tians" those who believed that Jesus had been raised by God. Those who made that claim in the first century continued to affirm that they were Jews (e.g., Paul and Peter [according to Acts]).

These brief reflections help clarify new perspectives of Judaism, the Gospel of John, Jesus, and the advent of "Christianity." Not only are the new methodologies and perspectives more attuned to Jesus and his Judaism, but both open avenues of communication with Jews who have been miscast, castigated, and even murdered because of poor biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. Perhaps with renewed honesty in biblical research and a living out of the command of love, as evidenced by the man from Nazareth, those who are abandoning the institution called "the church" for religious and spiritual reasons may hear the echo of quo vadis.

Turning Water to Wine: Re-reading the Miracle at the Wedding in Cana

Carsten Claussen

Over the centuries the question of "what actually happened" has led most critical interpreters of the Gospel of John, from David Friedrich Strauss and Ferdinand Christian Baur onwards, to radical skepticism. Already in the early third century CE Clement of Alexandria characterized its significance as "a spiritual Gospel." Unlike the Gospels of Mark and Luke, which the author of the Fourth Gospel probably knew, this later account may be regarded as "the Evangelist's meditations on significant words and deeds of Jesus," tempting one to affirm Martin Kähler's verdict against the

1. Leopold von Ranke, Geschichten der romantischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514 (Sämtliche Werke 33/34; Leipzig: Duncker und Humbolt, 1874 [and ed.]), p. vii.
4. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (CM 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 167; Martin Hengel, "Das Johannesevangelium als Quelle für die Geschichte des antiken Jüden-

I am grateful to Prof. Dr. A. J. M. Wedderburn and Prof. Dr. J. Frey, both from the University of Munich, for correcting my English and for helpful comments.
search for the "so-called historical Jesus." Therefore, on one hand one may call John's Gospel the least historical of the four Gospels.

However, this seems to be only one side of the coin. For instance, it has been frequently observed that the author of John contributes a number of accurate details about the geography of first century CE Palestine, about Jewish customs, and about certain historical personalities. Archaeological findings support John's knowledge of Palestine and Jerusalem, such as the Pools of Siloam and of Bethesda (or Bethzatha; John 5:2–9), stone vessels (cf. John 2:6), and the outdoor paving stones near the Antonia Fortress which may have been part of the Roman Praetorium in Jerusalem (John 19:13). His itinerary and chronology of Jesus' ministry and death are taken by some interpreters to be more reliable than those of the Synoptics. The debates and trials on the way to


6. Hengel, "Johannesevangelium," pp. 297-334. However, there is a geographical mistake in the narrative between John 5:1 where Jesus is said to be in Jerusalem and 6:1 where he "went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee."

7. Elgar Levkovits, "2nd Temple pool found," Jerusalem Post, June 10, 2004, p. 5, reports the find of the Pool of Siloam by Eli Shukrun of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Dr. Roni Reich of the University of Haifa.


11. For a balanced judgment see, e.g., Paula Fredriksen, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity (New York: Knopf, 1999), pp. 28-34, 197-214; she remarks (p. 290): "Given what we know about Jesus, the sort of itinerary that John presents makes much more sense than the one-year, one-way itinerary in Mark (followed by Jesus' execution seem to provide a better representation of what happened. Thus, on the other hand, John's Gospel appears to provide historical data complementing our knowledge of the historical Jesus and even proving more accurate. Therefore, at the heart of the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel we end up with a largely paradoxical situation. In some respects John's Gospel seems the least historical of the four NT gospels, but nevertheless provides a number of historical details we cannot gain from any other sources. As a consequence of this tension, authors like C. H. Dodd (1965) and J. Louis Martyn (1968) have made a strong case that one finds not only theology in John (which certainly no one should doubt) but also historical information (which is sometimes too easily overlooked). While the earlier "quests" for the historical Jesus largely neglected the Fourth Gospel, more recently a growing number of authors are taking John's evidence into account. Of particular interest for such an examination are the texts unique to John, for here we may find information about the historical Jesus that is

Matthew and Luke) that itself so much obliges Mark's distinctive theology. I do not defend the historicity of particular words, phrases, or the exact details of John's itinerary per se. As all the conflicting erudition shows, the evidence is simply too problematic to yield any unarguable conclusions."


toricity of the features of the sign's setting is tormented by John's specific type of anamnesis. Much current exegesis of this pericope seems occupied with the question of where the author may have received his Vorlage to write this story.

