

Research Article

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF TURNING OF WATER TO WINE IN JOHN 2:1-11: ITS RELEVANCE TO THE AFRICAN IGBO CULTURAL SETTING AND VALUES OF RESPECT AND REVERENCE

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Abstract

John's (2:1-11) account of Jesus turning water into wine at Cana constitutes the first of his signs in John's Gospel. It serves as a foundational revelation of his divine identity, messianic mission and glory. This study presents an exegetical study of Cana narrative, employing historical-critical, literary and theological approaches to examine the meaning of the text within the Johannine community context and its relevance to the African Igbo cultural values of respect and relevance to elders and parents that seem fast eroding in the contemporary time.

The paper explores the narrative dynamics involving Jesus, Mary, the servants and the wedding guests. The exegesis reveals that the miracle transcends the provision of wine in the wedding celebration and functions as symbolic manifestation of Jesus' glory which inspires faith among his disciples. The mother of Jesus' sensitivity to the hosts' need and instruction to the servants: "do whatever he tells you," underscores the importance of trust, obedience and reverence to divine authority. Also, the servants' unquestioning compliance with Mary and Jesus' directives demonstrates humility and respect that become instrumental in the realization of the miracle. The miracle preserved the hosts' honour and dignity reflecting the biblical concern for communal wellbeing and social harmony.

In relation to the African Igbo cultural milieu, the study identifies significant parallels between the values embodied in the Cana event and the traditional Igbo ideas of nsopuru (respect) and ugwu (reverence). Igbo society places premium on respect for parents, elders, communal leaders

and sacred institutions. The actions of Mary and the servants mirror these cultural values. Jesus' intervention to avert public embarrassment resonates with the Igbo commitment to preserving the family dignity and strengthening of communal relationships.

The study concludes that by highlighting obedience, respect for authority, and reverence for God and concern for human dignity, John 2:1-11 provides a rich theological framework for engaging and reinforcing Igbo cultural values of respect for parents and elders that seem fast eroding in the contemporary African society due to the influence of modernism, social media influence, etc.

Keywords: third day, Cana, wedding, woman, wine, respect

Introduction

The text of John 2:1-11 narrates how Jesus transformed water into wine in a wedding feast at Cana. This occupies a strategic position in the gospel of John as the first of Jesus' signs through which he revealed his glory and increased the faith of his disciples in him. This study employs historical critical, literary and theological methods to investigate the text's historical context, symbolic meanings and theological significance within the Johannean theology.

In dialogue with the African Igbo cultural setting, the study explores the relevance of respect and reverence for parents and elders. The embarrassment that would have resulted from the depletion of wine resonates strongly with the Igbo concern for honour, hospitality and preservation of communal dignity during social gatherings. Mary's intervention reflects the African value of communal concern and solidarity. The servants' obedience to Mary and Jesus as well as Jesus' Obedience to Mary mirrors the Igbo cultural appreciation for respect towards authority, adherence to counsel, parents and elders.

This study is very topical especially in our contemporary African society when respect for parents and elders seem to be eroding away due to the influence of modernism, social media influence, etc. Some are not obedient to their parents, they neglect them, and some even carry out certain actions that are bad/wrong against the good instruction/advice of the parents. Some do not even greet their elders talk less of taking instructions from them. The examples of the servants and Jesus in our text of how they/he respected and obeyed his mother should challenges us especially the young generation to go back to our African cultural heritage of respect and honour for our elders.

DELIMITATION OF THE TEXT

John's gospel is called the Book of Signs as well as the Book of Glory. Chapters 2-12 are referred as the Book of Signs because in them Jesus performed signs that revealed his glory (2:11). Chapters 13ff. are known as the Book of Glory. They are linked with the glorification of Jesus. A code word in John's gospel associated with Jesus's death, resurrection and exaltation.

The text under study falls within the book of signs (2:1-11). It can be treated as a unit because it stands on its own. Verse 51 of chapter one is a conclusion of different account about the call of Nathaniel (1:45-51), while from 2:12-25 deals with an entire account altogether, the cleansing of the temple. Its scene is also different from 1:1-11. The scene of 2:1-12 is Cana while 2:12-25 is Capernaum and then to Jerusalem where Jesus cleansed the temple. Again, the content and context of 2:1-11 is not directly related to what precedes it (1:43-51) or what comes after it in 2:13-22. Hence our unit of text 2:1-11, displays unit of character, setting, grammar, place and vocabulary that are unique that worth considering as a unit.

