

SUNNY KUAN-HUI WANG

Sense Perception and
Testimony in the Gospel
According to John

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*
435

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

Herausgeber / Editor

Jörg Frey (Zürich)

Mitherausgeber / Associate Editors

Markus Bockmuehl (Oxford) · James A. Kelhoffer (Uppsala)

Hans-Josef Klauck (Chicago, IL) · Tobias Nicklas (Regensburg)

J. Ross Wagner (Durham, NC)

435



Sunny Kuan-Hui Wang

Sense Perception and Testimony in the Gospel According to John

Mohr Siebeck

SUNNY KUAN-HUI WANG, born 1975; since 2014 Assistant Professor of New Testament at the Central Taiwan Theological Seminary.

e-ISBN PDF 978-3-16-155115-4

ISBN 978-3-16-154735-5

ISSN 0340-9570 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2017 by Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, Germany. www.mohr.de

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that permitted by copyright law) without the publisher's written permission. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.

The book was printed by Laupp & Göbel in Gomaringen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

For My Parents

J. C. Wang & L. L. Lee

Preface

This monograph is a revised version of my Ph.D. dissertation submitted in 2014 to the Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University. There are many people to whom I am very grateful for help and support during the writing of this dissertation. It is with immense gratitude that I acknowledge the support and guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Jane Heath, who has been so encouraging and supportive. Her wide knowledge and her expertise in this field have provided a sound basis for this present work. She has not only broadened my knowledge in the field of biblical studies but has also provided numerous opportunities for me to develop myself. She had read carefully several drafts of my thesis and had given me helpful comments. I would also like to express my gratitude to Prof. John Barclay, who offered constructive and insightful suggestions. He had read carefully each chapter of my thesis and his feedback always contained very useful and perceptive comments. I am grateful for their excellent supervision.

Particular thanks are due to my examiners, Dr. Catrin Williams and Dr. Wendy North for their incisive and helpful comments. Their suggestions made this work sharper and better than it would have been. I would like to thank Prof. Jörg Frey for accepting this dissertation into the WUNT II monograph series. I am also thankful to Dr. Henning Ziebritzki and the editorial staff at Mohr Siebeck for their excellent editorial advice and professionalism in bringing it to publication.

I owe my most sincere gratitude to Prof. Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, Prof. Robin Jensen and Dr. Catrin Williams for sending me their forthcoming publication, so that I could benefit from their research. Special thanks should be addressed to Prof. Daniel Wu, who encouraged me to embark on my Ph.D. studies and who provided academic and practical support during my years in the United Kingdom. Several people proofread my thesis, among them Hilda Doran, Anne Traill and Leonard Wee. I would like to thank them for their hard work and their patience.

Deeside Christian Fellowship has been a great church home for me during my years in Aberdeen. Even after I moved to Durham, I continue to receive love and support from my brothers and sisters there. I am especially grateful to the Fairley family, who accepted me as part of their family and showed me endless love and care. I would like to thank Julie, Joping, Yong Shin and Juai

for their friendship and love. Special thanks to my friends and colleagues in Durham, Pengpeng, Shermain, James and Beng Kwee, Ian and Angela, Nat and Charmaine for their love and support.

I would like to express my gratitude to my family, especially to my mother who has supported me with her love and prayers. Heartfelt thanks goes to my father, brother and my sister's family for their love and support. I am extremely grateful to all my friends who have faithfully prayed for me and supported me. Warm thanks to the faculty of the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University for the academic support I have received. Above all, I thank God for giving me the chance to come to the United Kingdom and for being with me every difficult step of the way.

To Him be all the Glory!

20 March 2017

Sunny, Kuan-Hui Wang

Table of Contents

Preface.....	VII
Abbreviations.....	XV
Chapter 1: The Focus of the Study.....	1
1. <i>Introduction</i>	1
2. <i>History of Scholarship</i>	2
2.1 Sense Perception	2
2.1.1 Sense Perception and Faith.....	2
2.1.2 Symbolic Interpretation of Sense Perception.....	7
2.1.3 The Range of Senses	10
2.2 Testimony.....	13
2.2.1 Testimony and Revelation.....	15
2.2.2 Rhetorical Purpose and Technique	15
2.3 Sense Perception and Testimony	18
3. <i>The Aim and the Structure of this Study</i>	20
3.1 The Aim of this Study	20
3.2 The Structure of the Study.....	21
Chapter 2: An Overview of Sense Perception and Testimony	22
1. <i>Statistics and Distribution</i>	22
1.1 The Prologue (John 1:1–18).....	23
1.2 The Testimony of the Baptist and the First Disciples (John 1:19–51)	25
1.3 The Public Ministry of Jesus (John 2–12)	27
1.4 The Farewell Discourse (John 13–17).....	29
1.5 The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus (John 18–21).....	30