The still dominant view argues in favor of a Dionysiac background, while others look for an Old Testament or an ancient Jewish origin. Finally, some take the story as if the narrator invented it "word by word." These basic interpretive directions need to be considered before we can begin setting John 2:1-11 into its historical framework. We need to keep in mind that both Jesus' and John's different contexts must be taken into account.

77


account. Neither is it sufficient to read the Fourth Gospel as a report of Jesus’ life in the 20s and 30s of the first century CE, nor to read this Gospel through the later spectacles of early church fathers, Mandism and later Gnostic systems, or rabbinic literature. Such attempts unduly separate questions of theology and interpretation from the recognition of historical tradition. One need also to recognize that an author at the end of the first century CE encountered tradition with what Gadamer calls a “fusion of horizons” (Horizontverschmelzung).

For the most part, John’s Gospel does not allow for reliably recon-


29. See the excellent summary and discussion by Adolf Smitman, Das Weinwunder von Kana: Die Auslegung von Jo 2,1-11 bei den Vätern und heute (BGBE 6; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck, 1966]).


Turning Water to Wine

33. Hengel, "Interpretation," p. 90, rightly concludes: “The time is past for attempts to ‘reconstruct’ the historical event.”

34. Fredriksen, Jesus, pp. 96-97. Fredriksen calls this type of approach “The Second Reading” as opposed to “The First Reading” which is “distilling an outline of Jesus’ story as given in the gospels and, necessarily to a lesser degree, in Paul, recalling grosso modo the evangelists’ own interpretation of these events. Such an outline is extremely hypothetical, depending as it does ultimately on Mark, who freely constructed the narrative framework of his story for his own purposes” (p. 94).

35. Fredriksen, Jesus, p. 97 (ital. original).
Carsten Claussen

Searching for the Background and the Context

The origin of this story of Jesus at Cana is shrouded in mystery. While for a long time most interpreters followed Rudolf Bultmann's contention for including the miracle in a supposed signs source, others have argued in favor of a "Two-Signs-Hypothesis," containing John 2:1-11 and 4:46-54 (and maybe 21:1-14). Today the signs source theory has lost most of its acceptance.

Nevertheless, at present there are two main approaches seeking a Vorlage for the production of this particular miracle story. They can be divided into those who favor the story of the god Dionysus and those who favor an Old Testament background, such as the prophet Isaiah or the book of Esther with its early traces of the feast of Purim.

The Dionysus Tradition and the Wine Miracle

Much of the interpretation of the miracle at Cana is guided by the argument of Rudolf Bultmann that the story seemed to be influenced by pagan tradition. He writes:

There can be no doubt that the story has been taken over from heathen legend and ascribed to Jesus. In fact the motif of the story, the changing of the water into wine, is a typical motif of the Dionysus legend.


40. For a list of earlier representatives of this interpretation, see Carl Clemen, Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des Neuen Testaments: die Abhängigkeit des ältesten Christentums von nichtjüdischen Religionen und philosophischen Systemen (Gießen: Tüpelmann, 1934 [4th ed.]).


42. See, e.g., Lütgtemann, Hochzeit, p. 282; Labahn, "Jesus," pp. 159–60; Wick, "Jesus," pp. 179-98; and even further. He argues, "the gospel of John as a whole disputes in an implicit way the worship of Dionysos" (p. 198). However, this seems to be an overinterpretation of the evidence.


even more likely in the Diaspora of Asia Minor. In Ephesus, where John's Gospel may have been written, the Dionysus cult had a very strong presence. This definitely allows for a “Dionysus-reading” of John 2:1-11.45

The questions that arise, however, are how closely such supposed traditions parallel the wedding-at-Cana story and how early they may have been available to the author. A careful survey of the evidence reveals that close parallels to the changing of water into wine are considerably rare and of these only three or four are from pre-Christian times.47