THE LITERARY STRUCTURE

The literary structure of John 2:1-11 is that of a miracle story. It is as follows:

1. The Setting and Characters Established (1-2)

- i. Time (v1a)
- ii. Circumstance (v1b)
- iii. Place/Scene (v.1b)
- iv. Characters Entrance (vv 1c & 2)

2. A Need/Problem Arises (3-4)

- i. A problem: when the wine was gone (v.3a)
- ii. Assertion: Jesus' mother said to him, "they have no more wine" (v. 3b-c)
- iii. Dialogue/Response: Jesus said to her, "Woman, what is that to me and to you?" (v. 4ab)
- iv. Basis for Jesus' response: "*My hour has not yet come*" (v.4c)

3. A Resolution/Miracle and Items to Address the Need/Problem (5-8)

First Response/command: Jesus' mother said to the servants, "do whatever he tell you" (v.5)

- i. The items to Resolve the Need/ Problem (v.6)

- ii. Second Response/Command in Reaction to v.5 and the Corresponding Response (v.7)
- iii. The Final Response/command in Reaction to v.7 and the Corresponding Response (v.8)

4. Conclusion: Post Response to the Miracle and its Effects (Vv.9-11)

- i. Post Response to the Miracle (Vv.9-10)
- ii. The Resolution is a Sign/Miracle (v. 11a)
- iii. The Effects of the Miracle (11b,c)
 - a. And he reveled his glory
 - b. And his disciples believed in him.

THE LITERARY CONTEXTS OF JOHN 2:1-11

i. Remote Literary Context

The remote literary context can be traced to the variant miracle stages in the Elijah-Elisha cycle. 1 Kings 17:8-16 records the miracle of multiplication of oil. 2 kings 4:1-7 treats the multiplication of oil by Prophet Elisha while 2 kings 4: 42-44 deals on the multiplication of loaves. Another remote literary context is the imagery of wine seen as part of the messianic wedding feast in Isaiah 54:4-8; 62:4-5; Mark 2:19-22).

PRALLELS AND SOURCE

The miracle of water turning into wine is Jesus' first act of ministry, in the Gospel of John. In Mark, his first act is an exorcism (Mark I: 21-28); in Matthew, it is the healing of multitude and the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 4:23-5: 12); in Luke, it is a sermon in the synagogue (Luke 4: 16-30); each of these points to a particular emphasis of each Gospel. However, the passage of the wedding at Cana is a unique Gospel passage, which can only be seen in the Gospel of St. John. There is no synoptic parallel for this gospel account and its source is unique to John.

John's miracles source is often referred to as signs Source. Some scholars suggested that the john's discourses might have resulted from his expansion of a collection of Jesus' sayings different from that that is behind the synoptic Gospels. Other scholars proposed that John took over a well formed pattern of revelation discourses from non-Christian sources that are referred as the Revelatory. PHEME in "The Gospel According to John" clarifies: "Discourse Source rather than assume such a source, it seems more plausible that the discourse material reflects patterns and units or preaching that had been developed with the John community" (943). The wedding

at Cana is not just an interesting story that was include at random, but it is one that provides a clue to the meaning of the rest of John's Gospel.

1. THE EXEGESIS OF .JOHN 2:1-11

In this section, we shall engage in a grammatical analysis of certain words, phrases and statements for an appreciable understanding of the text.

1. The Setting and Characters are Established (vv. 1-2)

The text of study is introduced with the following words: “on the third day there was a wedding at Can in Galilee...” (2:1). In this sentence, the setting (time, circumstance and scene) and some characters in the text are highlighted. They should be considered one after the other.

i. Time (v. a)

Scholars are of the view that “the third day” (v.1a) here, refers to the third day after Jesus met Nathanael (John 1:45-51). The term, “third day,” has some allusions both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. For instance, Brendan notes that in Exodus, it became a theophany, a revelation of YHWH to Moses. YHWH's revelation in a terrifying event in the time of Moses has become a revelation of the Lord in a human form at the wedding feast (53). YHWH stated that, on the “third day,” he will reveal himself before the eyes of all the people (Exodus 19:11). Again, the “the third day,” is associated with Jesus's promise to be resurrected (Luke 18:33; Mark 9:31). In John 2:19, it is alluded when he stated, destroy this temple and I will resurrect it, “on the third day.”