2. <i>Problems with Sense Perception</i>	32
2.1 The Undefined Object	32
2.2 The Vision of the Invisible: Glory, the Spirit and the Lamb of God ...	33
2.3 The Perception of God by Privileged Witnesses	34
2.4 The Perception of Signs within the Narrative.....	34
2.5 Perception Pre- and Post-Easter	35
3. <i>John's Use of Testimony Language</i>	36

Chapter 3: The Intended Audience and the Purpose of the Gospel 38

1. <i>John 20:30–31</i>	39
1.1 Textual Variant in John 20:31a	40
1.2 The Construction of ἵνα + πιστεύω.....	43
2. <i>John's Concept of Faith</i>	46
3. <i>The Content of the Gospel</i>	47
3.1 Structure and Presentation.....	47
3.2 The Language of Abiding and Indwelling	48
3.3 Ambiguities and Allusiveness in Language.....	48
3.4 The Paraclete.....	49
3.5 The Mission Motif.....	50
4. <i>Conclusion</i>	50

Chapter 4: Sense Perception, the Knowledge of God and Testimony in the Jewish Scriptures 52

1. <i>Theophany</i>	54
1.1 Jacob's Ladder (סֹלֵם) (Gen 28:10–17)	55
1.2 Theophany on Mount Sinai	58
1.2.1 The Israelites' Perception of God (Exodus 19–20).....	58
1.2.2 Moses' Perception of God (Exodus 33–34).....	61

2. <i>The Exodus Miracles</i>	63
3. <i>Communal Vision in Deuteronomy</i>	67
4. <i>The Tabernacle and the Ark of Testimony</i>	70
5. <i>Prophetic Sign-Acts</i>	73
6. <i>The Book of Isaiah</i>	77
6.1 The Motif of Blindness and Deafness	79
6.2 The Motif of Light and Darkness	82
6.3 The Motif of Trial and Sense Perception	83
7. <i>Conclusion</i>	85

Chapter 5: Sense Perception and Testimony in the Graeco-Roman World..... 87

1. <i>Techniques in Judicial Oratory to 'bring before the eyes' the thing told: Έκφρασις and Ένάργεια</i>	89
1.1 Έκφρασις	89
1.2 Ένάργεια	91
2. <i>Rhetorical Appeal to Emotion</i>	93
3. <i>Ways to Achieve Ένάργεια</i>	97
4. <i>An Analysis of Plato's Apology and Cicero's Verrine Orations</i>	101
4.1 <i>Plato's Apology</i>	101
4.1.1 Repetition and the Presence of the Crowd	102
4.1.2 Repetition, Contrast and Creating a Pictorial Image by Noting Particular Features of Actions and Objects	103
4.1.3 Verbal Cues to Prompt Imagination	105
4.1.4 Repetition with a Description of Sudden Actions	105
4.2 <i>Cicero's Verrine Orations</i>	108
4.2.1 Using Dialogues, Contrast and Creating a Pictorial Image by Noting Particular Features of Actions and Objects	109
4.2.2 Creating a Pictorial Image by Noting Particular Features of Actions and Objects and Mentioning the Presence of a Crowd	111

4.2.3 Contrast	113
4.2.4 Using Verbal Cues to Trigger Imagination.....	115
4.2.5 Repetition and the Presence of the crowd.....	116
5. <i>Conclusion</i>	117
Chapter 6: The Theological Significance of Sense Perception.....	120
1. <i>The Theological Significance of Jesus' Sense Perception and Testimony</i>	121
1.1 Jesus' Divine Origin and His Exegesis of God.....	121
1.2 Jesus' Perception of God.....	128
1.2.1 Jesus Sees the Father (John 5:19–20, 37; 6:46)	129
1.2.2 Jesus Hears the Father (John 8:26, 40).....	132
1.2.3 Seeing Jesus is Seeing the Father (John 14:7–11; cf. John 12:45).....	133
1.3 Jesus' Testimony.....	134
1.4 Jesus' Perception of the First Disciples	137
2. <i>Characters Who 'Saw and Testified' to Jesus</i>	140
2.1 The Baptist as a Privileged Witness	141
2.2 The Beloved Disciple as a Privileged Witness	145
2.3 Conclusion	146
3. <i>The Ideology of the Narrator</i>	147
4. <i>Sense Perception and Spiritual Insight</i>	149
Chapter 7: Testimony During Jesus' Public Ministry.....	150
1. <i>Signs and Faith</i>	151
1.1 Changing Water into Wine	155
1.2 Healing the Official's Son.....	160
1.3 Healing the Paralysed Man.....	165
1.4 Feeding the Five Thousand	167
1.5 Healing the Blind Man	170
1.6 The Raising of Lazarus.....	173