The earliest extant reference to the changing of water into wine appears in a fragment of Sophocles (497/6-406 BCE). It reads:

So Achelous runs with wine in our place (οἶνος πάρ’ ἠμῖν Ἀχελοῦς ἄρα νῦν)48

The reference is to the river Achelous in western Greece, which for some unknown reason is said to run with wine instead of water. The river god of the same name, known for having fathered the sirens, is not linked to wine. However, Achelous can also stand for freshwater.49 Sophocles may be using some kind of euphemism, calling freshwater wine. To take this fragment as evidence for the concept of changing water into wine would be an overinterpretation.

A second supposed reference appears in Ovid's Metamorphoses:

47. So, e.g., Broer, "Weinwunder," pp. 302-7. Broer rightly concludes that other examples from pre-Christian times and from the first century CE are even further remote from the motif in John 2:9. Cf. Diodorus Siculus (1st c. BCE) 3.56.2; Horace (65-8 BCE) Carm. 2.19.9-12; Silius Italicus (26/35 — ca. 100 CE) Punica 2.186-194.
48. Sophocles Athamas frg. 5 (Lloyd-Jones, LCL).
49. Today this river, which is far the greatest river in Greece, is called Megdova and also includes the lower reaches of the Aspropotamos or Aspros.

But to my daughters Liber gave other gifts, greater than they could pray or hope to gain. For at my daughters' touch all things were turned to corn and wine and the oil of grey-green Minerva, and there was rich profit in them.

Dedit altera Liber feminineae stirpi voto maiora fideque munera: nam tauta natarum cuncta meamur in segetem laticemque meri canaeque Minerva cryptogymnium, divesque eand usus in illis.31

Liber Pater, an ancient Roman god of nature, fertility, and wine, is to be identified with Dionysus/Bacchus. Ovid informs us that Liber bestowed on the daughters of Apollo's son, the Delian priestly king Anios, the gift to turn "all things" into corn, wine, and olive oil. These girls were well known in later Greek mythology as the oinothrophoi, the "winemakers." Their suggestive names Oino, Spermo, and Elais clearly confirm that they were responsible for more than producing wine. Although this is truly a concept of transformation, it does not indicate water is involved. On the contrary, the mythographic handbook Βιβλιαστήσ (attributed to Apollodorus, 1st BCE, but certainly later)33 says: "Dionysus granted them the power of producing oil, corn, and wine from earth."34 This early interpretation of this special gift suggests a special blessing to produce a rich harvest. A more differentiated interpretation appears, however, in Servius' fifth century CE commentary on Vergil's Aeneid. Here one finds the interpretation that the oinothrophoi were able to convert water into wine and everything else into grain and olive oil.35 However, this understanding probably originated through the Dionysian tradition itself. Thus Ovid's reference cannot be taken as an early allusion to changing water into wine.

A third author who supposedly references this motif is Pliny the Elder in his Natural History. Listing a number of miraculous types of waters, he includes

51. Ovid Metam. 13.650-54 (F. J. Miller, LCL). However, Miller translates "Liber" as "Bacchus."
52. The earliest known occurrences are: CIL I 1.2561 (4th c. BCE); I 1.2381 (3rd/2nd c. BCE)
54. Apollodoros Library Epitome 3.10 (J. G. Frazer, LCL), italics mine; the text was attributed to Apollodorus.
55. Servius, Verg. Aen. 3.80.
Water flowing from a spring in the temple of Father Liber on the island of Andros always has the flavour of wine on January 5; the day is called God’s Gift Day.

Andro in insula, templo Liberi patris, fontem nonis Ianuariis semper vini sapore fluere;... dies Θεοδόσια vocatur.56

Again, Liber Pater is linked to some kind of wine miracle. Even the date seemed to support the link to early Christian interpretation: Wilhelm Bousset pointed out that the Christian feast of Epiphany, celebrated on January 6, was meant to contrast the Epiphany of Christ with that of Dionysus.57 However, the history of the Christian feast of Epiphany is extremely complicated.58 A connection between the story of the miracle at Cana and this feast cannot be verified until the fourth century CE.59 And even if some elements of the Dionysiac tradition should have been relevant for the later understanding of John 2:1-11, the differences between the miracle story at Cana and Pliny’s account are significant. The type of liquid flowing from the spring is not even termed wine; it just tastes like wine (vini sapor). It also remains unknown whether this spring usually runs with water or may be dry altogether. A parallel account is not much closer to a changing-of-water-into-wine miracle.60

At Andros, from the spring of Father Liber, on fixed seven-day festivals of this god, flows wine, but if its water is carried out of sight of the temple the taste turns to that of water.