We have seen some allusions of the “third day” in other scriptural passages, what of in the context of the text of study? Traditionally, according to John Lightfoot, among the Jews, wedding feast is a week-long event. “The third day” presented in the text is related to the event of Jesus' call of Philip that took place on the seventh day. After two days, they came with Jesus to a wedding feast on its third day (out of its seven days) (250). Hence, the “third day” in the text is the third day of the wedding event.

Having seen the time, next will be the circumstance that led to the turning of water to wine. This is taken care of in the next paragraph.

ii. Circumstance (v.1b)

The text indicates the circumstance, when it states: “there was a wedding.” Among the Jews, wedding is a covenant ceremony by which a couple enters into a union under a law (*Halakha*), seen as a sacred and legal commitment before God (Telushkin, 712,713). The rite is performed under a *chuppah* that symbolizes divine presence that sanctifies the new home of the couple (Epstein, 214, 215). Important component of the wedding include: the marriage contract that outlines the marriage obligations, the exchange of rings, and the recitation of the seven blessings celebrating creation, joy and covenantal joy (Satlow, 89). The ceremony is concluded with communal celebration marked with music, dance, and meals, expressing both religious joy and communal participation in the marriage covenant (Strassfield, 156-158)

iii. Place/scene (v.1b):

The changing of water to wine took place “in Cana in Galilee” (v.1b). Cana is mentioned only here in John’s gospel. It is the home of Nathanael (21:2). According to Sebastian Kizhakkeyil and Kurian Ammanathukunnel, Cana is located on the northern part of Nazareth with a distance of three and half miles. It has a synagogue and about forty homes (143). Cana is not very far from Capernaum, the place Jesus will come again to perform his second miracle (cure of the son of court’s officer) (John 4:46-50) (Goerge Clark, 49-50). Furthermore, the symbolic choice of Cana lies on its negligibility. Just as makes choice of the less qualified (Moses, David, Gideon, etc.) for his work so he chose Cana such an insignificant place to reveal his glory. Thus, Jesus made choice of Cana an insignificant place for his first and second miraculous acts as against very significant place as Jerusalem.

iv. Characters entrance (vv 1c & 2)

The guests mentioned in the text gave importance to the wedding ceremony. According v. 1c, “the mother of Jesus was there” (v.1c); then v.2 states that, “Jesus was also invited to the wedding with his disciples.” The popular teaching has been that the invitation was extended to Jesus (with his followers) and his mother together. Likely, Jesus brought his mother with him. However, observing closely, Mary, Jesus’ mother was mentioned first before Jesus and his disciples, suggesting she may have been invited independently (Denis Farkasfalvy, 43).

Mary’s presence in the feast suggests, that she is not simply an invited guests but one that has an important role to play in the occasion. It is very likely that Mary and Jesus know a family at

Cana, if not their invitation would not have come. They may have a relation at Cana since Nazareth isn't very far from Cana. Mary may have been involved in some arrangements in the event that got her worried when the wine got finished (Barclay, 96). Concerning the disciples, we are not sure of total identities of all of them that were present. Four were initially mentioned, namely: Andrew and his brother, Simon Peter; Philip and Nathanael his brother (1:35-40). The fifth is unnamed; he is probably John, the author of the Gospel. It is likely that only five of the above named were present at the occasion. The other members of the apostles were seen in 6:67, with regard to when they arrived at the occasion, it is not very clear. Mary, Jesus' mother, appeared at this event and in the occasion of Jesus' crucifixion on the cross (19:25-27). In each of the occasions she was not called by name.