2. <i>Other Testimonies</i>	176
2.1 The Samaritans and Their Testimony (John 4:7–30, 4:39–42)	176
2.2 The Cleansing of the Temple	177
2.3 The Anointing of Jesus.....	178
3. <i>The Close of Jesus' Public Ministry</i>	180
4. <i>Conclusion</i>	181
Chapter 8: Witnessing the Passion, Death and Resurrection	183
1. <i>The Absence of Jesus and the Coming of the Spirit</i>	184
1.1 Promise of the Paraclete	184
1.2 'Doubting Thomas' and Later Generations of Disciples	189
1.2.1 The Character of Thomas (John 11:16; 14:5 and 20:24–29)	189
1.2.2 The Meaning of John 20:29.....	196
1.2.3 Conclusion	199
2. <i>Sense Perception and Testimony</i>	200
2.1 Jesus' Testimony to the Truth	200
2.1.1 The Use of 'Ενάργεια in Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection	201
2.2 The Disciples' Testimony to Jesus: Models of Seeing and Believing	204
2.3 A Prophetic Sign and Its Imitation in the Life of the Church	208
2.3.1 Footwashing as a Prophetic Sign-Act.....	209
2.3.2 Vivid Description of Footwashing	211
2.4 Sense Perception and Testimony in Johannine Tradition	213
2.4.1 Sense Perception and Testimony in John 21	214
2.4.2 Sense Perception and Testimony in 1 John	215
3. <i>Conclusion</i>	216
Chapter 9: Conclusion	218

Bibliography.....	223
Index of References.....	241
Index of Modern Authors	251
Index of Subjects.....	255

Abbreviations

All abbreviations of ancient literature, academic journals and monograph series follow the forms indicated in the *SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christians Studies* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999).

Chapter 1

The Focus of the Study

1. Introduction

‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth’ (John 1:14). Thus John’s Gospel expresses the reality of Jesus’ physical presence, a fleshly presence which is sense-perceptible and a glory which is in some sense accessible to ‘sight.’ Much scholarship has been devoted to the analysis of sight and faith in John, with a marked tendency to emphasise the ‘spiritual’ and symbolic meaning of sight and to marginalise or downplay the significance of the literal senses. Rather less attention has been paid, until recently, to the senses other than sight (and hearing). In this study, we are acutely conscious of the complexity and ambiguity of Johannine language,¹ and the heavy use of imagery and symbolism,² but our aim is to put emphasis again on the significance of the senses as literal and physical phenomena, and to conjoin in new ways the twin themes of sense perception and testimony. In particular, our goal is to:

a) show the interconnection between sense perception and testimony, not as a means of supporting the historicity of the text through the authority of eyewitness testimony, but to call attention to a theological conjunction of motifs that relates the revelation of God to the realities of embodied sense perception;

b) show that the senses are theologically relevant to John’s conception of knowledge of God and of Jesus, drawing on Scriptural themes which function as significant influences on his theology;

¹ For a history of scholarship on John’s use of language, see S. Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 120; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

² For a history of scholarship on John’s use of symbolism and imagery, see R. Zimmermann, *Christologie der Bilder im Johannesevangelium: Die Christopoetik des vierten Evangeliums unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Joh 10* (WUNT 171; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 77–87.

c) indicate the rhetorical effectiveness of John's appeal to the senses, which serves to enhance the vividness of the narrative and to draw the readers in faith into the experience of the disciples, just as *ἐνάργεια* is used in Greek and Roman rhetoric to draw readers/hearers into a narrative.

In this introductory chapter, we chart some of the main trends in scholarship on John in relation to sense perception (2.1) and testimony (2.2), and note both strengths which may be developed and gaps or weakness which require closer attention. At the end (3) we spell out in fuller terms the aims of this study and explain its structure and flow.