Andre e fonte Liberi patris statis diebus septenis eius dei vinum fluere, si auferatur e conspectu templi, sapore in aquam transeunte.

Although much in this passage remains mysterious, there is a connection of water and wine, even if the reported change is the other way around. We should note, however, that again it is the taste that turns from water into wine. Does this suggest that this special liquid coming from the spring during a special time is not wine, but rather water that tastes like wine?

A fourth example actually mentions the miraculous activity of Dionysus, whereas the above texts simply imply such divine activity. The Greek historian Mennon of Heraclea, probably first century CE,61 wrote a history of Heraclea Pontica. Here one finds notice of the following tradition.62

He [i.e. Dionysus] filled the spring from which Nicaea used to drink when she was exhausted from hunting, with wine instead of water.

πληροί τοίνυν τὴν κρητήν, ἄφ᾽ ἑκεῖθεν Νικαία πίνει, ἐπειδὰν ἀπὸ τῆς θήρης κοπάθει, ἀντὶ τοῦ ὕδατος σίνου.

The story concerns Dionysus being rejected by the water nymph Nicaea. However, after she drinks from the spring, whose water had been replaced by the god with wine, she gets drunk and falls asleep. Dionysus then takes advantage of her, thereby fathering Satyrus and other sons. While this may be the closest earlier parallel to the changing of water into wine in John 2:9, there are still significant differences between both miracles. First, while the six stone water jars are filled (γεμίζω) with water (John 2:7) which then miraculously turns into wine (John 2:9), here Dionysus fills (πληρῶ) a spring with wine instead of water. Thus Dionysus does not change water into wine but rather replaces one with the other. Second, the special quality of the wine is noted in John 2:10, as is the special taste in some of the texts discussed above. The wine consumed by Nicaea, probably in large amounts given the reason and result, seems to taste no different from the ordinary fresh water usually running from this spring. Otherwise, Nicaea would have noticed the difference and the whole plot would not have worked. The similarities between both stories are not very close.63

In summary, none of the scant supposed parallels from Hellenistic sources displays a changing of water into wine. The parallels are not close.

56. Pliny the Elder Nat. 2.231 (H. Rackham, LCL).
60. Pliny the Elder Nat. 31.13 (W. H. S. Jones, LCL).
62. Only a compressed account of books 9-16 has survived in Photius’ Bibliotheca. See Bibliothecae 234; Mennon of Heraclea quoted after FGH 434 frg. 1. Translation mine.
63. A bit closer is the much later parallel account in Nonnos (5th c. CE) Dionysius 16.252-34, where the yellow color of the water (!) and the sweetness of the stream turned into wine are mentioned.
enough to explain the origin of the tradition behind John 2:1-11. This does not, however, exclude the possibility that later hearers, readers and interpreters have noted a connection between the Dionysus tradition and the changing of water into wine at Cana. At a time much later than the composition of the Fourth Gospel, at the end of the second century CE, Pausanias in his Description of Greece tells the following story:

Three pots are brought into the building by the priests and set down empty in the presence of the citizens and of any strangers who may chance to be in the country. The doors of the building are sealed by the priests themselves and by any others who may be so inclined. On the morrow they are allowed to examine the seals, and on going into the building they find the pots filled with wine. . . . The Andrians too assert that every other year at their feast of Dionysus wine flows of its own accord from the sanctuary.64

Although at first glance this later story looks like a much closer parallel to the Cana miracle, even here the pots are empty; again, one cannot speak of a changing of water into wine.

