὐτοῦ ὅλη

- 2) Apart from the similarity of vocabularies in the concluding statements, both the Cana-signs contain a general pattern.¹⁷⁵

- a) the setting of the sign (2.1-2; 4.46)
- b) the suggestion/request by a person (2.3; 4.47)
- c) the negative response of Jesus (2.4; 4.48)
- d) the positive reaction/request by the person (2.5; 4.49)
- e) the positive command by Jesus (2.7ab.8abc; 4.50ab)
- f) the execution of the command (2.7c.8d; 4.50f)
- g) the verification of the miracle (2.9-10; 4.51-53c)
the positive faith response (2.11; 4.53d)

The presence of the same kind of expressions and

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

the same narrative pattern of these two Cana-signs confirms that it “could not have been the result of chance but the fruit of careful planning on the part of the Evangelist who intended the two extreme pericopes of the section of Jesus’ Initial Signs and Encounters (Jn 2-4) to be parallel to each other”.¹⁷⁶

F. J. Moloney examines all the episodes of 2.1-4.54 and concludes that these episodes have been very carefully structured by the evangelist in such a way that they lead the reader through a series of examples of faith.¹⁷⁷ In this gradual movement, we notice a change from ‘*complete faith*’ in a Jewish context to ‘*complete faith*’ in a non-Jewish context.¹⁷⁸ This theme of ‘faith’ will be elaborately dealt with in the second section of this chapter.

Thus, the function of the episode of changing water into wine is significant in the context of Jn 2.1-4.54. It functions as an opening of this section and forms a parallelism with the concluding part (4.43-54) with its similarities of expression, pattern and

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 196.

¹⁷⁷ The literary structure of the series of episodes (Jn 2.1-12.54) has been very well thematically explained in a diagram designed by F. J. Moloney (“From Cana to Cana [Jn 2.1-4.54] and the Fourth Evangelist’s Concept of Correct (and Incorrect) Faith” in *Salesianum* 40 [1978] 840). The same diagram has been reproduced in this book on p. 128.

¹⁷⁸ This literary structure proposed by F. J. Moloney from the perspective of faith explains the function of the first sign of Jesus in the context of Jn 2.1-4.54. Cfr. F. J. MOLONEY, *From Cana to Cana*, 839-841.

theological theme.

C. In the context of 'the book of Jesus' signs' (Jn 2.1-12.50)

This first sign of Jesus functions not only as the conclusion of the general introduction to the gospel (1.1-2.12) but also as the introduction to the first part of the gospel, that is the 'book of Jesus' signs' (Jn 2.1-12.50). So, it has to be regarded as a "bridge pericope", a connecting bridge between the introduction and the first part of the gospel.¹⁷⁹

Jn 2.1-12.50 is called the "book of Jesus' signs" because these chapters present the public life of Jesus in which he performs signs and works. It is summarized by the evangelist in the opening verse of the epilogue (Jn 12.37-50) to the 'book of signs'. Jn 12.37 (Τοσαῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ σημεῖα πεποιηκότος...) says that Jesus worked many signs before the disciples. Jn 12.37 summarizes all the sign that Jesus did and thus brings the "book of Jesus' signs" towards its conclusion. It is to be noted that the word σημεῖα includes 2.1- 12 as well. Jn 2.1-12 can be connected to the other signs that Jesus does in the first book of the gospel. Thus, the first sign at the wedding in Cana functions as an introduction and opens the first book of the gospel, that is the 'book of signs'.¹⁸⁰ The "book of signs" reaches its climax with the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11.1-44). According to G.

¹⁷⁹ G. MLAKUZHYYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 154.

¹⁸⁰ For more details, cfr. G. MLAKUZHYYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 152-156.

Mlakuzhyil, Jn 11.1-12.50, being a “bridge-section” is also part of the “the book of Jesus’ hour”.¹⁸¹ Studying the episode of the wedding at Cana (Jn 2.1-12) in the context of the “book of Jesus’ signs” (Jn 2.1-12.50) is important to better understand the role and function of this first sign and also its deep meaning.

*D. Connection with ‘the book of Jesus’ hour’ (Jn 11.1-20.29)*¹⁸²

The episode of changing water into wine has close links with the second part of the gospel as well. One of the examples of this connection is that the hour of Jesus mentioned in Jn 2.4 is theologically explained in various verses in the “book of the Jesus’ hour” (cfr. Jn 12.23, 12.27, 13.1, 17.1, 19.27). Not only these verses but the whole second part of the gospel (Jn 11.1-20.29) portrays the “hour of Jesus”, that is, the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Also, the theme of ‘glory’ mentioned in Jn 2.11 is theologically explained in various sections of ‘the book of Jesus’ hour’. This theme of glory (mentioned in Jn 2.11) is so predominant in the second part of the

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁸² As was mentioned earlier, in our study of the function of Jn 2.1-12, we are following the Christocentric structure of the fourth gospel as proposed by G. Mlakuzhyil. Many exegetes designate Jn 13.1-20.31 the book of Jesus’ hour. But G. Mlakuzhyil prefers to designate 11.1-20.29 “the book of Jesus’ hour” because he considers Jn 11.1-20.29 as the “bridge-section” (cfr. G. MLAKUZHYYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 156-162).

gospel that some exegetes designate the second book of the gospel ‘the book of glory’.¹⁸³

M. Morgen has made a comparative study of the wedding feast at Cana (Jn 2.1-11) and the last supper (13.1-30).¹⁸⁴ In her study, she presents many similarities between these two events and shows how the wedding banquet and the last supper of Jesus are closely connected. She argues that the context of the banquet (Jn 2.1-12) and that of the last meal (Jn 13.1-30) Jesus had with his disciples are thematically strongly connected with each other. Both the events take place in the context of a meal. These meals share some common elements: they are institutional, communitarian and eschatological. In both the events purification is mentioned (water jars for Jewish purification in Jn 2.6 and Jesus washes the feet of his disciples in Jn 13.5). M. Morgen presents a number of parallelisms between these two pericopes.¹⁸⁵

ὥρα	2.2	13.1
ποιέω	2.5	13.7, 13.12, 13.15, 13.17
δοξά	2.11	13.31
ἄρτι/νῦν	2.10	13.31

¹⁸³ For example, R.E. Brown calls it “the book of glory” (cfr. R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, pp. cxxxix).

¹⁸⁴ M. MORGEN, “Le festin des Noces de Cana (Jn 2, 1-11) et le repas d’adieu (Jn 13, 1-30)” in M. QUENSNEL et al. (edd.), *Nourriture et repas dans milieux juifs et chrétiens de l’antiquité* (Lectio Divina 178; Paris: Cerf, 1999) 139-154.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

Apart from these parallelisms, Morgen throws light on the meaning of “meal / banquet” in the Jewish and paleo-christian contexts.¹⁸⁶

These common theological themes that are present in both the pericopes (Jn 2.1-12 and Jn 13.1-30) are supporting factors for the link between these two events.

Another passage that has a close link with the first sign of Jesus is Jn 19.25-27. The presence of the “mother of Jesus” at the first sign of Jesus makes an inclusion with her presence at the foot of the Cross. The presence of the mother of Jesus is very programmatically and intentionally placed at the beginning and at the end of the gospel. Both times the mother of Jesus appears in the context of the ‘hour of Jesus’ and both times Jesus addresses his mother as “woman” (cfr. Jn 2.4; 19.26). The connection between these two pericopes (Jn 2.1-12; 19.25-27) has been explained by most mariologists. All these examples mentioned above support and clarify the important links between the episode of the wedding at Cana and the ‘hour of Jesus’.