2. History of Scholarship

2.1 Sense Perception

Sense perception has drawn Johannine scholars' attention for three main reasons. Firstly, it is associated with another significant theme in the Gospel: faith. The association of sense perception and faith raises scholarly debate as to whether sense perception is presented as a valid means to faith. On the subject of faith, one cannot neglect the relationship between signs and faith, where sense perception also plays a significant role. This then raises the related question of whether faith can be achieved by signs. Secondly, it is associated with Johannine Christology. The Gospel of John is the only Gospel that emphasises the incarnation of the Word. Not only that, John emphasises that the Johannine community has seen the glory of the Word. Jesus' relationship with the Father is also expressed in the language of sense perception. The Johannine Jesus often talks about his vision of God and that he hears from God. Thus sense perception is important in discussing Johannine Christology, yet how to understand John's use of sense perception in this context is another debated issue. Most scholars look for a symbolic meaning of sense perception; others see significance in the physical dimension of sense perception. Lastly, John makes reference to all five senses, yet most scholars focus only on sight and hearing. Some scholars have tried to fill the gap and have drawn our attention to John's use of the five senses. We here outline these interrelated elements of the scholarly discussion of sense perception in John.

2.1.1 Sense Perception and Faith

The relationship between the senses and faith has been a critical issue in Johannine scholarship at least since the Reformation. The placing of 'the word of God' at the centre of Christianity in reformed theology led to the

prioritisation of hearing over seeing.³ This teaching can be found consistently throughout Calvin's commentary on John. With reference to John 20:29, he says, 'Here Christ commends faith on the grounds that it acquiesces in the simple Word and does not depend at all on the sense and reason of the flesh.'⁴ When he discusses passages such as John 2:11, 23; 4:53; 7:31 and 11:45, where people believed when they saw, he stresses that this kind of faith is imprecise because they 'depended more on miracles than on teaching.'⁵ He emphasises that faith does not rely on carnal sense perception; rather, it is from hearing the Word and the inner illumination and sealing of the Spirit. Calvin shows interest in the language of sense perception only when dealing with faith and he denies that a faith based on sight is faith because faith comes through hearing.

R. Bultmann has been one of the most influential Johannine scholars of the twentieth century. His commentary on the Gospel of John and his *New Testament Theology* are important for Johannine scholarship because of his detailed exegetical and historical analysis. In his second volume of *New Testament Theology*, he expresses his view on signs and faith. He recognises that in John, 'signs' reveal Jesus' glory, and that John reproves those who refuse to be convinced by many miracles (John 12:37).⁶ But referring to John 4:48 and John 20:29, he argues that 'the meaning of the sign does not lie in the miraculous occurrence.' Thus Bultmann regards signs as 'pictures, symbols.'⁷ They all have specific symbolic meaning. Since resurrection is considered as one of the signs, it does not have any special significance.⁸ Jesus' words to Thomas are seen by Bultmann as 'a criticism of the small faith which asks for tangible demonstrations of the Revealer' and also 'contains a warning against taking the Easter-stories for more than they are able to be: signs and pictures of the Easter faith.'⁹ This strong Lutheran downplaying of the physical senses as a means of historical 'proof' opens an important issue for debate. We will have to consider whether Bultmann's view on signs and faith is sustainable and whether Jesus' words to Thomas are indeed a criticism.

³ This is partly due to the influence of Paul (Rom 10:17). Cf. B. Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin's Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 92.

⁴ J. Calvin, *The Gospel According to St John 11–21 and the First Epistle of John* (trans. T. H. L. Parker; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1961), 2:211.

⁵ J. Calvin, *The Gospel According to St John 1–10* (trans. T. H. L. Parker; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959), 1:193.

⁶ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. K. Grobel; 2 vols.; London: SCM, 1952), 2:44.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:56.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:57.

How faith is achieved is an important topic in Bultmann's theological interpretation of John. His preference for hearing over seeing in relation to faith is made clear by his subtitle, 'Faith as the Hearing of the Word.'¹⁰ He differentiates two kinds of hearing, 'genuine hearing,' and 'mere perception.' He argues that only 'a hearkening-and-learning' (John 6:45) or 'a hearing-and-keeping' (John 12:47) can evoke faith.¹¹ Thus the Jews' failure to 'hear' Jesus' words is the same as saying they fail to believe him. He treats not only 'hearing' and 'believing' but also 'seeing' and 'believing' as synonyms. He refers to John 6:40 and 12:45 to support his idea that these two verbs are parallel to each other.¹² Because of Bultmann's emphasis on the importance of faith in John, he identifies Jesus' person with Jesus' word and Jesus' work with his word. Thus seeing and hearing are united in John 5:37 and 8:38.¹³

We can see that, in Bultmann's interpretation, seeing, hearing and believing are not distinguished in effect. Even though John does use various words for believing, and though 'seeing' is often used together with 'believing,' that does not mean that John uses those two verbs as synonyms.¹⁴ Bultmann's symbolic interpretation of signs and sense perception leads to the view that the faith based on seeing signs or hearing Jesus' discourse is only a 'seeming' but not a 'genuine' faith.¹⁵ His argument is based on his interpretation of John 2:23, 4:48 and 20:29. He does not, however, examine those verses in detail. We shall have to examine whether these verses really denigrate sense perception or suggest that faith based on sight is inferior.

