

JOSAPHAT C. TAM

Apprehension of Jesus in the Gospel of John

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zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Mohr Siebeck

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For Lai-Ki,

ὡς εὖρεν γυναῖκα ἀγαθήν εὖρεν χάριτας

ἔλαβεν δὲ παρὰ θεοῦ ἰλαρότητα

Preface

This monograph is a slightly revised version of my Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Edinburgh in 2014. It was supervised by Prof. Larry Hurtado (secondary supervisor Prof. Paul Foster). I am immeasurably grateful to my *Doktorvater*, Larry, for his constant patience, close supervision, encouragement and guidance over the past few years. I will never forget our last supervision session (coffee time in your “Hobbit room”) where you taught me the qualities of a Christian Biblical scholar. Special thanks are owed to Prof. Jörg Frey for accepting my work for publication in the prestigious *WUNT II* series. Dr. Henning Ziebritzki, Jana Trispel, and Kendra Mäschke of Mohr Siebeck were very helpful and I thank them. Thanks also go to the thesis examiners, Prof. Andrew Lincoln and Dr. Helen Bond. Their critiques have made this a stronger work. In addition, I will never forget the very supportive encouragement and comments from Prof. Howard Marshall and Dr. Maureen Yeung-Marshall, especially during the later stage of this project. Despite my mention of these scholars, all shortcomings of the present work lie squarely at my own feet.

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with Christians while we were in U.K.: many members of both Chinese churches in Edinburgh, Chinese churches in Glasgow and Aberdeen, the Merecz family, Langham scholars, as well as colleagues in New College (Carlos Sosa, Lonnie Bell, Sean Adams, Denni Saragih, Adam Shreve, and Kin-Foon), and the list being too long to name exhaustively. To all these people we are very thankful.

Words cannot express my thanks to my parents who gave me life. You sacrificed so much for your children. How I wish that I might enable you both to find eternal life as a token of my deep gratitude for your upbringing. And I thank God that half of my wish has now come true.

This monograph is dedicated to my wife, Lai-Ki. It is not an exaggeration that it is her who alone understands the “cost” of supporting me, from the very beginning up to the very end. Without her love, support, and endurance, since 2007 till now, this adventure would never be successful. Holding the hands of you and our sons Jophiel and Cophiel, your laughter and tears have taught me what it means to know Jesus and that Jesus knows. Thanks Cookie. No one can replace you in my heart!

Above all else, may this humble work be a pleasing sacrifice to my Lord:

All my regrets, all my acclaims...
 Things in the past, things yet unseen...
 Lord, I offer my life to You
 Everything I've been through
 Use it for Your glory...
 (From “I Offer My Life”)

Hong Kong, June 4, 2015

*Josaphat Chi-Chiu Tam
 S.D.G.*

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in this work follow Billie Jean Collins, Bob Buller, and John F. Kutsko, *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014) and include the following, which do not occur there:

BD	Beloved Disciple
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
EVV	English versions
GJohn	Gospel of John
JSHJ	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
LN1.1	Domain entry 1.1 of <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i> . Edited by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida. 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
SBG	Studies in Biblical Greek
TKNT	<i>Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

Forests or woodlands are not difficult to find across Scotland. Oak trees, horse chestnut, fir, or maple can be seen easily. While people, if asked, may not rank them among their critical concerns, every oak or horse-chestnut plays an important role in the environment. In the Gospel of John (hereafter GJohn), there are words which are used almost everywhere, and yet whose importance may not be sufficiently appreciated. This work attempts to recover the value of six “tree species” among others. These common species in the forest of the theological complexity of GJohn are: seeing, hearing, knowing, witnessing, remembering, and believing. These terms, while distinct, are inter-related. Superficially speaking, seeing and hearing¹ relate more to empirical senses but are not limited to that; knowing concerns one’s understanding/perception; witnessing reflects the characteristic response of one who sees/hears/knows Jesus; remembering is also part of this cognitive process; all of them are related to believing, another expression reflecting that one has come to a certain stance in his/her own cognitive process, which is, of course, of paramount importance in the eyes of the author.

These terms appear in every chapter of GJohn, in ways not found in any other gospels. They pertain to what I call “apprehension,” that is relating to how the characters encounter and grasp Jesus the divine logos in the gospel. The author puts very clearly in the beginning, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (1:1). Thus, grasping the divine, the Christ and the Son of God (20:31), remains the author’s complicated and yet important task towards the readers. In this regard, I use the umbrella concept of “apprehension of Jesus.”

Numerous studies have been done on some of these words. Yet, a thorough and systematic study on all of these terms in a collective manner has not been conducted. My aim is to trace the concept of apprehension of Jesus in the literary context of GJohn in its entirety. Putting it in a nutshell, I attempt to show that there is a four-phased apprehension of Jesus depicted in GJohn, by which the author sought to have a unique impact on his readers in line with the overall plot of GJohn.

In the following sections of this Chapter, I will first outline the previous diverse investigations made on the subject. Pointing out a gap in which this

¹ As well as not seeing and not hearing.

work can make a contribution, I will state the method and approach I have taken. Lastly, I will lay out how the present study is going to be conducted. But before venturing into the diverse previous investigations, a brief aside on the introductory issues of GJohn is necessary.