In short, we can say that though this pericope has a particular and precise function, that is, to reveal the glory of Jesus and to bring his disciples to ever deeper faith, its numerous cross-references throughout the gospel pave a way for understanding that its function is not limited but vast and multiple. This is a richness

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 139-154.

of this pericope. All these cross references explain the vastness of its function in the fourth gospel.

2. THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF JN 2.1-12

The story of Jesus changing water into wine has a very deep theological significance. One of the reasons for its theological richness is its ample symbolism and its manifold literary allusions. Its important function in the context of the whole gospel of John explains its multiple theological meanings. In the following sections, we shall see some important theological motifs, namely, the revelation of Jesus' glory, the Johannine meaning of *σημεῖον*, *δόξα*, and *πίστις*, the meaning of Jesus' hour and his passion - glorification, the messianic wedding of new covenant, the mariological significance and the sacramental meaning of the Cana story.

A. The manifestation of Jesus' glory

The first sign of Jesus revealed his glory (v. 11). Here we should refer to the earlier mention of the glory of Jesus in 1.14 and 1.51. According to R. Schnackenburg, the most important thought behind the narrative of the evangelist is the revelation of Jesus' glory.¹⁸⁷ He comments, "Revelation in John is the self-revelation of Jesus; all the rest stems from this. The question of whether he is the hoped-for Messiah is a lively one (1:41, 45; 7:26f., 31, 41f.; 10:24f.; 11:27; 12.34). But he reveals himself as the

¹⁸⁷ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1, p. 337.

Messiah in a special and unique sense, as the Son of Man come down from heaven, as the Son of God sent by the Father and united to him, bringing revelation and light”.¹⁸⁸

The revelatory aspect of Jesus’ glory is one of the characteristics of the Johannine gospel. The use of the verb φανεροῦν (with the meaning of ‘to show’, ‘to manifest’, ‘to make known’, ‘to reveal’) is more frequent in the Johannine gospel than in the synoptic gospels.¹⁸⁹ When this verb is used in the active voice, it governs a personal object in the gospel of John (cfr. Jn 7.4; 17.16; 21.1).¹⁹⁰ The direct object that is governed by this verb in 2.11 is δόξα. “Jesus’ δόξα is always associated in Jn with God’s δόξα. This is in line with Jewish usage, where ‘glory’ (Heb. כבוד, Aram. אִקְרָא, Gk. δόξα) is especially a characteristic of God. In the OT the glory of God implies a visible and powerful manifestation of God to men. In the Targums ‘glory’ also becomes a surrogate, like *memra* and *shekina*, for the visible presence of God among men”.¹⁹¹ Since these elements are the visible manifestation of his majesty in acts of power, it is essential and meaningful to associate this *glory* of Jesus with that of God. This point is stressed by the

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Mathew and Luke never use this verb; Mark three times; John nine times. (Cfr. S. KUTHIRAKKATTEL, “The beginning of the symbols: The meaning and function of Jn 2.1-11”, in *Bible Bhashyam* 24/2 [1998] 92).

¹⁹⁰ S. KUTHIRAKKATTEL, “The beginning of the symbols”, 92.

¹⁹¹ B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 71.

evangelist (cfr. Jn 1.14: ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας). Jesus himself affirms that he received his glory from the Father and he gives it to others (cfr. Jn 17.22: κἀγὼ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς). When we read in Jn 2.11 that Jesus revealed his glory, we must understand that this is also God's glory (cfr. Jn 11.4; 11.40; 5.17; 14.10).¹⁹² G.R. Beasley-Murray interprets this revelation of Jesus' glory in reference to the kingdom of God. He says, "The glory of Jesus, manifest in Cana was a sign of his mediating the grace of the kingdom of God in his total ministry. The glory of God is seen precisely in God's bestowal of life in his Kingdom, and this he gives through the son".¹⁹³

Jesus reveals his glory through the sign that he performs at Cana. This close link between Jesus' glory and the signs is explained by P.Riga:

For St. John, the glory of Christ is an inherent quality and a prerogative of the Son of God in his mission on earth. The manifestation of Christ's glory could not be a direct vision since it is an impossible fulfilment for mortal man in his present terrestrial existence. Therefore, man must recognize this glory inherent in Christ by understanding the profound spiritual significance of the signs that Jesus performed. In this way they see the glory in Christ, and consequently come to a perfect faith in his person.¹⁹⁴

This connection between the glory of Jesus and the signs

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 36.

¹⁹⁴ P. RIGA, "Signs of Glory. The use of 'sêmeion' in St. John's Gospel", in *Interpretation* 17 (1963) 402.

he performed will be further explained in the following section. The self-revelation of Jesus in the Cana episode is not an isolated event, but is connected to Jesus' passion and death in the light of his glorification and ascension.

Thus, the revelation of Jesus' glory that takes place at the wedding at Cana, reaffirms and stresses the fact the Jesus has come 'from above' (Jn 3.13; 3.31; 8.23) and is from a higher origin (cfr. Jn 7.28).¹⁹⁵ "At the miracle at Cana, as at the other 'signs' and 'works', it is his origin from God and his union with the Father that must be believed and recognized (cf. 5:17, 19; 9:31 ff.; 10:38; 11:40 ff.; 14.11f.). The logion of 1:51 is already sufficient indication of the fact that in the miracle of the wine Jesus wishes to manifest himself as the Son of Man come down from heaven who remains in constant union with God".¹⁹⁶ The revelation of Jesus' glory, as portrayed by the evangelist in the event of the wedding at Cana, is a key element in understanding the identity of Jesus in Johannine theology.

B. *The Johannine meaning of σημεῖον*

According to P. Riga, "no single word can probably give such a profound insight into the whole theology of the Fourth Gospel as the word *simeion*. . . The signs of Christ in the Fourth Gospel are both miracles and discourses, and taken together they constitute one revelation. The whole of St. John's

¹⁹⁵ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1, p. 337.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

Gospel is clear only with an understanding of the theology of *sēmeion* in all of its ramifications”.¹⁹⁷

The term σημεῖον occurs seventeen times in the fourth gospel.¹⁹⁸ It is interesting to observe that 16 out of the 17 occurrences of the term σημεῖον in John refer explicitly to Jesus’ signs.¹⁹⁹ Apart from the number of occurrences, we must also consider the key role it plays in Johannine theology.

The first sign that Jesus performs at the wedding at Cana forms an inclusion with Jn 12.37 and 20.30. The evangelist shows the importance he attaches to the ‘signs’ by mentioning them in his summaries, comments and conclusions (cfr. Jn 2.11,23; 4.54; 6.2,14; 12.18,37; 20.30).²⁰⁰

Jn 2.11a reads: Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας. For the first time, Jesus performs a sign in the presence of his disciples at the wedding at Cana. J.P. Meier says that “this sign is not just the ‘first’ in a purely numerical sense. It is also the beginning – not just in the sense of the culmination of the beginning seen in the

¹⁹⁷ P. RIGA “Signs of Glory. The use of ‘sēmeion’ in St. John’s Gospel”, 416.

¹⁹⁸ The following are the seventeen occurrences of this word in the fourth gospel: 2.11,18,23; 3.2; 4.48,54; 6.2,14,26,30; 7.31; 9.16; 10.41; 11.47; 12.18,37; 20.30.

¹⁹⁹ G. Mlakuzhyil observes that “the only exception is 10,41 where it is said: ‘John did no sign’, a phrase which in its context implies that Jesus did.” (G. Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 271).