It is important to look at the title "mother of Jesus" used by John, rather than identifying her by her name, Mary. This title focuses on the identity of Jesus instead of Mary; Mary is called based on her relationship with Jesus (James McPolin, 58). Attention and focus is on Jesus. Jesus' coming to the feast is like that of a celebrity. He was seen as a celebrity following John the Baptist's testimony of him as the Son of God, and Lamb of God (1:34). As a celebrity he became famous. Jesus became known by many and many were in great anticipation of seeing and meeting him. Thus, Jesus' overwhelming influence gave his mother a unique identity instead of naming her by name, the author identified her with her influential son, Jesus, hence the title, "the mother of Jesus." Theologically too, the reason behind Mariology is Christology for every Mariology is Christo logical.

2. A Need/Problem Arises (vv. 3-4)

i. A problem: when the wine was gone (v.3a)

V.3 introduces a problem, when it states: "and they ran out of wine" (v. 3a). The problem is the running out of wine. Wine is an important element in joyous occasions (Calrk, 50). As earlier stated, Jewish wedding ceremony is a weeklong feast. It is a community celebration. To run out of wine will be an embarrassment for the hosts (the couple's parents and family). The community would make caricature of them for failing to provide enough wine for their guests. To prevent this shame, the mother of Jesus had to step in to fill in the gap. Then, the dialogue between Jesus and Mary began. She approached Jesus and said to him, "they have no wine" (v.3b).

ii. Assertion (v. 3b,c):

The shortness of the wine gave Mary concerns as one who was probably part of the organizers. She made clear to Jesus the problem at hand. It is not clear what she has in mind by her statement.

However, her words in v. 5 show urgency for him to have something done to remedy the situation. There is a great possibility that at this point her husband has died for a very long time and now she depends on her son for assistance. She has observed her son take care of difficult tasks and was very confident that he would deal with the problem at hand. Perhaps, she expects him to ask his disciples to go and buy additional wine, or being her mother she knows he has the power to perform a miracle. She did not command Jesus; she just let him know the urgency of the situation (Clark, 50). But to her request Jesus started a dialogue and made a statement as seen and considered in the next paragraph.

iii. Dialogue/Response (v. 4ab):

Jesus said to her, "Woman, what is that to me and to you" or "What to me and to you, woman?" (v.4ab). The phrase, "What to me and to you" is a proverbial or metaphorical Semitic way of expression, meaning, "What is of interest to you is to me", "what concerns you, concerns me" or "what belongs to you also belongs to me." The mother quite understood the response of Jesus and has to meet the servants to instruct them. This was so, because, "Jesus' mother ... does believe in Jesus" (Pheme, New Testament Introduction 954). Unfortunately some misunderstand the expression to mean rejection, uncaring and or even disrespectful, especially when he added "woman," According to Umoren, based on these erroneous understanding some concluded that Jesus did not give honour to his mother Mary. If it is so, it then assumes that Jesus was an irresponsible son who did not keep the basic commandment of God: "Honour your father and your mother" (Deut 5: 16; Exodus 20:12; Lev 19:3). The allegation also assumes that Jesus was a sinner when it is obvious that he was tempted in every way like us but did not sin (Heb 4:15). Umoren clarifies further in these words:

Jesus was fond of using the title "woman" in a positive, respectful and affectionate way on those women who he perceived had great faith in him or who he was inviting to have greater faith in him. Thus, to the Canaanite woman who expressed great faith in him, Jesus said: "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish" (Matt 15:28). To the faithful woman in the synagogue who had been crippled for eighteen years Jesus said. "Woman, you are set free from

your ailment" (Luke 13:10-13) ... after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to and addressed Mary Magdalene, who had come in search of him, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" (John 20: 15). Obviously, there is no evidence that in any of these instances of Jesus' use of the title "Woman", Jesus dishonoured the women so addressed, or had the intention to show them disrespect. Indeed. Mary deserves the title "Woman" because she represents the blessings of womanhood and motherhood. Thus Elizabeth, filled with The Holy Spirit, exclaimed with a loud cry: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Luke I: 42). By addressing his mother at Cana as "woman", Jesus acknowledges his mother's great faith in him even when his hour had not yet come (John 2:4) [hence,]... Mary's act of faith here made Jesus use the title "woman" to address her, a title he generally used to honour, respect and show affection to women who demonstrated great faith in him. It is; therefore, wrong to allege that Jesus dishonoured his mother by addressing her as "woman" (10-11).