The relationship between faith and vision has received attention in English, French¹⁶ and German scholarship.¹⁷ In contrast to Bultmann, G. L. Phillips (1957) in his article, 'Faith and Vision in the Fourth Gospel,' explores the relationship between faith and sight, and argues that faith and vision are not

¹⁰ Ibid., 2:70.

¹¹ Ibid., 2:70–74.

¹² Bultmann is not the only scholar who thinks this way. Some scholars also render the verb of sight in John 12:45 as 'believing.' G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 217. Cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:70–74.

¹³ Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:72.

¹⁴ F. Mussner, *The Historical Jesus in the Gospel of St. John* (trans. W. J. O'Hara; London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 23.

¹⁵ Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:73.

¹⁶ O. Cullmann, "Εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν. La vie de Jésus, objet de la 'vue' et de la 'foi', d'après le quatrième Évangile," Pages 52–61 in *Aux sources de La Tradition chrétienne: Mélanges offerts à M. Maurice Goguel à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire* (eds. O. Cullmann and P. Menoud; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1950).

¹⁷ H. Wenz, "Sehen und Glauben bei Johannes," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 17 (1961): 17–25. Wenz focuses on the story of Thomas, in particular, John 20:29. His conclusion is that sight and faith are not radically opposite.

mutually exclusive.¹⁸ Although Phillips views the function of sight positively, his differentiation of levels of sight remains questionable.

O. Cullmann's work published in 1948, "Ἐίδεν Καὶ Ἐπίστευσεν. La vie de Jésus, objet de la 'vue' et de la 'foi', d'après le quatrième Evangile" deserves our attention because he explores not only different levels of sense perception but also the relationship of sense perception with faith and eyewitness testimony. This is an extended study based on his previous work on the ambiguity of John's language.¹⁹ He refers to several key events where physical sense perception is emphasised, such as the Lazarus story, the voice from heaven, the scene at the tomb, and the Thomas episode to show that 'it is important that the witnesses really see with their eyes, and that they hear with their ears.'²⁰ However, he also argues that sight is not sufficient for faith because many people saw the work of Jesus first hand and heard his words and yet did not come to faith.²¹ Therefore, he argues, faith based solely on sight is not true faith. True faith is 'an act that takes place in the hearts of those who believe.'²² It is necessary for the first disciples to see and believe but 'the act of faith must be added to sight.'²³

Thus he argues that John's readers are in a privileged position because they have 'sight,' that is the 'written witness of the disciples' and 'inner sight,' that is inspired by the Holy Spirit.²⁴ Cullmann understands John's use of physical sense perception in the context of eyewitness testimony and, referring to John 9:39, he also recognises that John's sense perception operates on a spiritual level (*contemplation spirituelle*).²⁵ His study is significant for he points out that the simultaneity of 'seeing with the eyes (*voir avec les yeux*)' and 'contemplating by faith (*contempler par la foi*)' is one of the characteristics of John's Gospel.²⁶ This present thesis develops Cullmann's argument that physical sight and spiritual insight are both important in John but, rather than arguing for the historicity of events, it argues that the substance and form of what is written in John is designed to draw the readers in, so that they are able to perceive what the characters physically experienced – and more.

¹⁸ G. L. Phillips, "Faith and Vision in the Fourth Gospel," Pages 83–96 in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. F. L. Cross; London: Mowbray, 1957), 83–96.

¹⁹ O. Cullmann, "Der johanneische Gebrauch doppeldeutiger Ausdrücke als Schlüssel zum Verständnis des vierten Evangeliums," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 4 (1948): 360–372.

