

JESUS AND MARY AT CANA: SEPARATION OR ASSOCIATION?

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RECENT exegesis of the conversation between Christ and Mary at Cana has advanced the theory that Jesus on that occasion was insisting on His messianic independence of His mother. Mary was to exercise no maternal influence over her Son throughout the public life. As Braun explains: "If her intimacy with Jesus was to be developed, it would be on condition that she did not jealously conserve it, by keeping Him under her maternal influence, but that she accepted a separation, if such was the divine will, so as to permit Him to embark on the road of His vocation."¹ A reunion would take place on Calvary, "when the hour" (i.e., of the passion, referred to by Christ at Cana) "would have come and when the time of separation would be at an end"; then "the mother of the Savior will intervene normally, with increased power, in the transformation worked by the Spirit."² Meanwhile Mary was invited to self-effacement; the ties of blood between her and Jesus were declared suspended.³ The interpretation has two key ideas: "Jesus affirms at Cana His independence of flesh-and-blood in the work of salvation which His Father has confided to Him; and at the same time His words express the grand role which Mary will play in the new kingdom, once the redemption is accomplished."⁴

The views of Gaechter, the principal exponent of this interpretation, may be summarized as follows: Mary at Cana did not petition a miracle but only natural assistance. In reply to her, Christ laid down a negative principle, "What have I to do with you?" In this He "denied His community with Mary. No matter what Jesus thought of the bridal

¹ F. M. Braun, O.P., *La mère des fidèles* (Paris and Tournai: Casterman, 1953) pp. 61-62.

² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴ Juan Leal, S.J., "La hora de Jesús, la hora de su Madre (Jo 2, 4)," *Estudios eclesiásticos* 26 (1952) 154. Pp. 147-48 of this article provide an extensive bibliography on the interpretation of the conversation at Cana. We may add: Joseph L. Lilly, "Jesus and His Mother during the Public Life," *CBQ* 8 (1946) 52-57, 197-200, 315-19; James A. Kleist, S.J., "Our Lady's Training for the Sacrifice of Separation," *AER* 114 (1946) 81-89.

couple's distress, it was not Mary's business to exert influence on His activity."⁵ The word "woman" has the function of continuing this rejection of His mother's influence: "one would hardly be able to say that 'woman' replaces the name of mother; it is more correct to say that it displaces the name of mother. Jesus has consciously set aside the natural maternal relationship, because He did not wish here to take it into consideration."⁶ The term "hour," because of the verbal similarity between the phrase in which it is used in the Cana narrative and later passages in John,⁷ means the passion and glorification of Jesus. Jesus explains that "He has nothing to do with Mary, because His hour has not yet come."⁸ Mary is not excluded, however, from all the messianic activity of Jesus; the principle "What have I to do with you?" contains only "a refusal of any influence of His mother in the

⁵ Paul Gaechter, S.J., *Maria im Erdenleben* (Innsbruck, 1953) p. 177.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 186. The author employs the Greek of Jn 2:4, 7:30, 8:20 to show a verbal identity of expression and concludes: "It is unthinkable that John has created and employed this stereotyped formula without always intending to express the same meaning, especially from c. 12, when the *ou̐dē* is no longer in use because the hour has henceforth come; still the expression occurs three more times." The argument is that in all the statements concerning the non-arrival and arrival of the hour we have a group of texts of such verbal consistency that the meaning of a single word, *hōra*, could not well differ. However, the non-arrival of the hour is actually stated only once by Christ (at Cana); thereafter it is declared twice by the evangelist (7:30; 8:20). Significantly, the stereotyped formula involving *hōra* is not found on the lips of Christ when the text presents a clear opportunity for it (7:6-8). The fact that after Cana it is the evangelist, never Christ, even when there is opportunity, who declares the non-arrival of the hour, renders the express identification of 2:4 and 12:23 dubious. Further, if we argue to identity in the meaning of *hōra* between the Cana narrative and the remainder of the texts, we have Christ saying in 2:4 that an hour (of undetermined meaning) has not arrived; the declaration of arrival in 12:23 then specifies the nature of the hour in 2:4: the passion and glorification. This would mean not only that the reader (unknown to himself) would be at a complete loss to determine the essential meaning of the Cana narrative when reading it, but would actually be led into an erroneous interpretation by the evangelist himself. In view of the fact that John is at pains to make clarifications for the reader of Christ's statements (cf. 2:21 f.; 7:9-10, 39; 8:27; 11:13; 12:33), and especially if we suppose, as some hold, that John wishes to keep the passion paramount from the opening pages of his Gospel, his failure to specify the nature of the *hōra* at Cana as a reference to the passion constitutes a grave difficulty against considering all the "hour" texts to be identical in meaning. The evangelist presented himself with the clearest of opportunities to make the identification in 2:11, where he begins an "editorializing" practice of underlining the significance of events; this is carried out in cc. 2 and 3 (2:23-25; 3:16-21, 31-36) and probably also in the dialogue of 4:32-38.

⁸ Gaechter, *Maria im Erdenleben*, p. 188.

period of His public teaching activity."⁹ The rejection pains Mary,¹⁰ but knowing the goodness of Jesus¹¹ she continues to hope that He will act.¹² In spite of the fact that she does not understand the reply of Christ,¹³ she takes it upon herself to instruct the waiters, though she is uncertain that Jesus will act at all.¹⁴ Mary's action here is not very flattering to her.¹⁵ But John has included this incident in his Gospel to reveal the profound lesson which Mary was able to grasp after the Cana miracle: "Jesus could permit in the second stage of His messianic work" (i.e., His teaching activity, working of miracles, and other affairs of daily life) "no influence on the part of His mother."¹⁶ In working the miracle Christ made an exception to His principle—an "exception by elevation."¹⁷ Mary understood that "she had no right to demand such actions from Him",¹⁸ "she became conscious of the distance between His messianic activity and herself."¹⁹ Nevertheless, in making her the moral cause of the miracle,²⁰ Jesus "promised her a renewed community of action. As long as His hour had not arrived, the law of separation was valid; once it arrived, the separation ceased."²¹ Thus Christ "elevated her request, by way of exception, to the messianic sphere."²² Mary very likely was able to grasp the symbolism of the Cana miracle in so far as it pertained to herself: it was "only the type of the supernatural, divine activity of the Messias, consisting in the communication of spiritual goods. In this communication was she to have part later through her motherly intervention and intercession."²³

The problem is whether or not this instruction on messianic independence and separation is contained in the text of John. In our estimate the arguments that can be leveled against it reveal it to be an implausible explanation of the reply of Christ at Cana.

THE "HOUR" AT CANA AND THE PASSION

Those who maintain that Jesus at Cana was alluding to a reunion with Mary on Calvary rest their case on the term "hour." From Jn 7:30 this word, whether used by Jesus of Himself or applied to Him

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-93.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-92.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

by the evangelist, inevitably refers to the passion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. John wishes it to be understood in this sense at Cana also.²⁴

A single argument supports this interpretation of the word "hour": the sixfold usage of it in reference to the passion elsewhere in John's Gospel.²⁵ The argument is that, if the hour spoken of at Cana referred to the miracles of Christ, "it would be the only case in the whole Gospel of St. John where it would have that meaning."²⁶ But this point is not very compelling. The Cana narrative contains the first usage of the word in John's Gospel in a sense other than that of mere time. Subsequently John continually uses it in different meanings, the change always being sufficiently clear from the context. If the hour at Cana referred to the passion, this would be the only instance in the entire four Gospels where its meaning would not be determined

²⁴ With Dupont and A. Charue we include the ascension in the *hōra* of Jn 7:30; cf. Jacques Dupont, *Essais sur la christologie de saint Jean* (Bruges: Editions de l'Abbaye de Saint-André, 1951) p. 262. In spite of the fact that exegetical opinion is so divergent on the significance of the *hōra* in the Cana narrative, the evaluation of the evidence in the Gospel leaves much to be desired. The theory of separation is based on the famous opinion of St. Augustine: "Quod de me facit miraculum, non tu genuisti, divinitatem meam; tunc cognoscam, cum ipsa infirmitas pendebit in cruce"; cf. Braun, *La mère des fidèles*, p. 53, for Augustine's view and St. Thomas' elaboration of it. Lagrange, *Evangile selon saint Jean* (Paris: Gabalda, 1925) p. 57, rejected Augustine's opinion in favor of the immediate context: "In the present case the context indicates very clearly the time of responding to the wish of His mother, that is, of working a miracle." Braun in his commentary for *La sainte Bible* 10, 328, was as decisive in rejecting Augustine, accepting the hour in the Cana context as "that foreseen for the beginning of the exterior manifestations of the Incarnate Word"; yet his statements on Jn 12:23 seem to retain at least an allusion to the passion. In *La mère des fidèles*, apparently persuaded by Gaechter, the author adheres to Augustine's interpretation, the hour of the passion. Lagrange dismissed Gaechter's views on the hour in a single sentence: "To understand in its context the very simple 'my hour' as the hour of the passion is to sacrifice the thread of thought to an erudite and purely verbal rapprochement" (*RB* 41 [1932] 122). Toletus and Maldonatus considered the *hōra* at Cana to refer to the miracle itself. (For a list of interpretations and their adherents, see the manual of Simon-Dorado, *Praelectiones biblicae: Novum Testamentum* 1 [Rome: Marietti, 1951] 423.) Thus the necessity arises of studying the evidence for the meaning of the *hōra* in the Cana narrative. Except for Gaechter's development of Augustine's opinion, followed by Braun and Leal, we have found no study of this all-important point for the interpretation of the Cana incident in the Johannine Gospel.

²⁵ Jn 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 12:27; 13:1; 17:1.

²⁶ Leal, *op. cit. supra* n. 4, p. 158. Braun, *La mère des fidèles*, p. 56, writes in the same vein: "If the expression 'My hour has not yet come' necessarily signified in 2:4 the beginning of miracles, it would be taken in a different meaning, which is found nowhere else."

by the immediate context.²⁷ Since the meaning of "hour" is always determined from the immediate context in John's Gospel as well as in the Synoptics, the presumption would be that the same rule is to be applied to the Cana narrative.