²⁰⁰ G. Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 272.

gathering of the community of the disciples narrated in chap. 1 but also in the sense of the beginning of the series of signs that will spell out in ever greater detail the abundant, overflowing gift of divine life succinctly symbolized in this first sign”.²⁰¹

This important theological element of ‘signs’²⁰² in the Johannine gospel should be studied in reference to the glory of Jesus, because the signs are presented as the mode of revelation of Jesus’ glory. This is clear from the following texts: Jn 2.18; 4.48; 4.53; 5.36; 6.32; 6.43; 8.21; 9.1-9.²⁰³ So we can even call the signs ‘Revealers of Glory’. As recommended by P. Riga, the connection between the signs and glory and their origin must be studied in the light of the OT.²⁰⁴ In the OT, when God YHWH revealed His glory through wonders and signs, the Jewish people recognized the glory of God. When they saw the miraculous events and signs performed by the prophets, they gave glory to God (cfr. Exod 3.12; 4.17; Judg 6.17; Tob 5.2; I Sam 10.1; 10.7). These miraculous signs functioned as evidence for the presence of God and His power of

²⁰¹ J.P. MEIER, “The Changing of Water into Wine at Cana”, 946.

²⁰² For more details about the Johannine meaning of σημεῖον, cfr. R.H. RENGSTORF, σημεῖον in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, VII, 243-257; G. MLAKUZHYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 271-279; P. RIGA, “Signs of Glory. The use of ‘sēmeion’ in St. John’s Gospel”, 402-424.

²⁰³ P. RIGA, “Signs of Glory. The use of ‘sēmeion’ in St. John’s Gospel”, 410.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 411.

salvation.²⁰⁵ G. Mlakuzhyil says that the Messianic nature of the ‘signs’ is supported by “the thematic affinities between the ‘signs’ in the Exodus and those in the Gospel of John since many of the latter recall those of the former”.²⁰⁶ According to him, this thematic relationship between the ‘signs’ of the fourth gospel and the ‘signs’ of the Exodus is confirmed by some common literary characteristics. For example:²⁰⁷

Ex 11.10: ἐποίησαν πάντα τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα ταῦτα ἐν γῆ Αἰγύπτῳ ἐναντίον Φαραῶ
(See also Ex 7.3; 10.1-2)

Jn 2.11: Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ

Num 14.11: ἕως τίνος οὐ πιστεύουσίν μοι ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς σημείοις οἷς ἐποίησα ἐν αὐτοῖς

The ‘signs’ of the OT were only ‘imperfect representations of what was to come in Christ’.²⁰⁸ The evangelist “puts these signs in relation to these miracles or signs of the OT, proving that Christ was God’s envoy and that the presence of God was in the incarnate Christ”.²⁰⁹

R. Schnackenburg states that “the Christological significance proves to be the most important element

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ G. MLAKUZHYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 274.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 274-275.

²⁰⁸ P. RIGA, “Signs of Glory. The use of ‘sēmeion’ in St. John’s Gospel”, 423.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 411.

of Johannine ‘signs’, the most characteristic of their properties and the heart of their theology”.²¹⁰ This statement of Schnackenburg is true for the first sign of Cana as well. The first sign of Jesus is predominantly Christological in its character and it reveals the identity of Jesus and his origin from the Father. This first sign in which Jesus’ glory is manifested leads the disciples to have ever deeper faith in him.

C. The disciples’ faith in Jesus

Jesus did his first sign at Cana of Galilee and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him (Jn 2.11). The mention of the disciples in the fourth gospel is note-worthy. It is interesting to note that “74 times out of 78 times the term *mathêtês* refers to the disciples of Jesus...This is a clear indication of the evangelists’ exclusive interest in the disciples of Jesus”.²¹¹

At the wedding at Cana, though the disciples were not active participants in the miraculous event as noted in the narratological analysis, they are the ones who are said to have faith in Jesus. It is to be noted that the evangelist mentions the disciples at the beginning and at the end of the episode of changing water into wine. G. Mlakuzhyil observes that “the

²¹⁰ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1, p. 525.

²¹¹ G. MLAKUZHYYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 280.

disciples of Jesus are explicitly mentioned both in the 'historical sign-introduction' (2,1-11; cf. vv.2.11) and in the 'historical sign-conclusion' (20,30), which therefore form an inclusion"²¹². We analysed the character of the disciples of Jesus in our narratological analysis in the second chapter. This evidence supports the fact that the disciples play a vital role in the episode of the wedding at Cana. In the following paragraphs, we shall now see the significance of 'believing' or 'the act of faith' in the fourth gospel with a special reference to Jn 2.1-12.

'Believing' (πιστεύειν) is one of the major theological themes of the fourth gospel. The verb πιστεύειν is used 98 times in the gospel of John whereas it occurs only 11 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark and 9 times in Luke.²¹³ Believing (πιστεύειν) has a radically Christocentric character in the fourth gospel. Observing that the noun (πίστις) is never used by the fourth evangelist, though the verb (πιστεύειν) is frequently (98 times) used by him, G. Mlakuzhyil interprets that "this indicates the active character of Johannine faith"²¹⁴ For John, 'faith' means essentially 'faith in Jesus'²¹⁵ and this 'faith in Jesus' is also 'faith in God as Father' (cfr. Jn 12.44 f.).

A. Serra distinguishes three different uses of this verb πιστεύειν in the fourth gospel:

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ G. MLAKUZHYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 287, footnote 149.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 288.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

- πιστεύειν τίνι means to accept his word as the word of truth. (Jn 2.22; 4.21-50)
- πιστεύειν εἰς τίνα implies an adhesion to the person. (Jn 2.11; 3.16, 18, 36; 4.39)
- πιστεύειν εἰς τὸ ὄνομά τινος is the most perfect formula of faith. In the New Testament it is used only by the fourth evangelist (Jn 1.12; 2.23; 3.18; 1 Jn 5.13).²¹⁶

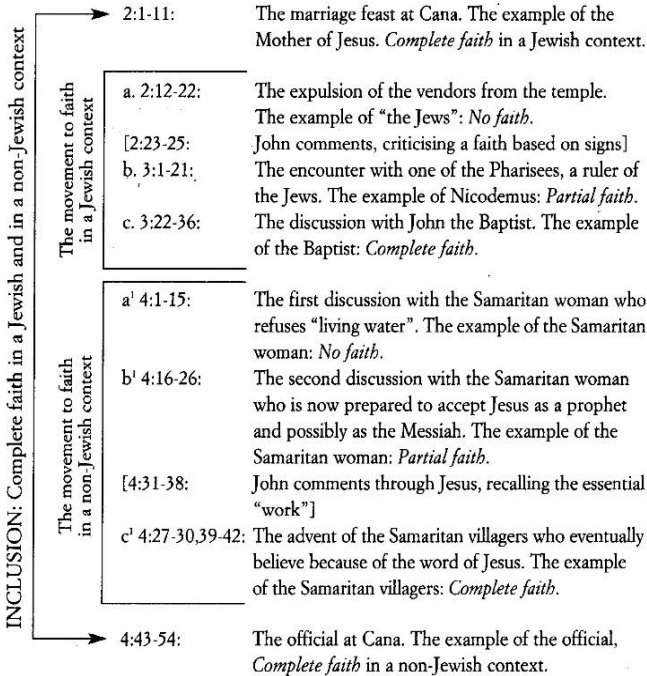
The importance given to ‘faith’ in the fourth gospel is very clear from its concluding verse, Jn 20.31: “ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεῦητόετι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ”. It is interesting to note that the very purpose of writing the gospel is to lead the readers to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; believing, one will have life through his name.

The emphasis the evangelist gives to this theme is very clear from the fact that he concludes many episodes with a note of faith. For example, the first two signs of Cana: the disciples believed in him (2.11) and the royal official and his family became believers (4.53). F. J. Moloney explains how this important theme (faith) is gradually developed by the evangelist in these two Cana episodes, with the help of the following literary structure of Jn 2.1-4.54:²¹⁷

²¹⁶ A. SERRA, *Maria a Cana e presso la croce*, 70.