²⁰ Cullmann, "Ἐίδεν," 56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

²² *Ibid.*, 57.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Johannine ‘seeing’ is studied thematically in C. Hergenröder’s book (1996), *Wir schauten seine Herrlichkeit*. Because of the extensive occurrence of verbs of seeing, Hergenröder regards John as a ‘Mann des Auges’ (man of the eye) and ‘der Zeuge der Offenbarung als Epiphanie’ (the witness of revelation as epiphany).²⁷ He starts with a close examination of the different verbs of seeing used in John and concludes that they are not used simply as synonyms. Rather, each verb has a particular profile, although that does not exclude significant overlaps.²⁸ He argues for ‘seeing as a way to faith,’ and uses Thomas and the Easter event as examples. He emphasises that the Gospel of John should be read in the light of those disclosure events.²⁹

C. R. Koester (1989) in his article, ‘Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John,’ centres his study on the senses of sight and hearing. His aim is not to discover the symbolic meaning behind sense perception, but to compare sight and hearing in relation to faith. He argues that true faith ‘is engendered through, but never comes from seeing signs.’ Seeing signs only confirms faith.³⁰ Koester, rightly we think, argues that the sense of hearing is significant in giving testimony to Jesus and that many in John believe through hearing. However, he fails to do justice to those statements that suggest that seeing signs should lead to faith (John 12:37–38; 20:30–31).³¹ This dichotomy between hearing Jesus’ words and seeing Jesus’ signs does not fit the overall Johannine treatment of sense perception in relation to faith. Hearing Jesus’ words and seeing Jesus’ signs both lead to one of two responses: belief or rejection. John never suggests that, between hearing and seeing, one is more significant than the other.

Thus scholars’ views are diverse regarding the means to faith. Calvin, Bultmann and Koester, though arguing from different perspectives, reach the same conclusion that faith is reached through hearing words not seeing signs. While they prefer hearing over sight in relation to faith, Philips, Hergenröder and Cullmann argue that sight is important to faith, although there are occasions when sight does not lead to faith. We argue that in John, faith can be the outcome of either hearing words or seeing signs. There is no need to prefer one over another. In most of the works of scholars mentioned above, John 2:23, 4:48 and 20:29 are all seen as evidence to support the case that

²⁷ C. Hergenröder, *Wir schauten seine Herrlichkeit: Das johanneische Sprechen vom Sehen im Horizont von Selbsterschliessung Jesu und Antwort des Menschen* (FZB 80; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1996), 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 204.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 567.

³⁰ C. R. Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John,” *Biblica* 70 (1989): 327–348.

³¹ Thompson makes a similar criticism. M. M. Thompson, “Signs and Faith in the Fourth Gospel,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 (1991): 89–108, at 99, n. 24.

John denigrates sense perception. We shall have to investigate whether this is indeed so, through a detailed and thorough exegesis of these verses.

2.1.2 Symbolic Interpretation of Sense Perception

Because of the rise of literary criticism, scholars are more interested in the final product of the Gospel and the investigation of its theology than meaning that would derive from a literary dissection of the Gospel.³² R. A. Culpepper (1983) was one of the first scholars who applied literary criticism to the Gospel of John. In his *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, he drew scholarly attention to the pictorial aspect of Johannine language.³³ Since then, the study of Johannine symbolism and imagery has flourished. Several Johannine scholars, such as D. Lee (1994) and C. R. Koester (1995), have shown interest in exploring this aspect of the Gospel.

Lee observes the complexity of John's use of sense perception at both symbolic and physical levels. She recognises that John's signs-narratives are 'symbolic narrative,' but points out, at the same time, the significance of physical sense perception in John. In her book, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, she identifies several symbolic narratives which are mostly narratives of signs. She excludes the wine miracle, the passion and resurrection narrative and the footwashing from her discussion because she thinks that either they do not have 'a symbolic focus' or they are not concerned with the development of the faith of the characters.³⁴ The exclusion of these passages is questionable, however, since the words πιστεύω and σημεῖον are used in John 2:11 and several times in John 18–21 (John 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29, 31). Lee recognises that Johannine signs operate on a material and physical level, but she argues that it is the 'symbolic function within the narrative which is the main point.'³⁵ This shows that she is more interested in discovering the symbolic meaning of sensory events, and this approach makes her pay scant attention to the literal meaning of the text.³⁶

A symbolic reading of John's sense perception is explored further in *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, where Koester examines the function of symbolism. According to Koester, 'Images are things that can be perceived by the senses, such as light and darkness, water, bread, a door, a shepherd, and a

³² G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980).

³³ R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

³⁴ D. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 12, n. 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁶ U. C. Von Wahlde, review of D. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning*, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57 (1995): 818.

vine.³⁷ Symbolic actions, such as footwashing, temple cleansing and miraculous signs have the characteristics of being perceptible to the senses. In Koester's and other scholars' definitions, only 'images that can be perceived by the senses' are considered to be symbols.³⁸ Although he recognises that a feature of these signs and actions is that they are sense-perceptible, his focus is not on the physical sense perception that John uses in these narratives but on the symbolic meaning of each sign and action. Similarly, in other studies on the imagery in John, scholars observe John's use of sense perception but place emphasis on the metaphorical level which is beyond the physicality of sense perception.³⁹ Study of John's symbolism and imagery shows the complexity of his use of sense perception. Since the focus is always on the deeper meaning of these symbolic actions or signs, the physical aspect of sense perception is often disregarded.