The interpretation of the term "hour" at Cana in the sense of the passion is based on an unwarranted presupposition. It is supposed that the *hōra* of Jesus is so peculiarly Johannine that in the mind of the author of the fourth Gospel no other meaning than the passion of Jesus is possible. Yet the word is common to all four evangelists and is employed by the Synoptics in the same fundamental sense as in John: in reference to a situation, event, or period of religious crisis. In this latter meaning the word is applicable to the religious life of individuals or to the religious history of the human race. Matthew uses *hōra* of the persecution of the apostles (10:19), as also does Mark (13:11). Luke applies it to the joy of Christ at the return of the seventy-two disciples, which occasioned the praise of the Father (10:21), and to the temporary supremacy of Christ's enemies (22:53). It would seem also that the Synoptics apply *hōra* to the time of the parousia (e.g., Mt 24:36; 24:44; 25:13; Mk 13:32; Lk 12:40; 12:46). John uses the term extensively, making many original applications: to the abrogation of the Old Law (4:21), the institution of the new religion (4:23), the life of grace, of which Christ is the source (5:25), the moment of the general resurrection (5:28), the martyrdom of the apostles (16:2), their sorrow upon the arrest of Jesus (16:21), their future comprehension of divine revelation (16:25), their desertion of Christ (16:32), and finally the placing of Mary in the custody of John (19:27). Each one of the situations to which the word is applied is a turning point, religiously, in a human life or in the history of the race. Apart from time, therefore, the word *hōra* is for all four evangelists a term reserved for situations of religious significance.

The term is, then, most appropriately applicable to the passion of Christ, religiously the most momentous event of history. In Matthew Jesus Himself applies *hōra* to the passion: "Behold, the hour is at hand"

²⁷ The instances in the Gospels where the term "hour" is undoubtedly employed in a transcendent sense are as follows: Mt 10:19; 26:45; 26:55; Mk 13:11; 14:35; 14:41; Lk 10:21; 12:12; 20:19; 22:53; Jn 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; 16:2, 4, 21, 25, 32; and (most probably) 19:27, in addition to the references to the passion indicated in note 25.

(26:45); and the evangelist makes the same application to Christ. "In that hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'As against a robber you have come out'" (26:55). In Mark Jesus twice applies the word to Himself in reference to the passion: "And going forward a little He fell on the ground and began to pray that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him" (14:35); "Sleep on now and take your rest! It is enough; the hour has come" (14:41). Although Luke has no direct application to the passion, he does provide a passage similar to Jn 7:30. John says: "They wanted therefore to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him because His hour had not yet come," while Luke writes: "And the chief priests and the Scribes sought to lay hands on Him that very hour, but they feared the people" (20:19).

John's Gospel, therefore, does not differ from the Synoptics in the note of religious crisis designated by the word *hōra* nor in its application to the passion of Jesus. Since Luke has already used *hōra* of the joy of Christ at the return of the seventy-two disciples (10:21), John would not be unique in applying it to events in the life of Jesus distinct from the passion. That John would not have been averse, however, to such a usage of the term, is clear from the discourse at the Last Supper, when Jesus says: "The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in parables" (Jn 16:25), a reference to the apostles' clear understanding of divine revelation after the resurrection, when the Holy Ghost will be sent by Christ. For John this would be also an "hour" of Jesus.²⁸

Our preliminary conclusion concerns the possibility that the "hour" at Cana, in spite of the fact that as the "hour of Jesus" it is "one of the most characteristic themes"²⁹ of the fourth Gospel, is not the hour of the passion. It is entirely possible that the author intended the immediate context of the Cana narrative to determine the meaning of *hōra* on the lips of Jesus, (1) because the term is common to the Synoptics and not peculiarly Johannine, and (2) because the term is in itself so flexible—as the usage of all four evangelists indicates—that it could easily have been applied by John to other momentous events

²⁸ It may be objected that the reference is not to "my" hour. But the mere absence of the qualificative pronoun does not make it any less an "hour" of Jesus. As a phase in the "hour" of Jesus it does not happen to be as important as the phase of the passion.

²⁹ Braun, *La mère des fidèles*, p. 56.

in Christ's life besides the passion. John has, in fact, drawn upon the flexibility of the term when he speaks of the period after the resurrection as being an hour of Jesus, who will influence the apostles through the Holy Spirit.

We turn now to the actual meaning of *hōra* at Cana. John differs from the Synoptics both in the extensive use he has made of the term and in the emphasis he has placed upon it.³⁰ The word *hōra* in the Johannine Gospel is something more than a significant synonym for the passion. It is a part of the literary structure of the Gospel. The evidence of the literary role played by *hōra* occurs in 7:6-8: "Jesus therefore said to them, 'My time has not yet come, but your time is always at hand. . . . Go up to the feast, but I do not go up to this feast, for my time is not yet fulfilled.'" The evangelist here uses *kairos* instead of *hōra*, the sole instance where he has done so. The extraordinary fact is that the immediate context contains an allusion to the passion: "He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to put Him to death" (7:1). Now if our author has already employed *hōra* in the Cana narrative in the sense of the passion, it would be perfectly natural for him to use the same term in this instance. The word *kairos* in itself means a suitable time, but it is used in the sense of a critical time by Matthew (11:25; 26:18), Mark (1:15; 13:33), and Luke (19:44; 21:8). In this pericope the time is critical, since the Jews are plotting the death of Jesus. A public trip to Jerusalem would provide an occasion for them to act; therefore, the passion of Jesus is involved in the thought of this passage. Yet the term *hōra*—certainly from 7:30 the Johannine term for the passion—is not employed. The first certain use of *hōra* to designate the passion occurs twenty-four verses later (7:30), when Jesus' teaching in the temple results in a determination to arrest Him: "They wanted therefore to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him because His hour had not yet come." Here John alludes to a concrete event of the passion, the arrest of Jesus, and in this connection he employs *hōra*. Coupled with the previous use of *kairos* in a passion context, the use of *hōra* in 7:30 in

³⁰ John has also given the *hōra* of the passion a totally different orientation from that of the Synoptics. While the latter restrict the term to the historical event of the sufferings of Jesus with their religious implications, John has enlarged the concept to include the heavenly glorification of Jesus, of which the passion is, as it were, the first step.

allusion to the arrest of Jesus would suggest a definite attempt to attach the passion meaning here.

We believe that two conclusions may be drawn from the substitution of *kairos* for *hōra*. The first is that the author has not previously employed *hōra* in the explicit sense of the passion. Had he done so, there would be no valid reason for him to replace *hōra* in 7:6-8; the use of *kairos* would serve only to diminish the literary importance of *hōra* if the author intended the latter to be taken as *the* term for the passion. Second, *kairos* indicates that the author intends to present his reader with the prospect of a new period arising in the life of Jesus: the period of the passion. This period is gradually unfolded. The introduction begins with the information that the Jews sought Christ's death (7:1). This brings about a *kairos* or critical time, which Jesus deliberately avoids (7:6-8). But in a short time the crisis arrives, when the Jews decide to arrest Him. The plan fails because the hour has not yet come (7:30). Jesus continues boldly to proclaim His identity in the precincts of the temple itself; yet nothing is done against Him, as His hour has still not come (8:20). Finally, the hour arrives only when Jesus Himself proclaims it (12:23).

Thus John carefully prepares his reader for the arrival of the hour of the passion. The term *hōra* in the express sense of the passion is not introduced into the text without warning, but employed only after the reader has become aware of the crisis developing in the life of Jesus. The word *kairos* serves to indicate Christ's awareness of the intent of His enemies, while *hōra* is not used until the enemies actually attempt to act against Him. The substitution of *kairos* for *hōra* is a strong indication that the hour at Cana does not concern, at least expressly, the passion of Jesus.

What, then, is the meaning of the hour at Cana? The first bit of evidence is the use of the word *sēmeion* in the Cana narrative. John has designated the miracle at Cana as "the beginning of His signs." The Cana narrative is certainly intended to introduce the first phase of Christ's public life, which consists in the disclosure of His identity by means of the miracle. The primary signification of *sēmeion* in the Johannine Gospel is miracle as an invitation to faith. As Dupont writes: "It is in this that the miracles of Jesus are signs: they reveal the power which He has received from the Father; they also permit

'seeing' His glory, recognizing in Him to whom God gives this glory the true Son of God."³¹ Excluding the epilogue, *sēmeion* occurs sixteen times in John's narrative prior to the passion.³² It always serves to express Christ's revelation of His identity and His demand for faith. There can be no doubt that the *sēmeion* characterizes the first phase of the life of Jesus in the concept of St. John, a phase prior to that of the passion.

The important aspect of this period of the *sēmeia* in connection with the hour at Cana is its crucial character. As a consequence of the *sēmeion* at Cana, Christ's disciples "believed in Him." But such was not the case with the Jewish nation, the witness of the *sēmeia*: "Now though He had worked so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in Him . . ." (12:37). This phase of Christ's life closes on a note of general incredulity, a fact on which John sadly comments (12:38-43). The *sēmeia* posed the question of faith in the person of Jesus (Jn 10:37-38). They represented a conscious, deliberate effort on the part of Jesus to win over His contemporaries. Thus a religious crisis developed between Jesus offering the *sēmeia* and the Jews steadfastly rejecting them. This period of crisis in the life of Jesus perfectly fits the sense of the word *hōra*, as used by all four evangelists.

The second piece of evidence that *hōra* at Cana refers explicitly to the period of miracles is the fact that the comprehension of this term is wider than that of *sēmeia* and *doxa*, and actually includes both these concepts. That *hōra* includes *sēmeia* is expressly stated by John. Although the period of signs was temporarily closed with the death of Lazarus, it is resumed again with the resurrection. Following his description of the apparition to the doubting Thomas, the evangelist writes: "Many other signs Jesus also worked . . ." (20:30). The apparitions of the risen Christ are counted among the *sēmeia*. Since, then, the *hōra* of the passion and resurrection includes *sēmeia*, there can be no objection to this inclusion in the *hōra* at Cana.

What has been said of the inclusion of the *sēmeia* both in the hour of the passion and in the hour at Cana is equally valid of the *doxa* of Jesus. We must distinguish in John's concept of the public life of Christ two periods of His glorification: the period of miracles and the

³¹ Dupont, *op. cit. supra* n. 24, p. 282.