²¹⁷ F. J. MOLONEY, “From Cana to Cana (Jn 2:1 – 4:54) and the Fourth Evangelist’s Concept of Correct (and

FROM CANA TO CANA (Jn. 2:1-4:54)



F. J. Moloney shows the movement from faith in a Jewish context (Jn 2.1-11) to faith in a non-Jewish context.

Noting the literary structure of the ‘from Cana to Cana section’ (2.1- 4.54), so carefully designed by the evangelist, he concludes that it leads the reader through

Incorrect) Faith”, in *Salesianum* 40 (1978) 840.

a series of examples of faith.²¹⁸ He interprets 2.11 as a “consequence of the ‘faith in the word’ of the Mother of Jesus, leading to the faith of others, just as the faith of the official led to the faith of his household (4.53)”.²¹⁹ In his opinion, the purpose of the ‘from Cana to Cana passage’ is primarily to lead the readers to a gradual understanding of what true faith means. In the same words of F.J. Moloney:

For John, true faith means a radical openness to the word of Jesus, i.e. to all that he has come to reveal. Anyone who will not accept this revelation (e.g. ‘the Jews’ or the Samaritan woman) has no faith. The signs must not be understood within the categories which men, history and culture can determine. . . . Ultimately, it is taking the risk of accepting this revelation without condition.²²⁰

The relation between signs and faith is very clear from the way the evangelist concludes the signs of Jesus. This close connection between the signs of Jesus and faith is one of the important theological themes of John. This connection is very well highlighted with examples by R. H. Rengstorf:

[...] the two Cana stories show particularly well how John depicts the relation between sign and faith., 2:1 ff.; 4:47 ff. In both instances the rise of faith – in the disciples in 2:11, in the βασιλικός and his whole οἰκία in 4:53 – is expressly brought into causal connection with the σημεῖον of Jesus. In the case of the disciples this had already been preceded by a plain confession of the

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 842.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

Messiahship of Jesus (1:41, 45, 49), and Jesus himself in the word πιστεύεις had recognized the faith of Nathanael on the basis of this confession (1:50). Similarly in the case of the sign of βασιλικός the sign of Jesus which awakened faith was preceded by a confident request that Jesus would heal his hopelessly sick son (4:47), and the Evangelist can say that he believed (4:50: ἐπίστευσεν) the word Jesus spoke to him in reply. In some sense one may also cite in this connection the confession of faith (9:38) made by the man born blind when he met Jesus after his sight was recovered. He obeyed Jesus and with the πηλός on his eyes and went and washed. But this obedient trust is obviously not what John means when he speaks of faith at the end of a σημεῖον story. This faith is inseparable from the immediate impression of the person of Jesus which is made by the act which reveals His nature [...] The σημεῖα of Jesus goes beyond the immediate hour and those who share in it as spectators. By having Jesus link words of revelation concerning His person with a series of σημεῖα (6:32 ff.; 9:39; 11:25; cf. 5:17), John brings out the fact that the signs have a constant power to establish faith because Jesus always remains the One He is. Since faith also cannot be forced by the σημεῖον, this always develops a critical function alongside its power to establish faith.²²¹

Thus, the active dynamism between signs and their power to establish faith is an important element in the gospel of John. This is very clear from the fact that the verb πιστεύειν is very frequently (74 out of 98 times) used in the book of Jesus' signs. R. E. Brown comments that "this division of frequency agrees with the thesis that in the Book of Signs Jesus is presenting to men the

²²¹ R.H. RENGSTORF, σημεῖον, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, VII, 251.

choice of believing, while in the Book of Glory (chs. xiii-xx) he is speaking to those who already believe and, thus is presuming faith”.²²²

It is also to be noted that the fourth evangelist attaches a great deal of importance to ‘faith’ not only in the concluding verses of the signs, but also in many other circumstances of Jesus’ earthly ministry (cfr. Jn 6.68- 69; 9.38; 11.27; 16.30). The fourth gospel reaches its climax with the confession of Thomas: ‘Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου (Jn 20.28). These instances show “how necessary it is not only to believe Jesus’ words, signs and works to acknowledge him as the Christ and the Son of God but also to commit oneself actively to his person”.²²³

D. The ‘hour’ at Cana and Jesus’ passion-glorification

B. Olsson says that ἡ ὥρα is the key to the understanding of the text as a whole.²²⁴ Two categories of interpretations of the hour of Jesus in Jn 2.4 are possible: It can be either regarded as a statement about the right moment for Jesus to intervene with a miracle at the request of his mother or as a statement about the ‘hour of Jesus’ in the second meaning of the Johannine theology, that is in reference to the passion,

²²² R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 513.

²²³ G. MŁAKUZYIŁ, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 291.

²²⁴ B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 43.

death and resurrection of Jesus.²²⁵

The word ὥρα appears 26 times in the fourth gospel. As G. Mlakuzhyil observes, sometimes it refers to the time of the day (cfr. 1.39; 4.6, 52, 53; 19.14) and sometimes it refers to the ‘hour of Jesus’ (cfr. 2.4; 8.20; 12.23; 13.1; 17.1).²²⁶ Though it is not explicitly mentioned what Jesus means by ἡ ὥρα μου in Jn 2.4, we can understand its meaning if we refer to Jn 7.30; 8.20; 12.23; 12.27; 12.28; 17.1). In reference to these passages, it is very clear to us that the hour of Jesus is the hour of his passion, death, resurrection and glorification. G. Mlakuzhyil presents various dimensions of ‘the hour of Jesus’:²²⁷

- 1) “The hour” of Jesus refers to his (Jesus’) passion-glorification and is of central importance in the Johannine Gospel. Its arrival is mentioned positively for the first time at the centre of the Gospel (12,23,27). While the first part of the Gospel tends towards “the hour” (cf. 2,4; 7,30; 8,20), the second part explains its theological meaning and its soteriological and chronological content (cf. 13,1; 17,1; 19,27).
- 2) Besides this primarily Christocentric dimension of the “hour”, there is also an ecclesial dimension. “The hour” of Jesus inaugurates the “hour” of the Church (*tempus Ecclesiae*) during which the Father will be openly revealed (16,25) and worshipped in Spirit and truth (4,21.23), when the dead will live again (5,25) and when the disciples will be persecuted and killed (16,2.4).
- 3) Since the second major division of the Gospel of

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ G. MLAKUZHYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 162-163.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

John (11,1-20,29) deals with the arrival and significance of “the hour” of Jesus, to which the first part (“the Book of Jesus’ Signs”) progressively and dramatically tends, we may rightly designate the second part as “Book of Jesus’ Hour”.

Though ‘the hour of Jesus’ can be interpreted from various perspectives, most exegetes agree that this ‘hour of Jesus’ mentioned in the first sign of Jesus signifies the passion-glorification of Jesus. There is no doubt about this. This is very clear from the inclusion that this pericope (2.1-12) forms with that of Mary at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19.25-27). This point is fully analysed by C. P. Ceroke.²²⁸

E. The messianic wedding

The word “γάμος” is used twice in the narrative (vv. 1 and 2). It is interesting and important to raise this question: why is the first sign of Jesus in the context of a wedding? Considering the importance given to the wedding context, many exegetes interpret this text in terms of a symbolic sense and say that this event symbolized the messianic wedding.