While Lee and Koester have investigated the use and function of symbolism in John's Gospel, J. J. Kanagaraj (1998) explores the mysticism of the Gospel, with regard to which sense perception is an important aspect. Like other scholars mentioned above, Kanagaraj observes that there are two levels of Johannine sight: the physical and the spiritual level. According to his view, the first level is 'to see at a superficial level, either by seeing signs or by hearing a testimony.' The second level is 'to perceive spiritually and intelligibly, which leads one to a commitment of faith in Christ and to testify about him.' He argues that the idea of two levels of seeing God is influenced by the mystical tradition of Judaism, the Merkabah vision.⁴⁰ This distinction implies that spiritual vision is superior to physical vision, for it leads to a commitment of faith. However, one might reasonably question whether John is really speaking about two types of seeing in a systematic way as Kanagaraj suggests. One could argue rather that, for John, physical sight is considered important in relation to spiritual insight. We shall explore whether John in fact values physical sense perception and even considers it to be an important step towards faith and communion with God.

³⁷ C. R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 4.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ For various articles on this theme, see J. Frey et al., eds., *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). Zimmermann's introduction on imagery in John is particularly helpful for it gives an overview of this topic in scholarship. R. Zimmermann, "Imagery in John: Opening up Paths into the Tangled Thicket of John's Figurative World," Pages 1–46 in *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (eds. J. Frey et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

⁴⁰ J. J. Kanagaraj, 'Mysticism' in *the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into Its Background* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 218–219.

D. Lee also published, in 2010, an article entitled, 'The Gospel of John and the Five Senses,'⁴¹ focusing on John's use of the five senses. She argues that the five senses in John operate on two levels, 'material and symbolic,' and that John uses them to enable the reader 'to grasp the incarnational shape of salvation through imagination.'⁴² She sees each of the five senses as 'a core image' to represent the 'life of faith' in John's narrative.⁴³ For example, she argues that in John 20 and 21, 'seeing' refers to 'signs surrounding the resurrection, which function as images of new life.' What the disciples see, such as linen clothes, angels, the wounds of Jesus, fish and fire, 'all point symbolically to Jesus' risen presence and power in the community beyond Easter.'⁴⁴ Since her focus is on the implication of the five senses which serve as the 'imaginative entry' of the readers into the 'symbolic universe' of the Gospel, she pays scant attention to the physical use of sense perception, and thus overlooks the significance of what we see as John's emphasis on physical sense perception. Another question about Lee's approach is whether it is legitimate to call senses 'symbols' or 'images.' It is difficult to determine which acts of seeing or hearing ought to be seen as images and which as mundane. As she says herself, 'hearing has a mundane as well as a metaphorical meaning (3:32).'⁴⁵ Nevertheless, her argument that the Johannine believers are to access the symbolic imagination through the five senses in order to have faith is a helpful observation on John's use of sense perception in association with imagination.

The symbolic interpretation of sense perception is one of the major trends in Johannine scholarship. This has tended to categorise sense perception into two levels, the physical and the spiritual, and the focus has always been only on the significance and greater importance of spiritual or mystical ways of seeing. This present thesis explores whether, in John's Gospel, sense perception operates on more than two levels. Different characters have different levels and degrees of insight and their insight can be developed and deepened. An overemphasis on the symbolic interpretation of sense perception may downplay the significance of the sensory faculties in John's narrative. This thesis recognises the importance of the spiritual insight that has been much discussed by scholars but argues that, for John, physical sense perception is also important if one is to gain spiritual insight.