³² Jn 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.

period of the passion and resurrection.³³ The evangelist unmistakably indicates this twofold aspect of *doxa*. The miracle at Cana as well as the raising of Lazarus is expressly designated as a manifestation of Christ's glory (Jn 2:11; 11:40). The hour of the passion is also termed the glorification of Jesus (12:23), while the Father Himself makes reference to the twofold glorification: "I have both glorified (my name), and I will glorify it again" (12:28). In the case of the miracles of Christ, "the glory of Christ appears in the power He displays in working His miracles."³⁴ In the case of the glorification of the hour of the passion, "it is a question of the heavenly glorification of Jesus, who will be able to glorify God in a different fashion than He has done during His earthly existence."³⁵ Since the *hōra* of the passion and resurrection embraces the heavenly glorification of Jesus, there can be no objection to *hōra* at Cana embracing the earthly glorification of Jesus. For the same divine glory displayed by Christ in working His miracles constitutes His own final glorification from the Father.³⁶

We must admit a gradual extension in the terms *sēmeia*, *doxa*, *hōra*. *Sēmeia* is extended, after the resurrection, to embrace the apparitions of the risen Christ. *Doxa* is extended to include the final and permanent glorification of Jesus. Likewise, *hōra* embraces at first only what falls within its immediate purview, the *sēmeia* and *doxa* of the pre-passion period, but is later extended to include the passion, resurrection, and ascension together with the ensuing *doxa* and *sēmeia*. In the light of the evangelist's total conception of the life of Jesus, *hōra* at Cana implicitly includes the passion. But in the context the express ambit of *hōra* is restricted by the concrete. In the Cana narrative the evangelist does not express his total conception of *hōra*, involving the passion, resurrection, and ascension (the final glorification of Jesus) as the all-

³³ C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1953), divides John's Gospel into "The Book of Signs" and "The Book of the Passion," a step in which every student of the Gospel would concur.

³⁴ Dupont, *op. cit. supra* n. 24, p. 280.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

³⁶ Dupont (*op. cit.*, pp. 287-89) well establishes that the glory which Jesus manifests in His miracles and in which His final exaltation consists is essentially one and the same divine glory, "which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world" (Jn 17:24). In His human nature the Son holds this glory as a gift from the Father, according to John's conception (cf. Dupont, p. 288), to be manifested in the power displayed in miracles and to be retained permanently in the final exaltation.

important manifestation, for he in no way indicates that he wishes the reader to understand *hōra* in the light of his total conception. Rather he leaves this for later development.³⁷

That there are points of contact, intended by the evangelist, between the Cana narrative and the passion seems undeniable. The *hōra* and its non-arrival, the word "woman," and the presence of Mary both at Cana and on Calvary indicate a parallelism between the Cana and Calvary narratives. However, the point of contact between the incidents cannot lie in the fact that Mary at Cana must simply await the hour of Calvary, for this phase of the hour has not as such come under consideration. The contact lies in the fact that Mary plays a role both in the inauguration of the period of signs and in the inception of the new era of the redemption. This role at Cana cannot be one essentially of awaiting the hour of the passion. For what occurs at Cana is to recur, in a larger sense, at a later date. The event of Cana foreshadows events of greater importance in the later life of Jesus: the *sēmeia* of the public life become the *sēmeia* of the risen life; the *doxa* of the public life becomes the final exaltation of Jesus; the manifestation at Cana is but a preview of the manifestation of the risen Christ. The role of Mary must be similarly progressive rather than static. Her presence and activity at the beginning of signs must be proportionately greater at the cross, which in John's concept is the beginning (as the *sine qua non*) of the final glorification of Jesus.³⁸

³⁷ Oscar Cullmann, *Les sacrements dans l'évangile johannique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951) pp. 19–26, presents instances of multiple connotations in Johannine terms, e.g., the "lifting up" of the serpent, of the Son of Man in the crucifixion (Jn 3:14; 12:32), and in the crucifixion and ascension (Jn 8:21–28). There is a certain progression here in the concept of the "lifting up." There are the well-known verbal progressions in the meaning of the words "water" and "bread" in cc. 4 and 6. There is also the switch from the concept of physical to spiritual blindness in c. 9, and the double connotation of "rise" in 11:23. All this shows that *hōra* at Cana is not so easily reduced to a simple idea such as the passion, the glorification of Jesus, or miracles. Strangely enough Cullmann (p. 36) does not test his own principle of multiple connotations for *hōra* at Cana, but accepts it in the simple sense of the death of Jesus.

³⁸ The gradual emergence of events in John's portrayal of Christ's life is aptly expressed by C. H. Dodd, *op. cit. supra* n. 33, p. 365: "Any moment in which Christ presents in action a *sēmeion* of His divine functions of *zōpoiēsis* and *krisis* is, in some sense, the destined *hōra* of His manifestation. At Cana, when His mother intervened, His *hōra* had not yet come (2, 4); but when 'He manifested His glory' in giving wine for water (2, 11), it had, in some sense, come. Similarly, when Jesus was hiding in Galilee, His *kairos* was not yet present (7, 6), but when at the Feast of the Tabernacles He declared Himself the source

It may be objected that there is a kind of opposition between the non-arrival of the *hōra*, stated at Cana, and its arrival with the passion. Thus *hōra* would remain in a state of non-arrival throughout the period of signs. The reply to this objection decisively establishes our point concerning *hōra*. For the master idea underlying both periods of Christ's life for John, that of miracles and that of the passion and resurrection, is the manifestation, the *phanerōsis*, of Jesus. The manifestation begins at Cana (Jn 2:11) and perdures throughout the period of signs, every miracle in John's concept being a manifestation of the divine glory. This idea is strongly reiterated in Jn 9:3, the instance of the man born blind: "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God were to be made manifest in him"; and again in connection with the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:40). The same idea of the manifestation of Jesus underlies the *hōra* of the passion and resurrection. The passion will convict the world (Jn 16:8-11) "of sin [i.e., of the innocence of Christ and the guilt of His enemies], of justice [i.e., the Father will approve Christ, reject the world], and of judgment [i.e., the true condemnation has been passed on the world, not on Christ]." The manifestation of Jesus continues even after the resurrection: "After these things Jesus manifested Himself again at the sea of Tiberias" (Jn 21:1; cf. 21:14). Thus the hour at Cana and the hour of Christ's glorification by means of the passion, resurrection, and ascension are

of light and of living water it was, in some sense, present. A certain similarity of structure in the Lazarus story would suggest that when Jesus delayed in Transjordan, His *hōra* was not yet, but the moment when the dead heard His voice and came out was the destined *hōra* in which His glory was manifested. . . ."

The importance of Jn 2:11, the evangelist's evaluation of the Cana incident, should not be underestimated. 2:11 is not a passing remark but a thoughtful judgment, as is proved by the pattern of personal commentary peculiar to the opening chapters of the fourth Gospel (see the conclusion of note 7). John derives three ideas from the Cana incident: (1) the period of signs, here inaugurated; (2) the self-revelation of Jesus, consisting in a display of divine power (the *doxa*); (3) the fruitful effect of the sign, faith. These are among the key ideas of the Gospel itself. The passion is certainly among the main themes of the Gospel as a whole, yet it is only from 7:30 that it occupies a prominence equaling, from a literary viewpoint, that of the *sēmeia* and the *doxa*. The omission of an allusion to the passion in the judgment of 2:11 constitutes a sound argument that at this point in the narrative it is not of equal prominence to the *doxa* and the *sēmeia*. Consequently we see no reason to include the passion expressly in the thought of 2:4, nor to exempt the *hōra* from the application of the evangelist's commentary on the incident.

unified in that each is in its own way a manifestation or self-revelation of Jesus.

It follows that the hour at Cana is not the hour of miracles nor the hour of the passion nor the hour of this particular miracle, but the hour of manifestation, the self-revelation of Jesus, which at Cana enters upon its first phase, that of the signs. The hour of the passion and resurrection is not actually conceived by John in terms simply of these historical events, but as "the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified" (Jn 12:23). In glorifying Jesus by means of the resurrection and ascension, the Father manifests or reveals the divinity of the Son. In reality, the hour of Jesus is a single hour—that of manifestation—which, however, embraces two periods or phases: that of signs manifesting the glory of Jesus (His divinity), and that of the passion, resurrection, and ascension manifesting the final and permanent glory of Jesus (His everlasting divinity).

Our conclusion is that *hōra* at Cana is to be interpreted in terms of its immediate context, the self-revelation of Jesus by means of the signs. In so far as *hōra* will be later extended to include the final glorification of Jesus ensuing from the passion, the latter note must be implicitly admitted in *hōra* at Cana. Its admission involves a relationship between Cana and Calvary, but a relationship of the lesser to the greater, the less important to the more important, the initial to the final manifestation. What is expressly under consideration in the conversation between Christ and Mary at Cana is the manifestation of Jesus by means of the signs, not the passion.

CHRIST'S SUPPOSED ASSERTION OF INDEPENDENCE

According to the interpretation we are considering, the burden of Christ's statement at Cana was to declare His independence of Mary throughout His public life. In the viewpoint of Leal, who holds that Mary originally proposed a miracle, Christ made it clear that He was acting as Messias. Mary's request pertained to the messianic order, and Jesus was refusing to admit that Mary could direct His messianic activity: "To direct His messianic activity will be the exclusive business of His Father, not of His mother, and it is to this that He responds directly. It does not pertain to you to direct me in the way of

my vocation or redemptive mission."³⁹ Braun explains Christ's assertion of independence as a denial of filial dependence upon Mary. Jesus refuses to acknowledge the flesh-and-blood relationship existing between Himself and His mother: "The public life of Jesus had begun, and during it He must devote himself wholly and exclusively to the orders of His Father. Mary is invited to self-effacement. Jesus gives her to understand that the ties of blood, as binding as they have been, are, as it were, suspended."⁴⁰

According to these explanations the independence of Jesus was declared at Cana either by an assertion of messianic dependence upon the Father alone or by a rejection of the maternal relationship. However, we do not find the expression of these ideas sustained either by the immediate context of John's narrative or by the remote context of the four Gospels.