Though this episode takes place in a wedding context, the evangelist never mentions the bride. The mother of Jesus is presented as one of the main characters of the episode in the first verse. And Jesus is the central figure of the episode. We note that the spouses are not introduced in these first verses whereas Jesus and his mother are, and thus it is very clear that

²²⁸ Cfr. C. P. CEROKÉ, *Ambiguity*, 323-40; IDEM, *Jesus and Mary at Cana*, 5-13.

these two characters (Jesus and Mary) in the episode are to be symbolically taken as the spouses.

At the wedding at Cana (Jn 2.1-12), Jesus is symbolically interpreted as the bridegroom and Mary as the bride. The allusion to Jesus as the bridegroom is ironically presented by the evangelist in vv. 9 and 10. This irony is intentionally made use of by the evangelist to symbolically present Jesus as the real bridegroom. The following words of I. de la Potterie make this point clearer:

Il maestro di Tavola, ignorando la provenienza di tutto questo vino, chiama lo sposo e gli dice: «*Tu* hai conservato fino ad ora il vino buono». Ora, ciò ch'egli dice allo *sposo* si applica in realtà a *Gesù*. È lui il vero sposo del festi- no messianico. Ricordiamo, infine, che in *Gv* 3,28-29 Giovanni Battista dichiara nella sua ultima testimonianza: «Chi possiede la sposa è lo sposo; ma l'amico dello sposo [...] esulta di gioia alla voce dello sposo» (3,29).²²⁹

Some exegetes say that the facts that Mary is mentioned at the beginning of the narrative even before Jesus is mentioned and that no other woman is mentioned in the narrative except Mary (not even a single ref- erence to the bride) indicate that Mary is the bride. I. de la Potterie inter- prets, “Gesù occupa il posto che un tempo aveva Jahvé come Sposo di Israele; e la Madre di Gesù, la « Donna », è ormai la Sposa del Signore e la nostra Madre”.²³⁰

²²⁹ I. DE LA POTTERIE, *La Madre di Gesù e il mistero di Cana*, 436.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 440.

This story reaches its climax with the messianic revelation of Jesus. To understand this revelation, we need to have a clear idea about the symbolic meaning of wedding. Interpreting the messianic wedding of Jesus, I. de la Potterie quotes the following words of A. Lefèvre in his article: “Nel mistero delle nozze di Cana tutto consiste nella presenza di questo sposo che è nascosto o piuttosto che comincia a manifestarsi”.²³¹

The messianic character of the revelation of Jesus is to be understood in reference to the symbolic meaning of the wedding as a messianic banquet. The following biblical references support the view that the wedding refers to the messianic banquet in its symbolic sense:

- Mat 22.2: Ὁμοιωθή ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ, ὅστις ἐποίησεν γάμους τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ
- Rev 19.7: ὅτι ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἠτοίμασεν ἑαυτὴν
- Rev 19.9: Μακάριοι οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι
- Jn 3.29: ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην νυμφίος ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου ὁ ἐστηκὼς καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ χαρᾶ χαίρει διὰ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ νυμφίου

I. de la Potterie observes that a wedding was a symbol of the covenant in the prophetic books (cfr. Hos 2.16-25; Jer 2.1-2; 3.1, 6-12; Ez 16; Is 50.1, 54.4-8, 62.4-5). YHWH is the bridegroom and Israel the

²³¹ A. LEFÈVRE, quoted in I. DE LA POTTERIE, *La Madre di Gesù e il mistero di Cana*, 436.

bride.²³² Further, referring to Mt 2.18-20, 2 Cor 11.2 and Eph 5.25-33, he says that Christ is the bridegroom and the messianic people (the Church) are the bride in the New Testament. At the wedding at Cana, Jesus reveals himself “as the divine spouse of the new messianic community”.²³³

The influence of this interpretation of Christ as the bridegroom at the wedding of Cana is also found in the Benedictus antiphon of the liturgy of the hours for the feast of the Epiphany: “Today the Church has been joined to *her heavenly bridegroom*, since Christ has purified her of her sins in the river Jordan: the Magi hasten to the royal wedding and offer gifts: the *wedding guests rejoice since Christ has changed water into wine*”.²³⁴

Though this interpretation is not totally new in the field of exegesis,²³⁵ it is one of the most interesting and important interpretations of the wedding at Cana.

²³² I. DE LA POTTERIE, *La Madre di Gesù e il mistero di Cana*, 436-437.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 437 in A. PROULX – A. ALONSO-SCHÖKEL, “Las sandalias del Mesías Esposo”, in *Biblica* 59 (1978) 24-36. (The translation is mine).

²³⁴ *The Divine Office. The Liturgy of the Hours According to the Roman Rite*, vol. I (London: Collins, 1974) 318-319. (The italics are mine).

²³⁵ I. de la Potterie states that this type of interpretation about Jesus at the wedding at Cana as the messianic spouse is found in the writings of some Church Fathers, for example, in the writings of St. Ephrem, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Augustin and St. Thomas (Cfr. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *La Madre di Gesù e il mistero di Cana*, 437).

F. The symbolism of 'the mother of Jesus' at Cana

Many mariologists (e.g. A. Serra) say that the mariological character of this episode is very significant and important, without negating the primary importance of the person of Christ and the Christological emphasis of the evangelist. The emphasis that the fourth evangelist attaches to the figure of 'the mother of Jesus' is clearly evident from the following facts:

1. This miraculous event of Jesus' changing water into wine takes place because of Mary's initiative.
2. The evangelist mentions the presence of the mother of Jesus here in 2.1-12 and also in Jn 19.25-27 and thus makes an inclusion in the literary structure of the gospel.
3. The evangelist has designed his gospel in such a way that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is present at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and at the end of his earthly life. This explains the importance of Mary's role in the earthly life of Jesus.
4. The fourth evangelist never mentions the proper name 'Mary'; he always calls her 'mother of Jesus'. This is not without any theological intention. This is not simply 'Mary' but the '*mother*' of Jesus. This title has been deliberately repeated in the fourth gospel in order to emphasize the maternity of Mary.

Taking into consideration these elements and the important role Mary plays in the fourth gospel, mariologists are convinced that anyone who reads this

passage cannot and should not miss the mariological connotation of this Cana episode. But there are some exegetes do not find any mariological symbolism in this pericope.²³⁶

But at the same time, these mariological interpretations are not without problems. First of all, Jesus' reply to his mother is very ambiguous. We cannot be sure that Mary was sure of her son's intervention in resolving the problem of the lack of wine. R.E. Brown says that "Jesus' negative reply to Mary is in harmony with the Synoptic passages that treat of Mary in relation to Jesus' mission (Luke ii 49; Mark iii 33-35; Luke xi 27-28): Jesus always insists that human kinship, whether it be Mary's or that of his disbelieving relatives (John vii 1-10), cannot affect the pattern of his ministry, for he has his Father's work to do".²³⁷ This point weakens the arguments of the mariologists.

R.E. Brown is also not convinced of the interpretations of some mariologists that despite Jesus' refusal Mary's intervention becomes the occasion of the first of Jesus' signs, because "the evangelist does nothing to stress the power of Mary's intercession at Cana".²³⁸ It is surprising to see that Mary asks the servants to do whatever her son tells them, as if Jesus has positively accepted her request. Moreover the negative reply of Jesus contradicts the miraculous act

²³⁶ For example: G. MLAKUZHYIL, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 95.

²³⁷ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 102.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

of Jesus. Because of these seeming inconsistencies in the sequence of the narrative caused by the dialogue between Mary and Jesus, some exegetes are of the opinion that while the wine miracle at Cana is a historical event, the dialogue between Jesus and his mother may have been the evangelist's creation inserted for the theological purposes of the gospel.²³⁹ Some other exegetes suggest that "the dialogue was also part of the primitive tradition, but that the evangelist has given us only those snatches of dialogue that served his theological purpose, thus leaving us with an incomplete and inadequate account when we try to pry beneath the theological level".²⁴⁰ In our mariological interpretation of this episode, we are as much concerned about the historical evidence of this dialogue as about its theological meaning.