⁴¹ D. Lee, "The Gospel of John and the Five Senses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129 (2010): 115–127.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 127.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

2.1.3 The Range of Senses

Sight and hearing are often discussed but few scholars have explored the full range of senses. There is a small but significant tradition of the scholarly study of the other senses in John. E. von Dobschütz (1929) was one of the first scholars of the New Testament to take an interest in the theory of the five senses.⁴⁶ He argued that the five senses are ‘an indispensable means’ for the expression of thoughts and ideas. But because he is interested only in the philosophical and religious thoughts that can be derived from the senses, he pays no attention to John’s physical use of sense perception. This dismissal of physical sense perception is picked up by M. Barth (1946) in his book, *Der Augenzeuge: Eine Untersuchung über die Wahrnehmung des Menschensohnes durch die Apostel*, which he begins by stating that sense perception is the main focus of his study. Barth recognises the symbolic usage of sense perception but focuses on the physical reading of John’s verbs of sense perception in the context of historical eyewitness testimony.⁴⁷ He argues that the apostles’ hearing, seeing and touching are means of perceiving the Son of Man, Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ His study shows that a literal understanding of sense perception can also be of theological and religious significance. He also draws our attention to the interrelation of sense perception and testimony.

R. Hirsch-Luipold (2008) explores the theme of Johannine sense perception from a religious-philosophical approach in his article, ‘Die religiös-philosophische Literatur der frühen Kaiserzeit und das Neue Testament.’⁴⁹ He argues that the idea of the incarnation of the Logos makes the perception of God possible, so that ‘we can perceive it with all our senses.’⁵⁰ In his discussion, Hirsch-Luipold also includes the senses of taste, smell and touch.⁵¹ He argues that the nature and perception of God can be perceived, seen, heard and felt in Jesus Christ and that this becomes the basis of testimony.⁵² He also recognises that even though in John everything can be perceived physically, there is an ambiguity in John’s use of sense perception.⁵³ Conversely, his

⁴⁶ E. von Dobschütz, “Die Fünf Sinne im Neuen Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 48 (1929): 378–411.

⁴⁷ M. Barth, *Der Augenzeuge: Eine Untersuchung über die Wahrnehmung des Menschensohnes durch die Apostel* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1946).

⁴⁸ Barth, *Augenzeuge*, 41.

⁴⁹ R. Hirsch-Luipold, “Die religiös-philosophische Literatur der frühen Kaiserzeit und das Neue Testament,” Pages 117–146 in *Religiöse Philosophie und philosophische Religion der frühen Kaiserzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 117–146.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 104–144.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 144–145.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 145.

article shows that, even though his Gospel is full of ambiguity and imagery, John emphasises physical sense perception.

D. Lee in the article aforementioned, ‘The Gospel of John and the Five Senses,’⁵⁴ focuses on John’s use of the five senses but makes no reference to Hirsch-Luipold’s study. She observes that there are scant attention paid to some senses and that ‘the cooperation of all five senses together’ has not been sufficiently discussed.⁵⁵ She argues that the theological significance of the five senses is to be used as images that pertain to faith; they operate on two levels, material and symbolic, and it is through the imagination that readers can access the deeper meaning that the imagery of the five senses represents.⁵⁶

The theme of sense perception is explored by R. Hirsch-Luipold in his Habilitationsschrift which was completed two years after the article just mentioned, under the title, *Gott wahrnehmen: Die Sinne im Johannesevangelium*.⁵⁷ He acknowledges that the study of the five senses in connection with faith in John’s Gospel is very limited and that very often the emphasis is on the higher senses, sight and hearing. Thus he focuses his study on the lower senses: taste (the wine miracle in John 2:1–11), smell (the stench of the dead and the fragrance of the ointment in John 11:39; 12:3) and touch (touching the risen Christ in John 20), but also includes, in his first chapter, the senses of sight and hearing, with special reference to John 1:14, 18 and 14:1–14. He argues that the perception of God is made possible in the incarnate Logos.⁵⁸ Physical sense perception, which is emphasised in these passages, is significant in understanding John’s Christology, theology and soteriology. He argues that ‘sensory-physical perception (die sinnlich-körperlichen Wahrnehmung)’ plays a significant role in John and is used ‘as a way to faith (als Weg zum Glauben).’⁵⁹ John’s use of sense perception emphasises the fact that ‘God can be seen, heard and touched. Even his life-giving power can be smelled and tasted – in the incarnate Word, the only Son, who is himself God.’⁶⁰ Hirsch-Luipold gives detailed discussion of the significance of physi-

⁵⁴ Lee, “John”.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 115.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 125.

⁵⁷ R. Hirsch-Luipold, *Gott wahrnehmen. Die Sinne im Johannesevangelium* (Habilitationsschrift masch. Göttingen, 2010). It will be published as *Gott Wahrnehmen. Die Sinne im Johannesevangelium*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017). I am grateful that, at the final stage of revising my thesis, Prof. Hirsch-Luipold kindly sent me a copy of his Habilitationsschrift, so that I could have a chance to consult his work and benefit from his research. The page references used below are according to his Habilitationsschrift.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 344.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 346.