It is simply unjustified to regard the Dionysus tradition as a generic source for John 2:1-11. This has been demonstrated looking carefully at all relevant pre-Christian and first century CE sources. Craig Koester is right to conclude that the legends of Dionysus “probably tell us little about how the story of the first Cana miracle originated, but they do help us understand how the story could communicate the significance of Jesus to Greeks as well as Jews.”65

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64. Pausanias, Description of Greece 6.26.1-2 (W. H. Jones, ICL); cf. the parallel traditions in Ps.-Aristotle, Mirabilia 121; Athenaeus, Deipn., 15.34a.
Gospel] has very creatively adapted for his own purposes Judaic haggadic traditions on the feast(s) of Ahasuerus in Esther 1:2-5.7 The book of Esther may go back to the late fourth or early third century BCE and its final form emerged by the second century.71 It concerns the deliverance of the Jews from threatened genocide during the Persian Empire. The story's historicity, however, is rather doubtful. As the book now stands, it serves as an etiology for the festival of Purim (Esth 9). Josephus mentions the festival at the end of the first century.72 Thus, Palestinian Jews certainly already observed Purim in the first century.

If one looks for miracles as signs (cf. John 2:11), it is striking that more than any other biblical book, Esther could be described with the term sign (Hebrew: דֶּרֶךְ; Aramaic: מִדְרֶשׁ).73 Parallel to the mentioning of the third day (John 2:1), Esther approaches the king on the third day after three days of fasting (Esth 4:16; 5:1). The link between weddings and the Esther story is also quite obvious as the LXX interprets the feast in Esth 1:3-5 as a wedding: “When the days of the wedding (αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ γάμου) were completed.”74 Wine in large quantities and of excellent quality is also a motif that appears in both John 2:9-10 and Esth 5:6; 7:2. Although these are striking parallels, the book of Esther does not provide any reference to a changing of water into wine, which is central to John 2:1-11 and, of course, the rabbinic interpretations are much later than John’s Gospel.75

To sum up: neither the pagan nor the Jewish sources provide any evidence for the motif of changing water into wine.76 There is no indication

75. Aus, Water, pp. 20-23, refers to a changing of drinking cups (Esth 1:7) and “becoming like lead” in rabbinic interpretations of Esth 1:7, cf., e.g., b. Meg. 11b (Sonnino Talmud pp. 65-66); 12a on Esth 1:7 (Sonnino Talmud p. 70); Pirqa R. El. 49. But these interpretations report a different kind of transformation and it is totally unknown whether the author of the Fourth Gospel knew the book of Esther, considering, e.g., it is the only OT text not present in any Qumran document.
76. Noetzel, Christus, p. 47.
77. So, e.g., Olsson, Structure, p. 98: “There is no indication in the text that he [the Evangelist] himself does not regard it as historically accurate. It is presented as an occurrence in Jesus’ historical situation which is a sign of something else.”
78. Thynen, Johannesevangelium, p. 151.
79. Cf. Hengel, “Interpretation,” p. 108: “There is no doubt that the narrative has a Jewish-Palestinian background and this is clear on the basis of its location and circumstances.”

Searching for “Historical Data”

By a number of issues this story is rooted in history. It takes place in Cana in Galilee “on the third day” (2:1). By referring to Jesus’ mother (2:1, 3-5, 12), brothers (2:12) and disciples (2:12, 12) the story is connected to earlier references to his home in Nazareth (1:45-46), the calling of the first disciples, and implicitly also his father Joseph (1:45). The description of the wedding may allow a comparison to Jewish wedding customs of that time. Finally, the stone jars may be similar to those found at a number of sites by modern day archaeologists.80 In contrast to the high Christology of the prologue (1:1-18), for example, we are here presented with the geographical and social context of the historical Jesus. All of these features prompt a historical investigation.
Carsten Claussen