As rightly attested by Umoren, Brown notes that, in John's Gospel, Mary, Jesus' mother was never called by her name. Some might see it being antagonistic, however, at that time, Jesus's reference of his mother as "woman" is a solemn and respectful address. It has deeper meaning in connecting Mary, his mother with Eve, the first woman. This first woman made Adam to carry out his first offence against God, while the new woman, Mary, made the new Adam to perform his first act of miraculous sign (Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary*, 21). Pertinently, it should be taken into account, that, from calling Mary "the mother of Jesus," John later called her the "woman," which has shades of meanings. The title gave Mary, the spiritual motherhood of all the believers. For Byrne, when Jesus calls her mother "woman" he gives her a title of honour that expresses her dignity in her relationship with him in the order of faith and hope. In other words, this title does not in any way portray disrespect or expresses separation by Jesus against his mother (McPolin 59). Rather it points to the new role of Mary as the new Eve. The first Eve is the mother of all humans while the second Eve is the mother of all, who through God's grace are born again to eternal life in Christ Jesus (Byrne, 54).

Furthermore, according to Joseph Ratzinger, Jesus' reference of his mother with the title "woman" has relation to that time he gave her to the care of his loved apostle, John. The "woman" in Cana points to a final marriage ceremony wherein Jesus will to use new wine. Hence, John demonstrates that the "woman" at the Cana wedding is a new Eve associated with new Adam. Although, this indirect reference is concealed in the text but Christian theology

infers it (Joseph Ratzinger, 221). It is symbolic that John introduces the “woman” “at the start of Jesus’ official work and concludes it also with the “woman” being present. This ultimately indicates the perfection of Jesus’s statement at Cana. Ancient People of God (Israel) is transformed to a Newborn People of God (the Church) is presently bequeathed to the motherly care of Mary (Therese Borchard, 42). Thus, in Heb 2:11, Jesus calls us his brothers meaning that believers and his disciples share in the spiritual motherhood of Mary. Jesus’ reason for the statement, “woman, what is that to me and you?” is because; his hour for miracle is not yet. The following paragraph gives more insights to it.

iv. Basis for Jesus’ response (v.4c):

According to Ridderbos, Jesus’ response about his hour (2:4) alludes to the time of his exaltment (passion, crucifixion, burial, resurrection as well as ascension, cf. John 12:23. 27; 13:1; 17:1) (106). At his glorification he will bestow new grape vine. Mary’s request becomes then an anticipation of evidence of Jesus’ power (Bruce Vawter, 122). Jesus’ response shows his intention towards mankind. Jesus talks of an hour of *eschaton* (end) that conveys significance to the current moment.

The evangelist, most probably have written about the hour of Jesus to show the resplendent apparent deity of Jesus. Jesus’ mother demonstrated great confidence in what her son would do. Mary instructed those serving to heed to her son’s interaction (2:5).

A Resolution/Miracle and Items to Address the Need/Problem (5-8)

i. First Response/command (v. 5)

Mary said to those serving, “do whatever he tells you” (v.5). Mary’s statement is modeled after the instruction Egyptian king gave to his subjects concerning Joseph when there was shortage of food with the confidence that Joseph would handle the crisis of famine adequately (Gen 41:55); which he eventually did. Mary demonstrates same confidence in Jesus’ capability to remedy the crisis at the wedding feasts. According to Barclay, the mother of Jesus’ conviction made her to promptly have recourse to her son being confident of his capability. Mary’s great conviction came to play here (101). For Gil Alinsangan, Mary took the risk of informing the servants to do carry out whatever Jesus instructs them on. This courageous act of Mary brought the miracle and affected the apostles’ incipient faith. Christ positively acted in reaction towards his mother’s

strong belief in him (81). Thus, at the end of the text of study, we noticed that Jesus' word to Nathanael to see greater things when he was under the fig tree (1:50) came to manifestation.

ii. The Items to Resolve the Need/ Problem (V.6)

According to v. 6, "nearby there were six stone water jars meant for the ritual washing as practiced by the Jews; each jar could hold twenty or thirty gallons." These six stone jars will help in resolving the problem. The stone jars were used for the customary absolution water (Clark, 51). The figure "six" betokens "incompleteness" in comparison with "seven" that symbolizes completeness or wholeness. Creation was completed on the seventh day. The imperfection signified by the number six and purification rite associated with the stone jars was transformed into "grace," gratuitous gift of God made tangible here as wine. God's gratuitousness they saw through Christ truly comes via God, this grace is unlimitedly available to all.