An assertion by Christ of messianic independence does not enable us to explain how, after receiving such an instruction, Mary would feel entitled to give a warning to the waiters anticipating an intervention. The decisiveness of Mary's act cannot be escaped. Braun has written: "Mary acted as if she had won her case";⁴¹ and again: "Mary, it is true, appears in no way repulsed by the refusal of Jesus. The fashion in which she addresses the waiters gives on the contrary the impression that she knows she has been heard."⁴² Prat observed: "Mary knew that . . . her request had actually been granted before it was made."⁴³ And LAGRANGE remarked categorically: "The astonishing thing is that Mary seems to count on the miracle."⁴⁴

Finding it necessary to reconcile Mary's act with Christ's instruction on independence, Braun appeals to an omission in John's narrative: "We are here in the presence of a problem for the solution of which we are reduced to conjecture. John is satisfied to outline the scene with the utmost brevity. It was not his intention to forestall questions which would arise in the minds of his readers."⁴⁵ An appeal to an omission in the text is at best a poor substitute for explaining the narrative as it stands. GAECHTER makes a suggestion more worthy of consideration:

³⁹ Leal, *op. cit. supra* n. 4, p. 161.

⁴⁰ Braun, *La mère des fidèles*, pp. 57-58.

⁴¹ *La sainte Bible* 10, 320.

⁴² *La mère des fidèles*, p. 63.

⁴³ *Jesus Christ: His Life, His Teaching, and His Work*, tr. J. Heenan (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1950) 1, 178.

⁴⁴ *Évangile selon saint Jean*, p. 57.

⁴⁵ *La mère des fidèles*, p. 63.

the possibility of a note of uncertainty in Mary's advice to the waiters. The clause, *ho ti an legē humin*, being conditional, contains a note of hesitancy and should be rendered: "In case He should say anything to you—whatever it may be—do it!"⁴⁶ However, it is tenuous to argue to doubt in the speaker's mind from the use of the subjunctive mood, since this grammatical nicety was already in the process of being lost when the New Testament was written.⁴⁷ According to Gaechter, Mary would be in doubt as to whether or not Christ planned to act. But John employs the same *ho ti an* construction elsewhere where it is clear that uncertainty is excluded (cf. Jn 14:13; 15:16). The same texts bear out M. Zerwick's opinion that Mary's statement is "a most certain expectation," equivalent to the Latin *quodcumque*, bearing, not upon the fact of Christ's instructions to the waiters, but upon the nature of the instructions.⁴⁸ The accurate literal translation of Mary's statement would be: "Whatever he *may* say to you, do it"; just as we would translate Jn 14:13: "Whatever you *may* ask in my name . . .," where the probability bears, not upon the asking, but upon the nature of the thing petitioned. Kleist's translation (*The New Testament*; Bruce, 1954), "No matter what he tells you, be sure you do it!" expresses the sense perfectly.

The narrative supplies us with two facts to be accounted for. After the reply of Christ Mary passes from word to deed, and Christ conforms to her direction. If He has declared messianic independence, it is most difficult to understand why the acts of Jesus and Mary are so closely conjoined in John's narrative. Had Christ refused to make use of the waiters, we should have decisive proof of the theory of independence. But Jesus Himself does not act upon the assertion of independence attributed to Him. So evident is this that Braun is compelled to explain the miracle as an anticipation of Mary's intercession, Gaechter as an exception to the principle laid down by Christ.⁴⁹

Mary's attitude toward intervention in divine affairs is well illustrated in Matthew's Gospel. In spite of the anguish she undoubtedly knew Joseph was suffering in view of her pregnancy, she maintained a

⁴⁶ Gaechter, *Maria im Erdenleben*, p. 192: "Falls er euch etwas sagt—was immer es sei—das tut!"

⁴⁷ Cf. M. Zerwick, S.J., *Graecitas biblica* (Rome, 1949) p. 76, n. 234.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76, n. 235.

⁴⁹ *La mère des fidèles*, p. 65; *Maria im Erdenleben*, p. 195 f.

strict silence until the problem was resolved by divine intervention. It seems more than disconcerting to discover that the same person, thirty years later, with the spiritual stature she had by then acquired, would need an instruction lest she intervene in divine affairs. Her very comment, "They have no wine," must certainly be understood in the light of the humility and submissiveness which were a part of her character at the age of fifteen.

That Christ was dependent solely upon the will of His Father throughout the public life is a fact that cannot be contested.⁶⁰ But that Christ applied this law of dependency upon the Father to Mary at Cana so as to rule her out of the public life as a matter of principle, does not accord with Mary's participation in the miracle itself or with her dependence on divine guidance elsewhere in the Gospels.

Braun's theory of a declaration of separation by Christ, consisting in a denial of filial dependence on Mary, fares no better in the light of the evidence from the Gospels than the theory of messianic independence. By the time of the episode at Cana, both a physical and moral separation had already taken place between Christ and Mary. The physical separation was occasioned by Christ's departure from His home at Nazareth. The moral separation was brought about years before when He entered upon the period of His manhood. The words of Luke, "He was subject to them" (2:51), do not apply with the same stringency to the period of Christ's manhood as to His childhood. Mary's jurisdiction over Christ would have pertained only to His minority; during His majority she would have enjoyed a certain jurisdiction, as long as He remained with her at Nazareth, required for the running of the household. But not even this situation obtained at the time of the Cana episode. Whatever Christ would now have done for His mother in the natural order would have fallen under the virtues of love and reverence, but not under the virtue of obedience. We must suppose that Mary had already accommodated herself to these changes; and the delicacy of her comment, "They have no wine," a masterpiece of non-authoritative strategy, reveals her own alertness to them. A declaration by Christ of

⁶⁰ Leal, *op. cit. supra* n. 4, p. 154, n. 40, cites over thirty texts from John in which Christ makes this declaration. Lagrange was careful, however, not to introduce the will of the Father into the thought of Christ at Cana, and it seems that greater caution would be advisable in this respect. It certainly is not clearly evident that anything done, proposed, or about to be done at Cana meets any obstacle in the will of the Father.

moral independence of Mary would have been merely to state a principle which she had in practice already accepted, and which was reflected in the veiled manner in which she couched her petition.

In an effort to confirm Christ's rejection of the maternal relationship, authors commonly have recourse to certain texts in the Synoptics wherein, supposedly, Jesus rejects His mother.⁵¹ The texts read: "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?" And stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, He said, 'Behold my mother and my brethren! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother' " (Mt 12:48-50). "And it was told Him, 'Thy mother and thy brethren are standing outside, wishing to see thee.' But He answered and said to them, 'My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God, and act upon it' " (Lk 8:20-21). "A certain woman from the crowd lifted up her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that nursed thee.' But He said, 'Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Lk 11:27-28).

Christ's purpose in these statements, as regards human relationships, is to declare the superiority of spiritual ties over natural bonds.⁵² Jesus makes use of His customary teaching device of choosing from nature to make a spiritual point. He does not intend primarily to comment upon the relationship between Himself and His mother. But the texts may be applied to Mary; and in application to her they teach, not a principle of separation, but a principle of the highest spiritual union. As Lagrange remarks, Christ "does not refuse the congratulation" (in the instance of the woman of Lk 11:27 f.) "either for Himself or for His mother, but He elevates the thought toward a sphere wherein Mary has excelled more than all women. . . ."⁵³ If there be a special bond of union between Christ and those who do the will of the Father, a bond comparable to the natural relationship of mother and son, a

⁵¹ Braun, *La mère des fidèles*, pp. 60-61; Gaechter, *Maria im Erdenleben*, p. 189; Leal, *op. cit. supra* n. 4, pp. 154-55.

⁵² Mk 3:31-35 and Mt 12:48-50 certainly also teach the priority of spiritual over temporal duties as exemplified in Christ's mission. There follows from this the fact of His separation from Mary, physically and morally, owing to the exigencies of His divine mission. But a principle of total exclusion from the pre-passion ministry does not follow, and is actually contradicted by the principle of spiritual union taught in the texts.

⁵³ *Évangile selon saint Luc* (Paris: Gabalda, 1921) p. 336.

fortiori this is true of the relationship of Christ and Mary. The texts of the Synoptics, therefore, in application to Mary, would enunciate a principle of union between Jesus and His mother rather than a principle of separation. This law of spiritual union taught by the Synoptics is reflected in the teaching of the magisterium. Pius X stated that Christ and Mary lived a "never dissociated manner of life and labors . . .,"⁵⁴ while Pius XII has declared that Mary was "always most intimately united with her Son."⁵⁵ If Christ at Cana laid down a rule which in effect prevented Mary alone among the Jewish people from petitioning the benefits of the messianic era, we may not explain this exegetically by constructing a wall of separation between Jesus and His mother.

DIFFICULTIES OF CONTEXT IN BIBLICAL PARALLELS

Relying on parallels in the Old and New Testaments, exegetes have most often attached an adverse import to the reply of Christ at Cana, such as refusal, denial of community, divergence of viewpoint, rejection of interference. Modern authors commonly exclude harshness or reproof. Many, however, think it necessary to admit refusal or denial of community, if not both attitudes. The reason for this position is the meaning of the phrase, "What to me and to thee," as it is established by the parallels. Maldonatus laid this down as a principle: "It must be noted that in the constant use of Scripture this phrase clearly signifies a denial of community between the speakers."⁵⁶

An examination of the passages in question, however, reveals that two important factors of their context are absent from the context of Cana. The first of these is a state of enmity between the speakers. In the five New Testament parallels (Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24; 5:7; Lk 4:34; 8:28), the phrase is addressed to Christ by the devil or by a person under diabolical influence. The existing enmity accounts for the animosity of the expression, "What to me and to thee," in these cases intended to express a denial of community. To argue to a denial of

⁵⁴ *Ad diem illum*, ASS 36 (1903-4) 453: "Hinc Matris et Filii nunquam dissociata consuetudo vitae et laborum. . ."

⁵⁵ *Mystici corporis*, AAS 35 (1943) 247: "Ipsa fuit, quae vel propriae, vel hereditariae labis expers, arctissime semper cum Filio suo coniuncta, eundem in Golgotha, una cum maternorum virium maternique amoris sui holocausto. . ."

⁵⁶ *Commentarii in quatuor evangelistas* (Paris, 1658) col. 1311; cited in Braun, *La mère des fidèles*, p. 51, n. 7.

community in the reply of Christ to Mary on the basis of these passages would be to assume a context simply non-existent at Cana.