R.E. Brown notices a parallelism between the 'woman' at the Cana event and the 'woman' of the book of revelation.²⁴¹ Most commentators say the woman mentioned in Rev 12 refers to Mary, because the male child to whom the woman gives birth is the 'Messiah' (cfr. Rev 12.5: καὶ ἔτεκεν υἷὸν ἄρσεν, ὃς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ. καὶ ἠρπάσθη τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ). R.E. Brown observes that a number of parallelisms are shared by Rev 12 and Jn 2.1-12, 19.25-27 in reference to the background of Genesis.

- a) The figure in Rev xii is described as "a woman"; in both Johannine scenes Jesus addresses his mother as

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

“Woman,” which.....is a peculiar form of address that needs an explanation. The term would be intelligible in all these cases if Johannine thought is presenting Mary as Eve, the “woman” of Gen iii 15.

b) Rev xii is unquestionably set against the background of Gen iii; ... (there are) many echoes of the early chapters of Genesis in John i-ii. A background in Genesis for xix 25-27 is more difficult to discern, but certainly the death of Jesus is the framework of the great struggle with Satan foretold in Gen iii, at least as that passage was interpreted by Christian theology (see John xiii 1,3, xiv 2-22).

c) Rev xii 17 mentions the woman’s other offspring against whom the dragon makes war; thus, the seed of the woman (Gen iii 15) is not only the Messiah, but includes a wider group, the Christians. In both of her appearances in John, Mary is associated with Jesus’ disciples. At Cana her action is in the context of the completion of the call of the disciples. At the foot of the cross Mary is made the mother of the Beloved Disciple, the model Christian, and so she is given offspring to protect.²⁴²

Against these backgrounds, we can understand better the meaning of “woman” in the Johannine corpus and the role of Mary. We can see that the request of Mary would lead to the miraculous act. According to R.E. Brown, Jesus’ reply to his mother is not a total refusal (only an apparent one), but before performing the miracle he makes it clear that she cannot have any role to play during his earthly ministry; his signs must reflect the glory and power of his Father, and not any human agency; she is to

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 109.

receive her role at the hour of his passion, death, resurrection and ascension. That is why John mentions her presence at the foot of the cross. It is there at the foot of the cross that she plays the role of the mother of the Messiah in the struggle against the satanic serpent. It is at the hour of Jesus that her role comes to its climax, in reference to Gen 3.15:

יְאִיבָה אִשִּׁית בִּינֶךָ וּבִין הָאִשָּׁה וּבִין זְרַעֲךָ וּבִין זְרַעָהּ

Thus, R.E. Brown interprets the dialogue between Jesus and Mary in the context of the hour of Jesus and according to him the role that Mary plays in the Cana event is significant only in the light of the role she plays as the new Eve at the foot of the cross.²⁴³

A. Serra says that Jn 2.5b is a reflection of the words pronounced by the people of Israel at the Sinai event (Ex 19.8; 24.3, 7).²⁴⁴

Ex 19.8	⇒	Jn 2.5b
“Whatever Yaweh has said, we will do”		“whatever he might say to you, do it”

Comparing these words of the people of Israel (Ex 19.8; 24.3, 7) with the words of Mary (Jn 2.5b), A. Serra comments:

1. Al Sinai, Mosè stava fra Yahwèh e l'assemblea dei suoi

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ A. SERRA, *Maria a Cana e presso la croce*, 34-37.

fratelli (Dt 5,5). A Cana, Maria si tiene tra Gesù e i suoi servi. Essa occupa un ruolo mediatore: « Dice la madre di Gesù *a lui*: “Non hanno più vino”... Dice sua madre *ai servi*: “Quando Egli vi dirà, fatelo” » (2, 3. 5).

2. Al Sinai, il popolo si dichiarò pronto ad ascoltare e osservare tutto ciò che il Signore avrebbe detto mediante Mosè. A Cana, Maria esorta i servi a fare quanto avrebbe detto Gesù nell'A.T., non è un personaggio neutro. Egli, prima degli altri, aderisce alla volontà di Dio. A pari, è presumibile che alle nozze di Cana Maria, per prima, disponesse il proprio animo ad accettare la volontà del Figlio, e comunicare così ai servi il suo abbandono totale in Lui. La frase: «Quanto Egli vi dirà, fatelo», significa allora: «Quanto Egli dirà, facciamo».
3. Al Sinai, il dono della Legge ebbe luogo dopo che il popolo pronunciò il suo atto di fede. A Cana, il vino nuovo (simbolo, come diremo, della nuova Legge portata da Gesù) è preceduto e propiziato dalla fede di Maria, che viene trasmessa ai servi.
4. Infine, se teniamo presente che l'occhio dell'evangelista è fisso alla teofonia sinaitica, siamo in grado di comprendere perché mai Gesù si rivolga alla Madre col titolo di « Donna ».l'invito di Maria è identico, nella sostanza, alle parole di tutta l'assemblea d'Israele al Sinai. Da questo parallelismo si hanno buone ragioni per concludere che l'evangelista opera una identificazione indiretta fra *tutto il popolo d'Israele e la madre di Gesù*. Infatti Giovanni pone sulle labbra di *Maria* la professione di fede che *tutta la comunità del popolo eletto* emise un giorno in faccia al Sinai.²⁴⁵

This study made by A. Serra is very attractive and interesting. F.J. Moloney also observes that this Cana

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 34-36.

event has a strong link with “the background of a Sinai tradition and the giving of a *doxa* that surpasses the Law through Moses (see 1:17)”.²⁴⁶

Thus, it is clear that the role of Mary at the wedding at Cana is important and needs to be studied in comparison with the old covenant, because this first sign of Jesus is not only the beginning of Jesus’ ministry but also the beginning of the new covenant.²⁴⁷

G. *The Ecclesiological interpretation*

Reading vv. 1-2, we note that Mary (v.1) and Jesus’ disciples (v. 2) make two different journeys to the wedding at Cana. Mary is presented as being there before Jesus and his disciples. But at the end of the episode (v. 12), the evangelist narrates that they all (also Jesus’ brothers) go together to Capernaum. What makes them come together is this first sign of Jesus and their faith in Jesus because of Mary’s faith (vv. 5 and 11 explain their faith).

A.Serra comments that at the faith level, there is no difference between his relatives (mother and brothers) and the disciples.²⁴⁸ They who are gathered together bound by the same faith in Jesus symbolize the Church. This ecclesiological dimension is explained in the words of M. Thurian:

Alla fine del racconto, Maria e i discepoli formano la comunità messianica, unita nella fede al Figlio di Dio

²⁴⁶ F. J. MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 83.

²⁴⁷ Cfr. A. SERRA, “A Cana Gesù inaugura la nuova alleanza (Gv 2,1-12)”, in *Parole di Vita* 49/1 (2004) 16-25.

²⁴⁸ A. SERRA, *Maria a Cana e presso la croce*, 71.

che ha appunto manifestato la sua Gloria; lì sta il nucleo della Chiesa attorno al suo Signore, ascoltando la sua Parola e compiendo la volontà del Padre. Maria è presente in questa comunità ecclesiale e si può immaginare il Cristo, mentre guarda questo gruppo che sta attorno a lui, in atto di dire: «Ecco mia madre e i miei fratelli; chiunque compie la volontà del Padre mio che è nei cieli, questi è per me fratello, sorella e madre».²⁴⁹

H. The sacramental meaning of the wedding at Cana

The sacramental aspect of the Johannine gospel is one of the most vigorously debated matters. R.E. Brown says, “perhaps on no other point of Johannine thought is there such sharp division among scholars as there is on the question of sacramentalism”.²⁵⁰ And it is also a point of discussion among the exegetes whether the Cana episode of Jesus changing water into wine contains sacramental meaning. Some exegetes say that this episode suggests the sacrament of Baptism and some others that of Eucharist and a few others that of matrimony. There is no consensus of opinions among the scholars with regard to the sacramental meaning of this episode.