Cana in Galilee

Jesus' first miracle is located at a Jewish wedding in Cana.81 The Fourth Evangelist locates the historical Jesus and the people around him at a number of places. John the Baptist and his ministry are situated in "Bethany across the Jordan" (1:28) and Aenon near Salim (3:23). The disciple Philip stems from Bethsaida (1:44) and Nathanael from Cana (2:12). Jesus travels three times to Jerusalem for Passover (2:13, 23, 6:4; 11:55). He goes into the Judean countryside (3:22), from Judea back to Galilee through Samaria (4:3-4), enters the city of Sychar (4:5), performs another miracle at Cana in Galilee (4:46) and one beside a pool "in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate" (5:2), and later heads "to the other side of Galilee" (6:1; cf. 7:1). Jesus twice visits Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus at Bethany (11:1; 12:1). He comes to a garden "across the Kidron valley" (18:1), finally carries his cross to Golgotha (19:17) and is entombed in a nearby garden (19:41). These localizations may reflect concrete examples of native tradition. Stories were remembered in connection with certain geographical data. In any case such geographical details are employed to support the Evangelist's credibility.

The mention of Cana frames the pericope in John 2:1 and 11 and also Jesus' early ministry in Galilee.82 Archaeologists have searched for Cana, also referenced by Josephus (Life 86), at several places in Galilee and southern Lebanon,83 but most scholars now identify it with Khirbet Qana.84 This site is situated on a hill on the northern side of the Beth Netofoa Valley at Wadi Yodefat, about 13 km south of Nazareth Illit. It was occupied from the Neolithic to the Ottoman periods. By the sixth century

82. Cf. Cana again in 4:46; cf. Luke 4:14-16 who, unlike the other Synoptics, also reports Jesus' early ministry in the Galilean hill country in the area of Nazareth.
83. See Richardson, "Cana," p. 100; Charlesworth, "Jesus Research," pp. 55-56.
84. See Charlesworth, "Jesus Research," p. 56; Douglas R. Edwards, "Khirbet Qana: From Jewish Village to Christian Pilgrim Site," in The Roman and Byzantine Near East (ed. J. H. Humphrey; JRASS 49; Portsmouth, R.I.: JRA, 2002) vol. 3, pp. 101-32; Peter Richardson, "Khirbet Qana (and Other Villages) as a Context for Jesus," in Building Jewish in the Roman East (ed. idem; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2004), pp. 55-71; idem, "What Has Cana to Do with Capernaum?" in idem, Building Jewish, pp. 91-107. (Also see, P. Richardson, "Khirbet Cana (and Other Villages) as a Context for Jesus," in Jesus and Archaeology, edited by Charlesworth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 120-44. This note was added by the Editor.)

85. Richardson, "Cana," pp. 100-101, summarizes the main references in pilgrim literature.
86. Richardson, "Cana," p. 106.
across a range of status levels is concurs with the use of large and expensive stone vessels for ritual purity (John 2:6).

**The Third Day**

The dating of the wedding “on the third day” (τῇ ημέρᾳ τῇ τρίτη) has discouraged many interpreters from looking for a historical meaning. An ancient Jewish wedding seemingly lasted seven days. However, “the third day” clearly does not refer to a certain day of the wedding festivities. Rather, what is meant is the day when the celebration started. From later rabbinic sources we are informed that virgins were married on the fourth day of the week, while widows were married on the fifth day. This practice may have been common already in first century Palestine. There is, however, no ancient evidence that “the third day” was a preferred day for weddings in early times.

While other elaborate explanations, especially symbolic ones, may seem more attractive, the simplest, most obvious meaning of “the third day” is a temporal connection with the gathering of Jesus’ first disciples.

If we take ημέρα in John 1:39 as the first day, έκατον in John 1:43 as referring to the second day, then νημέρα τῇ τρίτῃ may simply mark the last link of a chain of events. Thus, the Evangelist connects the wedding story “with the gathering of the first disciples in general and with Jesus’ promise to Nathanael in particular. This interpretation, however, does not preclude the attempt to regard “the third day” as referencing a literary scheme of six days in John 1:19–2:21 or even seven days in John 1:1–2:21 suggesting a new creation week (cf. Gen 1:1–2:4). In any case the text does not provide us with a historical dating, as the terminus a quo is not clear.

**Jesus, His Disciples, His Brothers and His Mother**

Jesus is accompanied at the wedding by his disciples and by his mother (2:1, 3–5). From John 2:12 we learn that his brothers had also been present at the celebration.