Two of the seven Old Testament parallels (Jg 11:12; 2 Chr 35:21) must be eliminated from consideration for the same reason, a state of enmity. The speakers are at war. In the remaining five illustrations (Jos 22:24; 2 S 16:10; 19:22; 1 K 17:18; 2 K 3:13) there is another factor which is absent from the context of Cana: a fact or experience emotionally unpleasant for the speaker. In Joshua it is the apparent usurpation of Mosaic worship by unauthorized peoples; in 2 Samuel Shimei's cursing of David; in 1 Kings the death of the widow's son; in 2 Kings the past history of the Northern Kingdom's dealings with false prophets. There is inevitably a source of irritation accounting for the speaker's expression of hostility. The context of our phrase, therefore, in both Testaments is always one of unpleasantness.⁵⁷ At Cana, however, there is no source of irritation for Christ, unless it be read into the context from the parallel passages.

Another aspect of the parallel passages must be acknowledged in connection with our Cana text. We learn of the attitude the Old Testament speaker intends to take from the explanatory statement he adds to the phrase, "What to me and to thee." The Israelite says: "You have no share in the Lord" (a denial of community, intended to challenge the right to Mosaic worship; Jos 22:24); Jephthah: "You have come against me" (a fixing of responsibility for war; Jg 11:12); David: "If he curses when the Lord has said, 'Curse David'. . ." (divergence of viewpoint; 2 S 16:10), and again: "Do you not know that I today am king?" (as in the preceding; 2 S 19:22); the widow of Sarepta: "You have come . . . to kill my son!" (complaint, not without bitterness; 1 K 17:18); Eliseus: "Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother" (reluctance to render prophetic assistance, tinged with sarcasm; 2 K 3:13); Necho, king of Egypt: "Cease then to provoke God . . . that He do not destroy you" (a solemn warning, amounting to a threat; 2 Chr 35:21).

Our point is that all the circumstances of the context as well as the speaker's own explanation of his attitude must be brought to bear in

⁵⁷ Not all exegetes, however, admit that the speaker's reaction is necessarily unpleasant in every instance. Eufrazio di Cristo Re, O.C.D., "Che significa 'Quid mihi et tibi,'" *Scuola cattolica* 75 (1940) 141, concludes that prevalently the speaker's reaction is unpleasant.

order to determine the exact meaning of the expression, "What to me and to thee." To carry over any one of the Old Testament attitudes into the conversation at Cana—whether it be refusal or denial of community—is to assume a similarity of context, which is certainly not evident and certainly not expressly indicated in the narration of the Cana incident. If the meaning of the expression is determined in the parallels by its context, the same principle must be applied to the phrase at Cana. The complete context is the principal determinant of the meaning rather than parallel passages. To project denial of community or refusal into the Cana text is to run the risk of reading into the reply of Christ a meaning not intended. The content of the parallels must be set aside, therefore, until the context of the Cana incident itself be clearly ascertained.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES RESULTING FROM THE PARALLELS

Under the influence of the parallels, exegetes have been led to adopt the theory of the momentary refusal. While Jesus found it necessary to refuse Mary initially, nevertheless He yielded out of regard for her. Prat thought the refusal of Mary's proposal so undeniable that it is useless to attempt any other explanation of Christ's reply: "As it stands, the answer implies, not a reproach or a reprehension (as several of the Fathers maintain), but a momentary refusal. The expedients thought up by certain exegetes to eliminate this meaning from the phrase seem to us out of place."⁵⁸ According to the explanation of Lagrange, the first portion of Jesus' reply, "What to me and to thee," declines the proposal. The second portion, "My hour has not yet come," provides the reason for the refusal. The time of miracles is not due at the precise moment of the suggestion; it is due, however, immediately: "Patience, the time has not come; it will come in a moment."⁵⁹ Actually, Christ was not to reveal Himself publicly as Messiah through a miraculous intervention on this occasion; but because of Mary's request the moment would be, as it were, advanced.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Prat, *Jesus Christ* 1, 177.

⁵⁹ *Évangile selon saint Jean*, p. 57.

⁶⁰ Lagrange did not introduce the notion of the "advancement" of the hour in his commentary on this passage, but he did so in his life of Christ (*The Gospel of Jesus Christ* [Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1938] p. 93): "This Son, who has the power of determining the hour of His own destiny, does not disdain to anticipate that hour out of reverence for His Mother."

The theory of initial or momentary refusal is confronted with serious psychological difficulties. According to this viewpoint, the assent of Jesus is not actually found in His words. These say only no, momentarily, and declare the divine will to be the reason. Meanwhile, Christ's manner expresses the assent: His tone of voice, His facial expression, His very inflection of the words. Jesus replies in the negative in word, but in the affirmative in manner. Although negation and affirmation are achieved in different ways, they would remain nevertheless practically simultaneous.⁶¹

It must be acknowledged that such a simultaneous refusal and assent is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to explain. Christ would be saying no and yes to the very same object—Mary's proposal of intervention—at one and the same time. That exegetes have perceived the difficulty seems clear from their suggestion of an omission in John's text: the verbal assent of Jesus would be omitted.⁶² But what would be more natural for the author than to give Christ's words of assent if such were spoken? It would be of the utmost importance to give the reader Christ's own explanation for performing the miracle if He Himself had declared that the time had not yet come.

But an even graver psychological difficulty for the theory of momentary refusal is presented by the conduct of Mary. In the supposition that Christ verbally dissented but conveyed assent through His mien, how could Mary have felt authorized to take the concrete step of preparing the waiters? She would have had to disregard the clearly adverse meaning of Christ's reply in favor of fastening on the hints of acquiescence. She would then have been authorized to hope for an intervention, which would be within the bounds of prudence. But in the

⁶¹ Joseph L. Lilly, "Jesus and His Mother during the Public Life," *CBQ* 8 (1946) 55, voiced the same objection: "This explanation would seem to imply that our Lord indicated one thing by the material sense of His words and another by the tone of His voice and His facial expression; that He said in words equivalently that He would not grant His mother's request and at the same time indicated by a twinkle of His eye, or by His vocal intonation that He really did not wish to be taken seriously. Is such a manner of acting consonant with the sacred character of our Lord? . . . Our Lord's facial expression and tone of voice gave the lie to His words, we are told. That is an inference from Mary's subsequent action. But is it not better to give an interpretation to our Lord's words which will bring them into conformity with the tone of His voice and facial expression? We think so."

⁶² Such is the suggestion made in the manual of Simon-Dorado, *Praed. bibl. N. T.* 1, 424.

light of a dissent by Christ, it may be doubted that it would have been within the bounds of prudence for Mary to take a concrete step that could have conceivably further embarrassed her Son concerning the manner of the intervention.

The theory of momentary refusal does not enable us to provide a satisfying psychological explanation for Mary's conduct.

The reply of Christ, therefore, has not been successfully evaluated in the light of the parallel passages. These have in reality exerted an undue influence on the exegesis of our text. Applying the principle of evaluation from context which exegetes have used in studying the phrase, "What to me and to thee," in the parallels, we would be compelled to center our attention on the context of the Cana incident as John has described it.

THE CONTEXT OF THE REPLY OF CHRIST

Four factors in the narrative bear upon the reply of Christ. There is (1) the crisis over the wine: what facts in this situation occasioned Mary's appeal? (2) The psychology of Mary's statement to Jesus: did she appeal for natural assistance, or did she appeal for extraordinary aid, addressing Him as Messiah and Son of God? (3) The psychology of Mary's instructions to the waiters: did she at this juncture anticipate a miraculous intervention by Christ? (4) Christ's performance of the miracle: did He act in response to Mary's original comment or independently of her appeal?

The crisis over the failure of the wine was in the mind of both Mary and the waiters. This is evident from the fact that Mary does not inform them of the deficiency; they know of it already. Once the discovery was made, a discussion concerning a solution naturally would have taken place. No feasible way of replenishing the supply had been suggested. We may only conjecture what the problem was. It could have been the lateness of the hour, the amount required, a lack of funds, or a delay, which would have resulted in the fact of the failure becoming known with the consequent embarrassment to the bridegroom. Whatever may have been the actual situation, it is clear that a real necessity existed and that no one had as yet been able to devise a way to resolve the problem. Perhaps in the circumstances Mary was counted upon to find a solution. At any rate, the matter was judged to

be grave, and in the absence of a solution Mary was impelled to approach Jesus.

The psychology of Mary's statement, "They have no wine," was necessarily determined by the existing situation. She expresses not merely the simple fact of the lack of wine, but also the necessity and that thus far at least no practical solution has been arrived at. Thus Mary, presenting the problem to Jesus as she knew it, appealed to Him for a solution.

What was the nature of Mary's confidence in her Son? Did she expect only natural assistance or a miraculous intervention? If the former, she would be falling back on past practice; if the latter, she would be addressing Him as Messiah and Son of God, making an act of faith.⁶³ Gaechter has suggested that Mary did not possess the practical knowledge required to petition a miracle.⁶⁴ She had never experienced a miracle worked by Christ, and had no way of knowing that the miraculous would be a part of His messianic ministry. Lacking formal education in the Old Testament, Mary would have learned her religion only from practice; concerning the Messiah she would have shared the view of those who thought in terms only of the spiritual aspects of the messianic kingdom. Psychologically, therefore, Mary was not prepared to think in terms of a miracle at Cana.

We believe that the difficulties are exaggerated. While the arguments of the author may offer some proof that Mary could not easily have thought in terms of a messianic miracle, neither is there reason to believe that under the stress of the situation Mary would have taken time out to meditate on the messianic implications of Christ's intervention. While she would have appealed to Him with the knowledge of His messianicship, she would also have appealed to Him as Son of God. Taking a concrete view, Mary would have drawn no distinction between the messianicship and divinity of Christ. She would have often meditated upon the assertion of the angel, "Nothing shall be impossible with God." In addition to her personal experiences of miraculous inter-

⁶³ Among those who hold that Mary asked for a miracle are Chrysostom, Augustine, Maldonatus, Knabenbauer, and Lagrange; cf. P. F. Ceuppens, O. P., *De mariologia biblica* (Rome: Marietti, 1948) p. 183. Ceuppens considers the point dubious. Braun, *La mère des fidèles*, p. 56, thinks the better view is that Mary did not petition a miracle.