It is to be kept in mind that the Johannine theology is not so concerned about the sacrament of Matrimony as about those of Baptism and Eucharist. R. E. Brown says, “among the four Gospels, it is to John most of all that we owe the deep Christian

²⁴⁹ M. THURIAN, *Maria Madre del Signore, immagine della Chiesa* (Brescia: Morcelliana, ²1965), 158.

²⁵⁰ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. CXI.

understanding of the purpose of Baptism and the Eucharist’.²⁵¹

Since we have already seen the interpretation of this Cana episode as a messianic wedding²⁵² in one of the previous sections, we shall only deal with the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist in the following sections.

i) Baptism

The word ὕδωρ is used by the fourth evangelist in Jn 1.33; 2.7; 2.9; 3.5; 3.23; 4.7; 4.10; 4.11; 4.13; 4.14; 4.15; 4.28; 4.46; 5.7; 7.38; 13.5; and 19.34. ‘Water’ has a symbolic meaning in the fourth gospel. The word ὕδωρ appears three times (vv. 7, 9, 9) in the episode of the wedding at Cana, always in connection with the ‘water-jars’ used for the Jewish purification rite. Some exegetes associated this purification theme and the symbolic meaning of water with the new sacramental character of Baptism. Here water is associated with baptism, the act of healing and the words of Jesus affirming that He is the living water (see Jn 4.13); also the symbolism of water develops the point that the water baptism of John foretells that Jesus should be manifested thereby as the Bearer of the Spirit. Jn 19.34 reads: “The soldier pierced his side with a spear and there came out blood and water”.

The evangelist mentions the Jewish purification

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, CXIV.

²⁵² For more details about the connection between the messianic weddings and Christian Matrimony, Cfr. I. DE LA POTTERIE, “Le nozze messianiche e il matrimonio cristiano”, in *Parola, Spirito e Vita* 13 (1986) 86-104.

and water-jars in v. 6. This connection between Jewish purification and the symbolism of water is associated with the sacramental meaning of baptism in the Cana event.

B. Olsson makes a detailed comparative study of Ex 19-24 and Jn 1.19-2.11 and comments on the Jewish purification rite mentioned at the Cana event and suggests:

“just as the Israelites had to receive the Law at Sinai and John had to baptize with water before receiving the revelation of the bearer of the new covenant, so also purification stands essential for the birth of a new people of God in the narrative of the Fourth Gospel. While the disciples do not receive a new baptism in this passage, the manifestation of Jesus’ glory that leads to their belief in him takes place with the aid of the water held within water jars used in purification rites”.²⁵³

Jesus’ use of water in this Cana event prepares his disciples to believe in him. And at the end of the miracle, the disciples have faith in him “and become children of God (1.12). As Jesus will use water before the feast of the Passover to ‘cleanse’ the disciples (13.10), so here at the wedding at Cana his employment of water brings them into contact with his glory....The one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (1.33) begins his ministry by using water to bring his disciples to faith”.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ B. OLSSON, *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*, 51, 102-106, in L.P. JONES, *The symbol of water in the gospel of John*, 63.

²⁵⁴ L.P. JONES, *The symbol of water in the gospel of John*, 63-

C.H. Dodd connects the symbolism of water with the baptism of John the Baptist. John was sent to baptize in water (ἐν ὕδατι). The use of this expression ἐν ὕδατι is impressive, because it is repeated three times (1.26, 31, 33). C. H. Dodd interprets this baptism theme with reference to Jn 1. 26, 31, 33; 3.26, 31-36; 7.38-39; 9.5-7 and indicates the sacramental meaning of baptism in the Cana event.²⁵⁵

The interpretation of the symbolism of water does not explain well the sacramental meaning of baptism, though it has some connections with this theme. The evangelist does not explicitly mention the baptismal meaning of this event. L. P. Jones himself agrees that “this...does not support a sacramental meaning of the function and meaning of water”.²⁵⁶ In my opinion also, there is no sufficient and convincing evidence for the baptismal meaning of the passage, though there is some allusion to this theme in the Cana episode in a very secondary and incidental sense.

ii) Eucharist

Some commentators believe that the first sign that Jesus performed at Cana has a Eucharistic sacramental meaning. There are three important elements of the Cana narrative that favour the Eucharistic sacramental interpretation.²⁵⁷

64.

²⁵⁵ C.H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 310-311.

²⁵⁶ L.P. JONES, *The symbol of water in the gospel of John*, 64.

²⁵⁷ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1,

1. There is clear link between the Cana event and the “hour of Jesus” which begins at the Last Supper. (cfr. Jn 13.1: Πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα ἵνα μεταβῆ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ἀγαπήσας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς).
2. We notice that the following three scenes are all stated by the evangelist as taking place before the Passover period:
 - a) The Cana event takes place before the Jewish Passover. (cfr. Jn 2.12: Καὶ ἐγγὺς ἦν τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων, καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ὁ Ἰησοῦς).
 - b) The multiplication of the loaves takes place before the Jewish Passover. (cfr. Jn 6.4: ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων).
 - c) The last supper of Jesus takes place before the Jewish Passover.

The temporal factor that is common to these three events binds them together and helps us in “associating the wine of Cana with the bread of the multiplication as a symbolic anticipation of the Eucharistic bread and wine”.²⁵⁸

3. The allusion between “Mary’s presence at Cana and her presence at the foot of the cross when *blood* flowed from the side of Christ”²⁵⁹ is also taken as a basis for this sacramental interpretation.

p. 110.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

R.E. Brown also presents some external criteria to establish the possibility of this sacramental interpretation:

Externally a 2nd or 3rd century fresco in an Alexandrian catacomb joins Cana and the multiplication of the loaves, thus bread and wine and in John the multiplication of the loaves has undeniable Eucharistic overtones. Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* III 16:7), speaking of Cana, mentions that Mary wanted before- time to partake of “the cup of recapitulation”; and this seems to be a reference to the Eucharistic cup.²⁶⁰

Commenting on the sacramental characteristic of the Cana episode, L. Orlando says that St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Cyprian and some other Church Fathers interpret the wine of Cana as the Eucharistic wine.²⁶¹

Taking into consideration all the internal and external references mentioned above, we can conclude that the Cana event has some link with the Eucharist. It is to be noted that this sacramental interpretation is not new to the exegesis of the Cana episode, but is already found in the writings of the Church Fathers, as has been mentioned above.