iii. Second Response/command in Reaction to v.5 and the Corresponding Response (v.7)

"Jesus said to the servants, 'fill the jars with water.' and they filled them to the brim" (v.7). His interaction with those serving commenced following his mother's instruction. As Christ instructs the servers, it was obeyed and have the jars filled up to the brim with water (vv. 5, 9). Their act is worthy of praise: firstly, these servants never knew the reason he asked them to fill the stone jars. Secondly, filling the almost two hundred jars is not an insignificant job. They finished filling the stone jars and being aware that Jesus never added anything in it, Jesus gave them another command in v. 8 in the next paragraph.

iv. The Final Response/command in Reaction to v.7 and the Corresponding Response (v.8)

V.8 reads: "now draw some out and take it to the steward." There is some question whether the Greek term for draw (*antlesate*) used here indicates pulling of liquid or water from a pit. There are different views to this. However, from John 2:1-11, it conveys the sense of "drawing." Wine is drawn from the stone jars.

4. Conclusion: Post Response to the Miracle and its Effects (Vv.9-11)

i. Post Response to the Miracle (Vv.9-10)

Vv. 9-10 record the reaction of the chairman of the occasion when he sipped the new wine he has no idea of where it came from. Clark explains that, “the chief steward” means the banquet’s boss or master, one who supervises the serving and ensures things are properly done. As the chairman, he is the first person to have a feel of the food and drinks before serving the guests (52). As he tasted the new wine, he immediately talked to the bridegroom. He was astonished given that normally, at feasts, guests are served the best wine before the inferior one. However, ironically, at the case at hand, the best wine came late while the inferior wine was served first. The people never knew there was shortage of wine but Jesus took care of the shortage (Thomas Brodie, 171). Jesus did not make noise, no prayer, only a command, "draw the water and give to the headwaiter." The nature of this miracle is almost the same in Lucan account (17:11-19) where Christ instructs lepers to show themselves to the priest, on their way it was discovered that they were healed. Jesus sometimes does his miracles this way or manner to avoid attracting undue attention and cheap popularity. The miracle was quietly done without the people knowing he was the person that 'made it happen'. One may assert that the target of his miracle is Christ's disciples. This is because they need to know more about Jesus and what he could do so as to strongly believe in him and follow him firmly as his disciples.

ii. The Resolution is a Sign/Miracle (11a)

After the response or surprise of the good wine by the chief steward, John goes on to state that, “this miraculous sign was the first that Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee” (v.11a). This may be called a “miracle,” but John prefers to call it “sign” (2:11. 23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2.14; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30), for Christ, it is work (John 5:20; 9:3-4; etc.). That which signifies a meaning farther than the object itself is a sign. “Wonders” or signs” in the scripture (OT & NT) are revealed to give a glance of divine realities. In the book of Genesis God created the light and set them on the clouds as “signs” (Gen 1:3, 14). God set rainbow as sign of a pact in the cloud after the flood not to destroy life with deluge again (Gen 9:13-17). In Exodus, the plagues were signs YHWH used to show his intention to let Israel off out of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 1:1-3). For PHEME, the "abundant wine is frequently a sign of restoration or of the *eschaton* (cf. Amos 9: 13; Hos 2:24; Joel 4: 18; Isa 29:17; Jer 31:155; Enoch 10:19: 2 Apoc. Bar., 29:5)” ("The Gospel According to John," 954).

iii. The Effects of the Miracle (11b,c)

- a. “and he Revealed his Glory”(v.11b).

v.11b calls to mind John's prologue, where the Word was made flesh and he lived amongst us, we behold his splendor (1:14). In the OT "glory" is connected to God (Exodus 16:7; 33:18, 22; 40:34, etc.). In the NT, Jesus unveiling his splendor points to his deification. Primarily, the objective of signs in the NT is to showcase the "messianic nature of Jesus." He is not just a "sign" giver (2:23-25; 4:48; 6:26). He is primarily the messiah.

b. "and his Disciples Believed in him" (v. 11c).