⁶⁴ *Maria im Erdenleben*, pp. 160-71.

vention, she would have known of some of the nature-miracles described in the Old Testament. Thus she would have had a sufficient foundation to consider a miracle of nature by Christ a possibility. The possibility is admitted by Gaechter,⁶⁵ but he objects that Mary did not know that Christ's human nature would be the instrument of miracles.⁶⁶ But this is not a very strong objection, for the manner in which the miracle would have been performed would not have been Mary's problem but Christ's. It was not necessary that Mary make a theological judgment as to how the miracle would be performed. Lest, however, we go beyond the evidence, we content ourselves with saying that Mary's request need not have excluded a natural solution to the problem (since possibly Jesus could have proposed one); but neither would it have necessarily excluded divine omnipotence. Thus Mary's petition could have contained, at least implicitly and as a possibility, a miraculous intervention. The manner, the significance, and the public import of a miraculous intervention (unless Jesus chose to act in the completest secrecy) are factors Mary need not have even considered.

The text itself would seem to favor the inclusion of an extraordinary intervention in Mary's appeal. Her conduct leads up to the miracle. She prompts Jesus first to the thought and then to the act of the miracle. The miraculous is in the very spirit of the narrative, Mary's faith leading ultimately to the strengthening of the faith of the disciples. The word "hour" has for John the express meaning in this context of the beginning of signs, the period of miracles during which Jesus reveals Himself to the world. Thus the reply of Christ in the view of the evangelist would have been a natural response to the mind of Mary, and is indicative of the nature of her thoughts regarding the intervention she is proposing. As will be seen, Mary's instruction to the waiters presupposes an unusual intervention by Christ. If after the reply of Christ she expects a manifestation of divine power, she must have entertained this possibility in the beginning, for the reply in itself could not have informed her of a miracle had she not been of this mind originally.

It is certain that Mary's appeal to Jesus over the crisis of the wine counts on His aid. Her comment, being completely subservient to

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-66.

whatever means Jesus should choose, would seem to include the preternatural as well as the natural.

The psychology of Mary's instruction to the waiters is that a solution is forthcoming. Her statement (1) allays their anxiety; there is no longer need for them to cast about for a solution, as (2) her Son may be expected to come to the rescue; only (3) they must do as they are told by Him.

The submission to Christ required of the waiters by Mary again raises the question of whether or not at this juncture she anticipated a miracle. The evidence here quite clearly favors the view that Mary sensed something unusual about to occur. Her main intent is to insure the waiters' cooperation. Yet they are as anxious to see wine provided as is she, though perhaps for different reasons. Mary's statement creates in them an attitude of expectancy toward Christ: they will discover the solution to their problem in Him, but they must be prepared to do as He asks. Mary's insistence on their compliance does not seem to be fully explainable on the supposition of a natural intervention. Since the waiters themselves are already aware of the problem and anxious for a solution, a caution against failure to follow the instructions of Jesus would be unnecessary in the circumstances. They are already psychologically disposed to assist in the procuring of more wine. The problem forestalled by Mary is not the mere fact of their cooperation, but their obedience to instructions whose purpose they might be inclined to question. There is a vast difference between saying, "He will tell you what to do," and "Do whatever He tells you." The former would be much more in accord with the circumstances, were Mary expecting a natural intervention.

The performance of the miracle by Jesus confirmed Mary's advice. She was correct in every detail. The problem of the wine was solved by her Son. She anticipated His use of the waiters. Her expectancy that He Himself would act was fulfilled. Her hint that the orders of Jesus would demand the unquestioning submission of the waiters was also perfectly accurate. Christ Himself makes His miraculous action dependent on Mary's preparation.

Our problem now is to evaluate the reply of Christ in the light of the following factors of our narrative: (1) Mary laid before Christ a situation for which there was no natural solution, outside of one proposed by

Him; (2) she fully relied upon His wisdom and goodness to solve the problem; (3) after the conversation, she informed the waiters that for all practical purposes the problem was solved; no other solution need be looked for save in Christ's instructions; (4) Christ fully justified Mary's interpretation of His reply.

Two psychological factors of the narrative—Mary's appeal to Christ for aid plus the great degree of confidence she exhibited before the waiters—demand that the reply gave Mary considerable encouragement to rely upon an intervention. The reply of Jesus must be interpreted in accordance with the confidence displayed by Mary both before and after the conversation.

WHAT TO ME AND TO THEE

We first have to reckon with our formidable phrase, "What to me and to thee." It is a response to a petition so tactfully presented that a paraphrase of Mary's remark is difficult. She said in effect: "Will you aid these people to procure more wine?" Mary makes her proposal, not on her own behalf, but on behalf of others. Had Christ intended to refuse absolutely to aid, it would seem more exactly in accord with the idiom for our text to read "What to me and to *them*"; community would be denied between Christ and the people in question on the issue of the wine. In the parallels the community is always denied between the parties concerned.⁶⁷ But the peculiarity of the conversation at Cana is that the reply of Christ is not directed squarely at the issue of the wine. The failure of wine is left in the background; and Mary, whose statement has left herself out of the matter, has been drawn into it. The phrase, "What to me and to thee," is not a simple refusal of aid, since it does not touch immediately upon this issue.

But is Mary drawn into the issue as a person either refused or rejected? The phrase cannot be a refusal of Mary. We have already

⁶⁷ The biblical parallels of the phrase, "What to me and to thee," may be described as a triangle of thought. The two persons announced ("to me and to thee") are at the base of the triangle. The subject in which each is interested is at the apex of the triangle. The aim of the speaker is to state his mind on the subject, but to do so in connection with one or other of the announced parties. In accordance with this triangular form of expression, if Christ were to announce a refusal, there should be a denial of community between Himself and the people in need, since these are the two parties Mary has proposed as being involved in the failure of the wine.

pointed out the psychological difficulties inherent in the admission of a refusal, and we fully concur in Leal's statement of the argument: "The proof" (that Mary's petition was not refused) "is that she did not so understand the reply. If the words of her Son had refused her request, she would not have set out immediately to prepare the waiters, confident that something unusual was about to happen. If Christ had refused the miracle, He would have done it without contradicting Himself."⁶⁸ Gaechter would not consider this a sound argument, for Mary could have failed to understand, as was the case with the words of Christ in the temple.⁶⁹ But this point is hardly valid for the refusal itself. The reasons for it she could have failed to grasp, but if one argues to the meaning of "What to me and to thee" from biblical parallels, Mary could not have failed to grasp at least the rejection of her request. If the phrase be duly established as a refusal on the ground of an idiom, it could have no other meaning for Mary than a refusal.

A rejection of Mary's maternal influence by means of a denial of community is without foundation in the text. According to Braun the basis for it would be Mary's authoritative manner.⁷⁰ But this is a mere assumption and is not sustained by her words, "They have no wine," which in themselves do not insist on her motherly position. Leal finds Mary provoking Christ to a messianic miracle.⁷¹ But this too is an assumption impossible to prove, and in no way indicated by Mary's simple words. Her comment restricts itself solely to the need of the moment and evidently leaves the decision entirely up to Christ. For Gaechter, Christ is saying that He can in no way submit to Mary's motherly influence, even in the natural order.⁷² But let us suppose, for the sake of clarifying this point of Mary's maternal influence, that Christ had simply said "Leave it to me." Would such a simple assent be in fact an admission of maternal influence? If so, Christ would have submitted to the influence of every person who received an unqualified

⁶⁸ Leal, *op. cit. supra* n. 4, p. 160.

⁶⁹ Gaechter, *Maria im Erdenleben*, pp. 192-93.

⁷⁰ *La mère des fidèles*, p. 49. "On dirait qu'elle lui parle d'autorité, sans égard pour le changement survenu dans sa vie depuis le baptême dans le Jourdain."

⁷¹ Leal, *op. cit. supra* n. 4, p. 160: "Su psicología era de madre, que pretendía socorrer a los esposos por un medio extraordinario, que pertenecía al orden mesianico y debía revelar lo que era su Hijo y afianzar la fe de los discípulos."

⁷² *Maria im Erdenleben*, p. 189.

assent to a petition for a miracle. The mere assent to Mary's appeal would have no more compromised the messianic independence of Christ than His assent to any other petitioner. We do not find, therefore, any foundation in fact for a denial of community, the purpose of which would have been to state a principle of messianic independence of Mary.

We consider it necessary to reject three interpretations of the phrase, "What to me and to thee": (1) an absolute refusal of intervention, on the ground that such a refusal should require the phrase to read "What to me and to *them*"; (2) a refusal of Mary as petitioner, on the ground that such a refusal is incompatible with the confidence of Mary before the waiters; (3) a denial of community as a rejection of Mary's motherly influence, on the ground that no proof of an unwarranted motherly influence exists in the text, and that a simple assent by Christ would in no way have compromised His messianic independence.

The rejection of these three interpretations is confirmed by the explanatory phrase, "My hour has not yet come." If Christ had been intent upon negating a position assumed by Mary, it is she who would be the object of the negation. The explanatory statement should be, "Your hour has not yet come." But the negation is stated in terms of Christ and not of Mary.

Further consideration of the phrase, "What to me and to thee," must await discussion of the word "woman."

WOMAN

The respectful note attached to the word "woman" cannot be denied by one who attentively considers the usage of the term by Christ. On the lips of Jesus it inevitably expresses the dignity of the person addressed and is accompanied by the overtones suitable to the circumstances. For the Samaritan woman it denotes the importance of what Jesus is about to say (Jn 4:21); its keynote is admiration in the instance of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:28), sympathy for the adulterous woman (Jn 8:10), pity toward the stooped woman (Lk 13:12), and tenderness toward the weeping Magdalene (Jn 21:13).

What has been considered to be puzzling is the supplanting of the term "mother" by "woman." According to Leal, Jesus is insisting on the enormous distance between Himself and this woman, who is His

mother in the flesh.⁷³ But this contrast between Christ as Messiah and Mary as a mere creature is not grammatically sustained. Were such a contrast intended, we should have the word "woman" in apposition to the word "you," so that the text would read *Ti emoi kai soi gynaikei*, "What to me and to thee, a woman." The interpretation of Leal reads too much into our text. Similarly the other term of the contrast, wherein Christ in the word *emoi* would insist on His messianic consciousness, would also have to be modified. The word "woman," being in the vocative, provides no grammatical basis for the alleged contrast between Christ and Mary. While the *emoi* would include Christ's messianic consciousness, the grammar of the text does not indicate a particular insistence on this fact.