We know surprisingly little about the mother of Jesus. Our earliest evidence comes from the apostle Paul, who identifies her as a Jewish woman (Gal 4:4) but does not even mention her name. According to Mark’s Gospel, she had other children beside Jesus: four sons, named James, Joses, Judas and Simon, and also daughters whose names are not reported (Mark 3:32; 6:3). Jesus’ family does not support his ministry; instead, believing him to be mad, they attempt to restrain him (Mark 3:21). While Mark suggests a considerable distance between Jesus and his mother (3:21, 33–35), John portrays this relationship quite differently. The Fourth Evangelist never uses her name, calling her instead “the

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90. M. *Ketubot* 1.1; b. *Ketubot* 21a; p. *Ketubot* 1.1; 51; *Pesiq. Rab Kah* 26.2.
94. For a similar chain of events cf. ἐκατον in Matt 27:62 and the “third day” as the day of the resurrection in Matt 27:63–64.
98. For an excellent survey and discussion of the entire material see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), pp. 3–5 et passim.
mother of Jesus" (John 21:3) and "his mother" (2:5, 12; 19:25-26) as a "woman" (2:4; 19:26; cf. 20:13, 15), but this is not a sign of disrespect. While in Matthew and Luke Mary figures primarily in the birth and infancy stories of Jesus, in the Fourth Gospel her two appearances span his whole ministry, from his first miracle in Cana (2:1-11) to the end of this period of activity (19:25-27). Mary is thus depicted as showing special faith in her son (2:5) from the beginning of his ministry onwards, and still present when he receives a final drop of wine (19:29-30).

A Jewish Wedding

The Synoptic Gospels never show Jesus attending a wedding feast. However, Jesus uses wedding imagery in some of his parables, such as the "Wedding of the King’s Son" (Matt 22:1-14), the "Ten Virgins" (Matt 25:1-13), and the "Waiting Servants" (Luke 12:35-36). The wedding ceremony in John 2:1-11 is sparsely characterized by a (probably large) number of guests (John 2:1-2), the consumption of large amounts of wine (2:3, 6-10) and by the presence of the bridegroom (2:9), a number of servants (2:5, 9) and even a chief steward (ἀρχηγός: 2:8-9). The reader is left wondering why Jesus, his friends, and family were invited, and about the identification of the bridegroom and the bride, who are not even mentioned.

Wedding celebrations usually lasted seven days. Many friends and family of the couple may have stayed for the whole celebration, and perhaps most of the village joined in. It comes as no surprise, then, that a shortage of wine occurred, although employing a chief steward should have prevented such an embarrassment. In any case the presence of a num

99. Cf. Josephus, Ant. 17.74: Pheroras, who has great affection for his wife, nevertheless addresses her as "Woman."
101. Cf. Mary with the apostles in Jerusalem following the crucifixion (Acts 1:14).
103. This is not sufficient reason to suggest, as Dodd, that "the traditional nucleus of this pericope may have been a parable" (Tradition, p. 227).

Turning Water to Wine

... of servants and even an ἀρχηγός reveals considerable wealth. The reader may be puzzled by this wedding's apparent luxury in a small peasant village like Cana.

Six Stone Vessels

When the wine is lacking at the wedding, Jesus orders six stone jars to be filled with water. Such vessels were required by Jewish purity regulations. The water they contained was used for ritual cleansing of the hands. A stone vessel did not contract uncleanness, stone vessels seemed most appropriate. Archaeologists have found such jars at many Jewish sites in Palestine, Judea, Galilee, and the Golan. They appear during the reign of Herod the Great and quickly disappear after 70 CE. While they are widespread in Palestine, they are almost absent in the Diaspora. Recently, a few small vessels have also been found at Khirbet Cana. The jars mentioned in John 2:6-7 can be identified with large vessels, which were turned on a lathe. They could contain about 100 liters each. The Mishnah calls them kēlāli. Jonathan L. Reed rightly stresses that, due to their sophisticated production technique, they were "luxury items." Such luxurious jars are virtually absent in peasant villages like Capernaum, but rather frequent in rich urban sites like Sepphoris. The reader is again impressed by this rather luxurious wedding feast, crowned by an incredible 600 liters of wine, of excellent quality, in rather expensive stone vessels.