Brown states that in the above statement stands the texts objective (103). PHEME has it thus: "the first of the miracles in the Gospel is referred to as one of Jesus 'signs' and is made the occasion for a revelation of Jesus' glory that leads his disciples to believe in Him" ("The Gospel According to John," 953-954). The objective of the sign is to inspire faith. John captures this objective in another place thus: "there were many other miraculous signs that Jesus did in the presence but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). It was not every one that witnessed the miraculous signs believed in Jesus (5:10, 18; 9:18). There are cases where the evangelist reports that Jewish authorities (the Pharisees, chief priest and scribes) witnessed the signs but refused to believe in Jesus (9:15; 11:47-57). However, some Jewish people believed (11:45).

THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JOH 2:1-12

i. Promotion of faith and unveiling of Jesus's deity

The text states, that Christ carried out a miraculous sign in Cana and unveiled his splendor which inspired his apostles to have faith in him (v.11). According to Edwin Freed, John wrote his gospel to promote faith in Jesus as the Messiah (354). For Byrne, the "signs" did by Jesus are miracles. "Signs" in John's perspective signifies two things, namely: the signs Jesus did point to the reality of his identity and messianic role to promote faith. At the last part of his gospel, he noted that the signs in the book are recorded for his audience to believe that Jesus is the messiah and the Son of God (John 20:30-31) (56). On the other hand, the signs of Jesus, especially the one under study at Cana wedding did not aim at producing faith but to strengthen and confirm the faith of those that already believed in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (Latourelle, 2005).

205).

“Sign” is more than a demonstration of power. It reveals something more than itself as earlier stated. At the wedding at Cana, “sign” points to Jesus’ glory (v.11). “Signs,” unlike miracles are not openly done. They are hidden from some people. The chief steward did not have a clue about the sign (v.10). Everyone does not understand their significance. They disciples believe (v.11) and many also believe (v.23), but the “Jews” are skeptical (v.18). The gospel records the signs that we may believe.

ii. Obedience to Parents and Elders:

The text (John 2: I -I I) shows the parental authority of Mary over Jesus. Jesus response to his mother, Mary: "what is that to me and to you"(v.4a. b), according to PHEME, "the expression ... could represent the Heb expression, *mali walake*, which does carry overtones of refusal or at least unwillingness to get involved in whatever the petitioner is concerned about (eg., Judg 11:12; IKgs 17:18; 2 Kgs 3:13; Hos 14:8)" (954). Before doing anything, Jesus also shows his concern, that he also had a plan for his ministry depicted in the comment, “my hour is not yet come”. Jesus' plan is deeper than Mary's request, yet he heeds his mother's request because of his sense of great respect and love to Mary's identity as a "woman."

Being law- abiding, Jesus scrupulously obeyed the fourth commandment, "Honour your father and your mother as the Lord your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you" (Deut 5: I 6; Exodus 20: I 2; Lev 19:3). He definitely understood and kept the following biblical wise instructions concerning relationships with one's parents, especially the mother: -Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching" (Prov 1:8; 6:20-23): wise child makes a glad father, but the foolish despise their mothers." (Prov 15: 20); "If you curse your father or mother, your lamp will go out in utter darkness" Prov 20: 20; Exod 21:17; Lev 20: 9); "Let your father and mother be glad let her who bore you rejoice" (Prov 23: 25); "The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures" (Prov 30: 17). Hence, by attending to the mother’s request, Jesus teaches us the importance of respect for the elders, those in authorities and especially to our parents.

iii. Eschatological Significance of the Wine Miracle

The text (John 2: I-II) shows the importance of Jesus' actions to the faith of those who witnessed him. Without telling his divinity, Jesus showed it to the people around him - making the wedding at Cana a symbol of the wedding feast he is about to partake, where he is the bridegroom of the new and everlasting covenant (Matt 26:27-29). We might also see the chief steward's remark in v. 10 to mean the "inferior wine" of the Jewish law and the "good wine" of Jesus' grace or the abundance of wine Jesus provides reflects the abundance of his graces or both. This is reiterated by Maurice Hogan, thus: "the sign of abundant excellent wine (the first of seven signs) points beyond itself to the revelation of God in Jesus, a manifestation of God's presence and power working through him, and his disciples believe. An abundance of wine is also a sign that the messianic age has arrived (Isa 25:6: .II 3: IX: Am 9: 13) and with it the replacement of the most important Jewish feasts, institutions and customs" (178-179).