Braun maintains that "woman" deliberately abstracts from the filial relationship⁷⁴ and argues: "That the word 'woman'. . . is an almost normal expression to address one's mother is an entirely gratuitous hypothesis. It is not based on any example taken either from the Bible or from rabbinic writings."⁷⁵ However, it is not necessary to prove that the word "woman" was an "almost normal" form of address for one's mother. It is only necessary to prove that the term was a dignified form of address which could have been applied to one's mother for a particular reason on an occasion. This point we deem to be already established. All biblical scholars today admit that among the Greeks "woman" as a form of address, far from containing anything derogatory, was actually a term of social politeness, acknowledging the excellence of the person. Gaechter adduces overwhelming evidence in confirmation of this point and concludes: "Among the Greeks, *gynai* was a much used, thoroughly respectful address for women, both of low and of high station."⁷⁶ Nevertheless, on the ground that in modern Syria "this impersonal form of address is used by a man when he speaks with a woman who is strange to him,"⁷⁷ the author concludes that Christ "with a conscious choice of expression" addressed Mary as though she were a stranger.⁷⁸ Now we certainly would not expect strange women to be addressed in any way except an impersonal one in any country; but from the fact

⁷³ Leal, *op. cit. supra* n. 4, p. 161.

⁷⁴ *La mère des fidèles*, p. 50: "Si Jésus dit ici à sa mère ' *ittê*, femme,' c'est donc apparemment qu'il faisait abstraction de sa qualité de fils."

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁷⁶ *Maria im Erdenleben*, p. 178.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

that an impersonal form of address is used to Mary, the mother of Jesus, it simply does not follow "without further ado"⁷⁹ that Christ was overriding the personal relationship between Himself and His mother. The established fact is that John attributes to Jesus the use of a term, current in the Greek of the evangelist's time, which was always employed as a mark of distinction or respect. It is a further established fact that the other evangelists depict Christ employing the same term to other women in the same sense. If it be inquired why Jesus did not employ the term "mother," we may ask why we should expect Him to have used any form of address at all. Was it absolutely necessary that He call Mary His mother? The absence of the term "mother" would constitute a real problem only if we must subscribe to a principle that no son may at any time address his mother by any term whatsoever except "mother." Otherwise no other implication is possible except an abstraction from the filial relationship. At Cana Mary was known as the mother of Jesus. If in this circumstance Christ chose to address her, according to the evangelist, by a term employed as a sign of respect, He would evidently be indicating that He held His mother in the highest honor. Psychologically speaking, we simply cannot agree with our distinguished authors that the word "woman" clearly abstracts from the filial relationship. It is natural to understand an accepted form of address by a good son to a good mother as a mark of honor and respect. To understand "woman" as conveying the esoteric meaning that Christ is viewing Mary as a stranger places the burden of proof upon those who would maintain it. Not an iota of evidence has been advanced from the Bible or rabbinic literature in support of this viewpoint.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ The possibility that "woman" has a messianic and maternal significance peculiar to the Johannine writings is indicated by Bernard J. Le Frois, S.V.D., *The Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Rome: Orbis Catholicus, 1954) p. 223: "In Ap. 12 it must be granted that the woman is somehow the mother of the Messiah. She is depicted as an individual. Now, in St. John's Gospel, in two messianic passages, one at the beginning of his public life (Jn. 2, 4) and one at the consummation of it (Jn. 19, 26), Jesus called Mary his mother by the sole title of 'woman' (*gynē*). Taking for granted that St. John is the author of the Apocalypse (at least indirectly), Ap. 12 would be the third messianic passage where the mother of the Messiah is designated solely as *gynē*. It seems intentional on the part of the author. In the event that the Gospel was written after the Apocalypse (which is generally

Consequently, we interpret "woman" as a form of address by means of which Christ acknowledged the excellence of His mother; and we reject the notion that the term so governs "What to me and to thee" as to institute a comparison between the dignity of Christ as Messiah and Son of God and the lowliness of Mary as a mere creature.

THE DENIAL CONTAINED IN THE "WHAT TO ME AND TO THEE"

The entire reply of Christ bears a negative import; and it is perhaps this fact that contributes much to the difficulty of interpretation. Even apart from the parallels, the expression, "What to me and to thee," indicating a questioning attitude, contains a negation. Whatever is denied is actually the understood subject of the phrase: "Of what concern *is it* to me and to thee."⁸¹ It seems to us that the key to interpretation is to ascertain as accurately as possible the subject understood. It is this which is the object of Christ's denial.

As an aid to uncovering the true subject of our famous phrase, let us take as examples some of the principal paraphrases of it. Lesetre and Durand translate, respectively: "Que voulez-vous de moi," "Qu'attendez-vous de moi," as though Christ were saying, "What do you

conceded) the argument is accentuated, for then there is a clear procedure from implicit to explicit clarification of the *gynē*, as well as of the spiritual maternity involved."

Our paper does not concern itself with these implications of the text, since we have restricted ourselves to the historical context of the Cana incident: what did Mary actually say to Christ, and what did Jesus actually reply to her? The Johannine implications are a further question; John himself would have based them on the historical facts.

⁸¹ In the interpretation of a complete, though temporary, separation between Christ and Mary, the true paraphrase should be: "Of what concern are you to me?" However, none of the parallels are so personal. Even those of the *NT*, out of the mouths of the possessed or devils, are directed less at the person of Jesus than at the judgment threatened by His presence. If the context of the Cana incident permitted, not an adverse response (which we do not concede), but reluctance on the part of Christ, Lagrange's paraphrase (see *Évangile selon saint Marc* [Paris: Gabalda, 1947] p. 22) is the most acceptable: "De quoi viens-tu te mêler," "For what purpose do you interfere?" This would not be directed at the person of Mary but would be a rhetorical question bearing (1) upon her intent, benignly recognized by Christ as a request for a miraculous intervention, and (2) on the necessity of the rendering of a grave judgment by Him. But the second portion of the reply, if taken as a declaration that it really was not the time for such an intervention, would then be in conflict with Mary's decisive action. Consequently this interpretation of "My hour has not yet come" would be unacceptable.

want me to do about this?"⁸² This is to translate as a simple question which bears upon the nature of Mary's request. Since it fails to preserve the negative note of the phrase, it must be considered inexact. Lagrange renders, "Qu'importe à moi et à toi," "What does it matter to me and to you?" The negation is here preserved. However, since (in Lagrange's interpretation) the object of the denial becomes the failure of wine, we have Christ saying that here and now the absence of wine does not matter to either Himself or Mary. The context reveals, however, that it does matter to both of them, and matters a great deal; and therefore the meaning conveyed does not correspond to fact. The translation of Osty and Weber, "Laisse-moi faire," "Leave me alone," and that of Daniel-Rops, "Ne t'occupe pas de cela," "Don't worry about that," obviously eliminate Mary from any further action in the intervention. We are then left without any explanation as to how she took it upon herself to prepare the waiters. Goodspeed's "Do not try to direct me" is in patent contradiction to the context, since Mary's instruction to the waiters is clearly directive of Christ's action. Braun's paraphrase, "Qu'avons-nous à faire ensemble, en ce moment, que tu me demandes d'intervenir," "What have we to do together, at this moment, that you ask me to intervene?" lays down a principle for Mary of non-participation, and again we are left without a psychological explanation for her subsequent conduct. The paraphrase of Cadoux, "Qu'est-ce que cela pour moi et pour toi que donner du vin matériel à ces noces-là? Combien cela nous est facile et nous coûte peu à moi et à toi," "What is it for me and for you to give material wine at these festivities? How easy is such a thing for us and how little it costs me and you," makes the object of the denial the difficulty of providing material wine. In order to achieve this point it must draw on a subtle distinction between the ease of this provision and the sacrifices involved in the shedding of Christ's blood, of which the Cana miracle is the symbol. Certainly at the time this would have been meaningless to Mary, even if the symbolism could be established exegetically.

Greater attention to the context would seem to be necessary if the object of Christ's negation is to be determined. The first consideration

⁸² Braun, *La mère des fidèles*, p. 51, offers a list of paraphrases from which we have borrowed freely.

is the social milieu, in which supreme importance was attached to the wedding celebration and to the wine as a necessary component of it.⁸³ The failure of the wine was not merely a calamity threatening to end the festivities, but one threatening disgrace to the family of the groom. It was simply taken for granted that a prudent householder would have stored a sufficient quantity for such an occasion. A failure on this score would have provided material for gossip for years to come. The second item to be taken into account is the sensitivity to social factors of the women responsible for the serving—of housewives like Mary herself. Like all good matrons charged with such a responsibility, they would have been keenly alert to the social demands of the occasion: the proper preparation and serving of the food and drink as well as the sufficiency of quantity. Putting ourselves into the social milieu and into the spirit of the women in charge of the serving, we may grasp something of their reaction to the discovery of the failure of the wine. It would have been their intense desire to avert the impending calamity. We may only imagine—but legitimately so—the hustling and bustling, the whispered conversations, the suggestion of solutions, the disappointment at failure, the ever-growing anxiety. Mary's remark must be understood in the light of the milieu and in the light of the social sensitivity of the matrons present. It is not the mere absence of wine that she emphasizes, but all the implications and circumstances accompanying it: the family disgrace, involving ridicule for perhaps years to come, the catastrophe that would mark the wedding-day of this young couple, the useless efforts of the housewives and their eventual despair. The goal of Mary's appeal was charity; the impulsion for her approach to Christ was the apprehension and anxiety of those who knew of the problem and had confessed failure concerning it.