I. Eschatological meaning

In v. 10, we read that the steward calls the bridegroom and tells him: “Every man sets out first

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ L. ORLANDO, *Il Vangelo di Giovanni. Lettura Teologica* (Taranto: Puntopace, 2003) 123.

the good wine, and when men have well drunk, then the inferior; you have kept the good wine *till now*.” The good wine kept “till now” (ἕως ἄρτι) is a sign that the messianic time has been inaugurated. This expression ἕως ἄρτι used by the evangelist four times (2.10; 5.17; 16.24; 1 Jn 2.8-9) refers to all stages of the salvific history that prepared the activity of Jesus. The eschatology is realized with the coming of Jesus into this world.²⁶²

The evangelist mentions that Jesus manifested his glory (v. 11). This revelation of Jesus’ glory symbolizes the messianic times, because “the revelation of divine glory was to be a mark of the last times”.²⁶³ The symbolism of the new wine of this Cana miracle opens a way to interpret this episode from an eschatological perspective. R.E. Brown presents a number of references to support this view: “In Ps Sol xvii 32 we hear that the Messiah shall make the glory of the Lord to be seen by all on earth. En xlix 2 speaks of the glory of the Chosen One (John 1,34), the Son of Man; and Ps cii 16 promises that the Lord will appear in His Glory (also Ps xcvi 6; Isa lx 1-2, etc.)”.²⁶⁴

While explaining the deeper meaning of ‘the hour of Jesus’, G.R. Beasley-Murray comments on ‘the

²⁶² G. FERRARO, “Eôs arti”, in *Rivista Biblica Italiana*, 20 (1972), fascicolo supplementare, 529-545, in A. SERRA, *Maria a Cana e presso la croce*, 52.

²⁶³ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 105.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

hour' from an eschatological perspective:

The hour of Jesus in Cana was less a symbol of his timeless redemptive action than a representation of the eschatological moment which, itself full of glory, leads to a glorious future. We may here recall a different but related use of the "hour" in this Gospel: "the hour comes and now is" (4:23; 5.25), which refers to eschatological realities of the kingdom of God which are now in process of actualization and are moving to a climax in the near future.²⁶⁵

Though there is no direct mention about eschatology, these points mentioned above support the eschatological interpretation of the wedding at Cana.

J. The wisdom motif

This is a very incidental and subordinate theme in the interpretation of the Cana episode. Not many commentators mention this wisdom motif in their interpretation.

We have already seen that the episode of Cana has some connection with the call of the disciples (Jn 1.35-39). R.E. Brown observes that one of the common elements in these two passages is the wisdom motif. According to him, "some of the language of this passage (Jn 1.35-39) stems from the motif of Jesus as divine wisdom"²⁶⁶ The following are

²⁶⁵ G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 37.

²⁶⁶ R.E. BROWN *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 79.

the parallels from the book of Wisdom:

- Wis 6.12: “Wisdom is easily seen by those who love her and found by those who look for her”.
- Wis 6.13: “She anticipates those who desire her by first making her- self known to them” (just as Jesus takes the initiative).
- Wis 6.16: “She makes her rounds seeking those worthy of her and graciously appears to them as they are on their way” (cfr. Jn 1.43).

As this wisdom motif is present in this passage (Jn 1.35-39), so is it in the Cana narrative. Jesus (the divine wisdom) makes himself known to his disciples who look for him by manifesting his glory to them.

R.E. Brown refers to the article written by R. J. Dillon²⁶⁷ and further states that “wisdom prepares a banquet for men, inviting them to eat of her bread and drink of her wine....The act of dining at Wisdom’s table and drinking her wine is a symbol for accepting her message....at Cana in Galilee just before Passover (ii 13), we have Jesus giving men wine in abundance to drink, and this leads his disciples to believe in him. It seems, on a comparative basis, that the Wisdom motif is intended at Cana”²⁶⁸.

Moreover, this Wisdom motif is also reflected in the comment made by the steward in v. 9 (ὡς δὲ ἐγέυσατο ὁ ἀρχιτρίκλινος τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον γεγενημένον

²⁶⁷ Cfr. R.J. DILLON, “Wisdom Tradition and Sacramental Retrospect in the Cana Account (Jn 2, 1-11)”, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 24 (1962), 268-296.

²⁶⁸ R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), vol. 1, p. 107.

καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει πόθεν ἐστίν, οἱ δὲ διάκονοι ᾔδεισαν οἱ ἠντληκότες τὸ ὕδωρ). The ignorance of the steward is put in contrast to the knowledge of the servants. The parallelism of the same ignorance of where wisdom is from is found in Job 28.12-20. Here R.E. Brown associates the theme of where wisdom is from with that of where Jesus is from as portrayed in the fourth gospel.²⁶⁹ Though this “allusion is so subtle”, we can notice that this episode has some connection with the Wisdom motif.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS OF NARRATIVE CRITICISM

Having seen the function of this pericope (Jn 2.1-12) in its immediate and proximate context and also in the context of the whole gospel of John, we come to know the important role this Cana episode plays in the fourth gospel. We have also dealt with various interpretations and theological themes of the Cana story, namely, the manifestation of Jesus’ glory, the Johannine meaning of σημεῖον, the disciples’ faith in Jesus, the ‘hour’ at Cana and Jesus’ passion-glorification, the messianic wedding, the symbolism of ‘the mother of Jesus’ at Cana, the ecclesiological interpretation, the sacramental meaning of the wedding at Cana, the eschatological meaning and the wisdom motif. These interpretations show that this pericope is rich in content and meaning. The interpretations never exhaust the text.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

We want to arrive at a few conclusions as a result of our Narratological and theological study of the text Jn 2,1-12. Having made a literary analysis (Part 1), a narratological analysis (Part 2), exegetically examined the text in its various contexts and theologically interpreted it from different points of view (Part 3), we draw the following conclusions as a result of our study:

Having reviewed the various commentaries and exegetical works about this pericope, we come to see about the inexhaustible richness of theological treasures that are hidden deep within this text, despite the various literary problems and diversity of opinions among the scholars in their interpretation.

With regard to the nature of the text, our preliminary observations, literary analysis and narratological analysis lead us to arrive at the conclusion that this text is predominantly narrative in its character with many allusions and allegorical meanings. We can conclude that this text type is: “a narrative miraculous episode with symbolic elements”.

Our close examination of the text in its various contexts leads to the following conclusion: this text has very strong inter-textual connections or links within the whole Johannine gospel (e.g. 2.4-5 and 19.25-27). Many important and major themes of the

fourth gospel are found within this text (e.g. Hour, Glory, Faith, etc.). Light is shed on this text by other texts of the same Johannine gospel.

It is not hard to arrive at a conclusion regarding the function of the text. It has two functions in the gospel of John: as an end and also as a beginning. In other words, it concludes the call of the first disciples (1.35-51) and opens up a new section (2.1-4.46). Functioning as an opening of this new section, it forms a parallelism with the concluding part (4.43-54) with its similarities of expression, pattern and theological theme.

The principal purpose or scope of this text is to reveal the glory of Jesus and thus lead the disciples of Jesus to have faith in him.

As has been already mentioned earlier, though this pericope has a particular and precise function (i.e. to reveal the glory of Jesus and to bring his disciples to ever deeper faith), as a result of the numerous cross references that we come across throughout the gospel, we can conclude that its function is not limited but vast and multiple. All these cross references explain the vastness of its function in the fourth gospel in connection with various thematic elements.

In the second part of the third chapter, we interpreted the text from various theological perspectives. Though various thematic interpretations are possible, the Christological interpretation is the primary one. All the other themes revolve around this. All the other theological themes are secondary and incidental.

Thus, we conclude that the meaning of the first sign of Jesus at Cana is based on the Christological Revelation. Thus, our text, not only has a Christological thrust, but understood in its contexts, really becomes a key to the understanding of the major themes of the Gospel (Jesus' Signs, Glory, Jesus' Hour, Faith, etc.). The one who reads this text certainly feels invited to have faith in Jesus (v.11) and follow him (v.12). And this is an invitation for us too to grow in our faith in Jesus who constantly manifests his glory in various ways. In the second part of the third chapter, we interpreted the text from various theological perspectives. Though various thematic interpretations are possible, the Christological interpretation is the primary one. All the other themes revolve around this. All the other theological themes are secondary and incidental.

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Printed in India
15 August 2019