iv. Jesus Can Make Something Good out of us

V.6a states: "nearby there were six stone water jars meant for the ritual washing as practiced by the Jews." The stone jars were used for the Jewish rite of purification but it became one of the major component elements in the miracle. Jesus treated them as if they were used for drinking water. They might not be suitable for drinking water, but Jesus made something better out of them. We can observe how Jesus transformed not only the water but also the stone jar into something great and desirable. The water for washing is now the best wine for the feast. The stone jars kept outside are now something to be kept inside because of the contents. Thus, Jesus can and will always transform us into something better. All we need to do is to let Jesus enter into our lives.

JUXTAPOSITION BETWEEN CANA (JOHN 2:1-11) AND THE AFRICAN IGBO CULTURAL VALUES OF RESPECT AND REVERENCE

Beyond the texts theological themes, it also contains lessons that resonate deeply within the African Igbo values, especially the culture of respect, reverence and obedience for elders and parents. In the Igbo traditional society, reverence for elders and parents is a central ethical value. Elders are custodians of tradition, wisdom, morality, and communal memory. Hence, such Igbo expressions as: "if an elder speaks the younger listens", "respect your father and mother that things may be well for you", "if a child disrespects his father he would not see/progress". This culture of respect is so valued in among the Igbo that many proverbs are developed towards it,

such as “Okra should not be stronger than the planter” or “a child should not be above his father's authority”. Children are expected to listen attentively to parents. Obey their instructions promptly. Shun public contradiction of elders, and seek counsel from the elderly.

The Africa Igbo cultural values in the texts (especially in vv3-9) can be seen in Mary’s role and maternal authority that came to play, when she noticed the problem before others (v.3). In Igbo culture, mothers often perceive family needs early and act protectively. Her intervention resembles the role of an Igbo *nne* (mother) who safeguards family honour, and good name from shame.

The shortage of wine at the wedding would have brought embarrassment on the hosts. Similarly, among the Igbo, preserving communal dignity (*ugwu*) is highly valued.

Again, Mary’s directive: “do whatever he tells you (v.5) resembles the authoritative instruction of an Igbo mother whose words and instruction carry weight within the household. Hence, next is the obedience of the servants. They did not argue with Mary or question Jesus, because filling large jars with water when wine was needed appears unreasonable, yet they obeyed. This attitude parallels Igbo training in obedience where younger persons may comply first and understand later. Thus, the saying “what the elder instructs should be done” finds a strong echo here. Their obedience became the channel of divine manifestation. Likewise, Igbo tradition often sees obedience to parents as bringing blessings and prosperity. That is part of the reason for seeking their consent when asking for the hand of their daughter in marriage. Again their parental blessings are also required before she goes to their husband’s home. Unfortunately, in our contemporary African society respect for parents and elders (and even not adhering to their good advice as one plans to marry) seem to be eroding away due the influence of modernism, social media influence, etc. Some are not obedient to their parents, while others do not even greet their elders talk less of taking instructions from them. The example of Jesus (and the servants) in our text of how he respected and obeyed his mother should challenges us especially the young generation to go back to our African cultural heritage of respect and honour for our elders.

Before rounding off, it is important to state that Christ purifies culture. While Igbo respect for elders is valuable, Christianity purifies it. Obedience is not absolute. It must align with God’s will. Mary herself redirects attention away from herself towards Jesus: “Do whatever he tells you.” thus, Christ remains the ultimate authority.

CONCLUSION

The reason for the miracle is simply to meet a need. The host was out of wine. Jesus turned the water into wine that was better than the wine previously served through the intervention of his mother, Mary. John 2:1-11 also harmonizes remarkably with the Igbo ethos of respect and obedience to parents and elders. Mary's maternal intervention reflects the honoured place of mothers in Igbo society; the servants' compliance mirrors traditional obedience; and the preservation of wedding dignity aligns with communal values of honour and solidarity. In sum, the theological theme of Cana goes beyond culture. It teaches that all human authority ultimately should point towards Christ. Respect for elders remains important, but authentic obedience reaches its fulfillment when it leads persons to "do whatever He tells you"

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