We must bear in mind also that Mary herself would have been deeply affected by the situation. If Christ experienced human emotions at the distress of human beings, Mary likewise experienced similar emotions in accordance with her womanly nature and maternal sympathies. We may rightly assume that her charitable heart was touched and pained by the distress of her compatriots, and that she too shared

⁸³ Giuseppe Ricciotti, *The Life of Christ* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1947) pp. 282-84, makes some illuminating remarks on the social aspect of the Cana incident.

their sentiments of apprehension. It is this concrete situation of helplessness in the face of a grave social problem that is expressed in Mary's plea, "They have no wine." In the absence of any other satisfactory object of Christ's negation, it must be this expression of helplessness that constitutes the object of His denial: "Of what concern is this distress and anxiety to me and to thee, Lady?" i.e., "Of what concern is it to you and to me, Lady, that they cannot solve the problem?" The object of the denial would be the helplessness of the "they," which Mary's statement has expressed. The reply of Jesus would thus be a reassurance of His mother. Denying that the problem is insolvable for Mary and Himself, Jesus would allay His mother's anxiety, and dispose her to direct her thoughts wholly to the power of her Son. The word "woman," indicating a respect for the person of Mary, would reveal also a respect for her appeal.

We turn now to the second portion of Christ's reply, which completes the thought.

THE NON-ARRIVAL OF THE HOUR

The second portion of Christ's reply, "My hour has not yet come," bears upon His own action. The literal translation is "Not yet has come my hour." The primary emphasis in the Greek text is on the adverb of time, *οὐπὼ*, "not yet." We should note the absence of the simple negative "not," which would make the statement declare that the hour has not come at all, and the presence of the word "not yet," indicating, apart from context, a delay, whether of long or of short duration.

In the context the adverb "not yet" must necessarily indicate a delay of short duration. This is clear from the very circumstances. Long delay over the crisis of the wine would be fatal, as the plight of the host would become generally known, or the guests, become aware of the deficiency, would consider the festivities concluded. Thus the charitable purpose of the action would be defeated.

The secondary emphasis in the Greek text is on the word "hour." A short delay is forecast for the "hour." The important ideas may then be grouped thus: "Not yet for me the hour."

This brings us to a crucial point in the interpretation of the text. Since the word "hour" is part of the literary structure of the Gospel

and contains the note of the self-manifestation of Jesus, we must distinguish between the Johannine implications of the word, especially that of the self-manifestation, and the meaning of the term for Mary in the concrete circumstances. Just as the apostles did not grasp the allusion to the passion and resurrection in Christ's later statements concerning the arrival of the hour (Jn 12:23, 27; 17:1), so also the messianic implications of the "hour" would have naturally escaped Mary before the event. But it does not follow that the term has no meaning for her. As far as her understanding is concerned, the term "hour" must be restricted to its fundamental meaning found in all four evangelists: the fitting time for an action of critical importance. The statement of Christ will then read: "Not yet for me the suitable moment," i.e., there will be a short delay before the right time arrives.

It is possible that the phrase, "What to me and to thee," which in the parallels is ordinarily followed by a negation, has dictated the evangelist's choice of the negative form for the second portion of Christ's reply. However that may be, the casting of the reply in the form of a negative serves to give dramatic vividness to the narrative by creating suspense, and to indicate the crucial juncture of the Cana episode: the manner in which the suitable moment is brought about. Neither Mary nor John has any difficulty in apprehending the import of the reply. Mary immediately proceeds with her instructions to the waiters. The evangelist gives no evidence of seeing any problem between the reply of Christ and Mary's action. He omits a connective between the reply and his description of Mary's action, "His mother said to the waiters . . . (*Legei hē mētēr autou tois diakonois*)."¹ Contrariety is not indicated between the words of Christ and the action of Mary (as is the case with Christ's words and action in 7:6-8, 10, where the particle *de* is employed in v. 10). Nor is consequence indicated (as in 11:12, where *oun* is used to emphasize that the disciples' remark is a misunderstanding of Christ's words). The evangelist has not characterized the reply as a mere assent or dissent. In his view the action would flow right along, but the outcome is totally dependent upon the principals.

The action does in fact flow along, but not as far as Christ is concerned. It is Mary who continues it; it is Christ who delays. The text permits us to deduce the practical reason why Jesus will not act on His

own initiative, but awaits the appropriate moment. The messianic claim of Christ was not known at Cana, except by the five disciples. It is contrary to all the facts that the guests at the wedding, as Willam has conjectured,⁸⁴ knew of the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Christ, or that the populace of Cana had turned out en masse to catch a glimpse of the announced Messiah. Had such been the case, Mary's instruction to the waiters would hardly be necessary; nor is it likely that Christ could have performed the miracle in so quiet an atmosphere that it would have escaped the attention of the chief steward. It is even questionable that the bridegroom himself is aware of the origin of the wine. According to the impression of the narrative, the actual performance of the miracle goes practically unnoticed. Among those present only Mary, the waiters, and the disciples of Jesus, who already accept Him as the Messiah, have immediate knowledge of what has occurred. Among believers in the messiahship, after the miracle, John mentions only the disciples; not even the waiters, in spite of their courteous cooperation, are placed in this category. Had the messiahship of Jesus been publicly claimed at Cana, the question of faith for the guests would have arisen. John gives us no hint of believers or unbelievers among the guests. This question does not even arise.

It is Mary's action, therefore, which brings about the suitable moment. She enables Christ to perform a messianic action without a public messianic claim. Up to this time He has said nothing of His identity except for the veiled expression to Nathanael. His disciples, quietly gathered, believe in Him on the testimony of the Baptist, confirmed by their personal estimate of Him and by His remarks concerning themselves (Jn 1:35-51). In accepting their opinion Christ has acknowledged the testimony of the Baptist, but has made no public claims. Mary's statement to the waiters assures that they will not question the right or authority of Christ to give orders to them or manifest astonishment at the nature of His directions. The miracle at Cana was performed on the basis of the faith and understanding of Mary alone.

We are now in a position to make a complete paraphrase of the reply

⁸⁴ *Mary the Mother of Jesus*, tr. F. Eckhoff (St. Louis: Herder, 1947) p. 195 f.

of Christ. Literally translated, it reads: "What to me and to thee, woman? Not yet has come my hour." Our paraphrase would be: "Of what concern is this distress and anxiety to me and to thee, Lady? I await only the suitable moment."

MARY'S ROLE AT CANA

According to the interpretation we have suggested, Jesus at Cana would have taken Mary into His confidence, indicating His approval of her proposal and relying upon her prudence to smooth the path for His miraculous intervention. Instead of stating a principle of separation the reply of Jesus would have reflected a community of understanding and mutual reliance between Himself and His mother.⁸⁶

The central figure of the Cana episode is undoubtedly Christ. Mary's role is clearly subordinate to His. Nevertheless, hers is essential to the miracle. She suggests it, at least implicitly, and disposes the waiters to a blind cooperation. Gaechter does not exaggerate when he calls Mary the moral cause of the miracle.

In our estimate, the most remarkable facet of the narrative is the discretionary power allowed Mary as to the preparation for the

⁸⁶ The acute observations of Lagrange, *RB* 41 (1932) 122, on Christ's alleged declaration of a separation between Himself and His mother deserve to be quoted in full: "John's intention is to recount a miracle—the very first—the effect of which was profound. The miracle is in the air, so to speak, from the beginning. The request aims high, as the tone of the response and its aftermath prove. Admittedly, during His ministry Jesus did not have to take into account earthly and natural considerations. But it was always thus. His relationship with His mother rested on a foundation much higher than that of nature. It would be very strange that at the very moment when He was about to satisfy her request He would have posed a principle henceforth nullifying the prayer of His mother. The glorification of Jesus was only a confirmation of the power she exercised over His heart. And if Mary failed to understand the reply in the sense in which G. understands it, it is undoubtedly because the meaning is most obscure, or rather that this is not the meaning. To understand the very simple 'my hour' as the hour of the passion is to sacrifice the thread of thought to an erudite and purely verbal rapprochement. St. Augustine delighted in profound senses but more than once simply introduced them into the text. John does not teach under a most enigmatic form that there was a suspension (and for what purpose?) in the supernatural (rather than the natural) relationship between Jesus and Mary, but that the intercession of His mother was from that time sufficiently powerful to obtain a miracle which Jesus otherwise would not have worked. The reply had the appearance of a refusal. Mary so well understood it that she interpreted it as consent. The prayer most certain to be heard is one submitting itself in advance to whatever Jesus should wish."

miracle.⁸⁶ No direction is given her by Christ, but she is permitted to take whatever step she deems prudent. In the simple action she chooses is revealed an extraordinary tact, the product of faith and humility. She takes no positive action into her own hands save to direct the attention of the waiters to Christ. Perhaps with the exception of the statements of Martha and Mary on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, no greater tribute was paid to the divine power of Jesus in His lifetime.

As to any particular significance the incident expresses concerning Mary's role in the redemptive work of Christ, we believe it provides another illustration of the close cooperation and union between mother and Son, inaugurated with the Incarnation at Nazareth. Just as Mary brought Christ into the world (Matthew, Luke), so she was active in the inception of His public manifestation (John). In the scheme of John's Gospel her activity at Cana is a preparation for the comprehension of her role on Calvary. The relationship of Christ and Mary at Cana was one of mutual cooperation, as we would expect it to be from the analogy of the faith.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ For Lagrange Mary's power of intercession is disclosed in the fact that had she not petitioned, there would have been no miracle; for, considering the natural circumstances alone, a miracle was not in the plan of Christ. It seems to us that this is weak evidence of intercessory power, for the same could be said of many other cases of miraculous intervention in the life of Christ. Throughout the Synoptics a miracle is not generally performed without a petition demonstrating faith. We prefer to pin the evidence of Mary's intercessory power on the fact that she petitioned a miracle without previous factual knowledge of how Christ would go about it (as Gaechter points out), and (more importantly) on the liberty conceded her to prepare for the miracle. Mary goes beyond a petition; with the approval of Christ she plays a role in the intervention itself.

⁸⁷ Two articles appearing too late for our consideration but meriting attention are: Emmanuele Testa, O.F.M., "La mediazione de Maria a Cana," *Studi biblici Franciscani liber annuus* 5 (1954-55) 139-90; Johann Michl, "Bemerkungen zu Joh. 2, 4," *Biblica* 36 (1955) 492-509. The former accepts *hōra* as an express allusion to the passion, but does not admit a principle of separation. The latter rejects the separation theory as incompatible with the context and defends the interrogative reading of Jn. 2:4.