Historical Data and Theological Tendencies

The historical details in this story, such as the peasant village of Cana in Galilee, the relationship of Jesus with his mother, the sparse description of
the wedding feast, and the six stone vessels, comport with what we know about the wider ancient Jewish context. Our “second reading” of John 2:1-11 has suggested a number of details plausible within the life of the historical Jesus and unknown from the Synoptic Gospels.

However, these historical details are not just bits and pieces of a historical biography of Jesus; we have not yet reached an appropriate interpretation of the text. More than the other Evangelists, the author of the Fourth Gospel makes us suspect he uses such details to serve his theological purposes. Such an agenda is obvious in mentioning “the third day” (John 2:1), which is not a historical date but a literary device; it potentially alludes to the biblical tradition of God coming on Sinai on the third day (Exod 19:11, 16) and of the resurrection on the third day (John 2:24, 19-20). Likewise, Cana is not simply a geographical reference. In John’s Gospel, Cana serves as Jesus’ base, perhaps as a counterpart to Peter’s Capernaum which is far more prominent in the Synoptics. Jesus is not present at an ordinary wedding, but at what seems to be a luxurious event. In line with Johannine tendency, this attempts to present Jesus at home in wealthier circles of society. Theologically, the wedding imagery has eschatological overtones, becoming most obvious in John 3:29, when Jesus is identified as the (true) bridegroom. Finally, the stone vessels are not only indications of a wealthy household, but refer to Jewish ritual purity. Does the changing of water into wine suggest Jesus fulfills the old ritual order, replacing the ritual means of the old covenant with wine, as an indication of the new life he is going to bring about (cf. John 15:5)?

A careful look at the historical details in John 2:1-11 reveals the fusion of horizons of historicity and theology in John. In its final form John 2:1-11 is firmly integrated into the broader context of Johannine eschatology. The reader is informed that Jesus’ “hour has not yet come” (2:4). But then, puzzlingly, a miracle nevertheless follows at once, revealing Jesus’ δόξα and even resulting in faith in the disciples (2:11). An informed “re-reader” may have already guessed that the context of this miracle is actually the hour of the resurrection, i.e. the third day (cf. 2:1 and 2:19). Charles H.

Giblin has shown that John 2:1-11 follows a narrative pattern of “suggestion” (2:3), “negative response” (2:4b), and “positive action” (2:7-8); this pattern is not only typical for miracle stories (John 4:46-54; 11:1-44), but also the story about Jesus at the feast of Tabernacles. As this pattern is thus not limited to one specific form, we should attribute it to the Gospel’s author and not to any sources. This pattern underlines the paradoxical narratological situation of John 2:1-11: On the “historical” side of the story Jesus’ hour is not yet present (2:4c). However, as the author looks back from a time after the resurrection, already the miracle reveals the beginning of Jesus’ δόξα. Therefore in nuce John 2:1-11 is another example of the typical Johannine tension between “the hour is coming” and “is now here” (John 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28). John 2:1-11 illustrates the Johannine “fusion of horizons” of the “perspective of the time of Jesus” on the one hand and of the “perspective of the Johannine addressees” on the other.

Conclusion

In sum, our historical investigation has demonstrated a number of details from John 2:1-11 fit well into the context of first century CE Galilee. They reveal possible and even probable details of the life of the historical Jesus. However, none of these features seem to be included merely to present historical information to the reader. As always, the historical details in John’s Gospel carry theological significance when read in the context of John’s theology. The “fusion of horizons” of historical context and Johannine theology does not allow for separating the two aspects. We cannot simply determine that these historical data appear, on the one hand, because they were part of some source, or on the other hand, because the final author included them for theological purposes. This may leave us only with possibilities and probabilities of what “really” happened (Fredriksen), but rather appropriately represents what, in the eyes of the author, “actually” (Ranke) happened.

112. For a more extensive interpretation of the Johannine theological background of John 2:1-11, which is beyond the scope of this article, cf., e.g., Schnackenburg, Johannes-evangelium, pp. 342-44.
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