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## Observations on Fr. Reese's Lecture

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## OBSERVATIONS ON FR. REESE'S LECTURE

Since Fr. Reese concentrated on the Cana incident for his presentation at the Congress, my remarks pertain only to that section of the printed paper. Keeping in mind the opening paragraphs, we must acknowledge that the paper explains the Cana narrative in the light of linguistic methodology. The question of sources for the narrative is more the concern of an historical-critical approach. My response consists of both a grammatical and a linguistic note.

Firstly, the central burden of the argument for moving from one level to another in this dialogue rests on the translation of verse 2:4b in John's Gospel. The present study opts for the interrogative reading, "Hasn't my hour come?" Lack of punctuation signs in the original mss. makes this sentence grammatically ambiguous in Greek. The more traditional translation was a declarative statement in the negative, "My hour has not yet come." However, the Greek adverbial form for "not yet" can also serve an interrogative function. In two instances following questions (Mark 4:40; 8:17), it is used interrogatively expecting an affirmative response. The present study suggests that John 2:4b follows the same pattern. This underlying grammatical ambiguity remains a factor in the ongoing discussion of the verse, and consequently, the interpretation of the whole narrative. This paper is justified in its choice, though not everyone is in agreement on that option.

Secondly, a more substantial criticism arises from a linguistic consideration of the same sentence. The term, "hour," in the Gospel of John is universally recognized as a significant element in the theological development of this literary work. We note its occurrence at 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 13:1. Abiding with the traditional declarative translation of 2:4b, this series of

occurrences has a crescendo-like effect of highlighting the univocal meaning of "hour" as the moment of Jesus' glorification in the climactic passages dealing with the passion and resurrection.

On the contrary, following the translation of the present study, "hour" would seem to have a wider meaning, including the notion of a ministry of miracles, or as John refers to them distinctively, "signs." Cana was the first of these "signs" (John 2:11). The initiation of the "signs" at Cana as being the arrival of Jesus' "hour" seems chronologically disoriented when we read the explicit denials in chapters seven and eight. "His hour had not yet come."

However, in this second criticism also, the text might be interpreted as offering support for the option chosen by this present study. The author could justly note that the scenes in Chapters two and thirteen situate the arrival of Jesus' "hour" among his friends, whereas the other two instances occur in scenes of opposition and unbelief. The concluding verse of the Cana incident is evoked in support of this notion. "Thus did he reveal his glory and his disciples believed in him" (John 2:11). Therefore, the "hour" in John's Gospel would not be bound to chronology but to the presence of faith in the people who encounter Jesus.

In conclusion, it should be noted in regard to the question of sources for the Cana incident that the article alluded to in footnote 16 offers much insight. This material has now been used to suggest a resolution of the awkward development of the Cana scene with Jesus' apparent rebuff to Mary, and then his actual performance of the request. For the full development of the argument cf. Raymond Brown, *Crises Facing The Church* (Paulist: NJ, 1975) 96-101. The present study attains much of the same results in its interpretation of the scene and its validity for an insight into the image of Mary in the early Church.

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