A. Authorship, Audience, and the Gospel

We know little about the actual and concrete historical situation of GJohn's author, his first readers, or anything about the prehistory of the text despite many controversial proposals and reconstructions. Like the other canonical gospels, strictly speaking, the author of GJohn is anonymous. In this monograph, by using "the author" or "John," I refer to the author of GJohn as a whole, whoever his identity is. However, taking into account of the patristic evidence but noticing scholars' dissidence, I consider that GJohn could be attributed to the work of a person called the "Beloved Disciple" whose identity is very likely to be John the son of Zebedee. Noticing many other possibilities discussed by numerous scholars,² this traditional view is assumed in this monograph.

Moreover, being aware of scholars' discussions on the composition history of GJohn, I only take the final text of GJohn as the basis of our discussion.³ As with other canonical gospels, GJohn belongs to the genre of Greco-Roman *bioi*.⁴ The final form of the text could have been completed and circulated some time from the 80s to 90s in the late first century, with its plausible provenance at Ephesus in view of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Gospel.⁵

Regarding the audience of GJohn, or the "readers" as discussed in this monograph in our analysing the text, they are John's intended first readers who lived in the late first century. Here, Culpepper's assumption is taken that "the actual author(s) wrote for intended, actual readers, and that the implied

² Among the huge volume of literature on it, see for instance, Robert Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1975), 86–101; R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 56–88; C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 81–139; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 5–24.

³ Thus, the source critical, redaction critical, or historicity issues lie outside the present scope of study.

⁴ Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

⁵ Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, WUNT 166 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 241–263. Cf. the parallels drawn in Sjeff van Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, NovTSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

readers fit the profile of the intended readers closely.”⁶ The intended readers are supposed to reflect the perceived identity of the actual/real readers, given an effective and meaningful communication by the author took place via GJohn.⁷

Regarding the nature of John’s audience, the recent proposal by Richard Bauckham and others that the gospels were intended from their beginning to have a very wide readership in the first century of the Roman Empire is noted together with its positive and negative appraisals.⁸ In my analysis, such a

⁶ R. Alan Culpepper, “Pursuing the Elusive,” in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 114. Similarly, R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 212; Robert M. Fowler, “Who Is ‘the Reader’ in Reader Response Criticism,” *Semeia*, no. 31 (1985): 5–23; Jeffrey L. Staley, *The Print’s First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel*, SBLDS 82 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1988), 21–37; Francis J. Moloney, “Who Is ‘the Reader’ In/of the Fourth Gospel,” *ABR* 40 (1992): 20–33; Willis H. Salier, *The Rhetorical Impact of the Semeia in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2/186 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 9–10.

⁷ At the same time, it is important to note Ricoeur’s distinction: “the implied author is a disguise of the real author, who disappears by making himself the narrator immanent in the work... the real reader is a concretization of the implied reader, intended by the narrator’s strategy of persuasion.... the phenomenology of the act of reading requires a flesh-and-blood reader, who, in actualizing the role of the reader prestructured in and through the text, transform it.” Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. David Pellauer and Kathleen McLaughlin, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3:169–170. Moloney’s comment then remains thoughtful to us: “The intended reader both *is* and *is not* the implied reader. The real reader is both *is* and *is not* the implied reader. Also, the real reader both *is* and *is not* the intended reader.” Francis J. Moloney, “Narrative Criticism of the Gospels,” in *A Hard Saying?: The Gospel and Culture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 103. Similarly, D. François Tolmie, *Jesus’ Farewell to the Disciples: John 13:1–17:26 in Narratological Perspective*, BIS 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 34–49; Craig R. Koester, “The Spectrum of Johannine Readers,” in *“What Is John?”: Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia, SBLSymS 3 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 5–19; Stephen Motyer, “Method in Fourth Gospel Studies: A Way Out of the Impasse?,” *JSNT* 66 (1997): 27–44.

⁸ Richard J. Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); David C. Sim, “The Gospels for All Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham,” *JSNT* 24, no. 84 (2002): 3–27; Margaret M. Mitchell, “Patristic Counter-Evidence to the Claim That ‘The Gospels Were Written for All Christians,’” *NTS* 51, no. 1 (2005): 36–79; Christopher Tuckett, “Gospels and Communities. Was Mark Written for a Suffering Community?,” in *Jesus, Paul, and Early Christianity: Studies in Honour of Henk Jan De Jonge*, ed. Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, Harm W. Hollander, and Johannes Tromp, NovTSup 130 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 377–83; Edward W. Klink, ed., *The Audience of the Gospels: The Origin and Function of the Gospels in Early Christianity*, LNTS 353 (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Richard Last, “Communities That Write: Christ-Groups, Associations, and Gospel Communities,” *NTS* 58, no. 2 (2012): 173–98.

possibility of a wide readership in John's mind is neither rejected nor taken as one of my presuppositions.

Furthermore, it is not my intention to analyse GJohn in light of the so-called "Johannine Community," if it existed.⁹ The concept of a "sectarian and synagogal" Johannine Community, whose history is constructed out of a special reading of GJohn on the assumption that the gospel shows serious disarrangements, as a result of being composed and redacted over a long period of time, is a speculative hypothesis. Severe criticisms have been noted in recent years.¹⁰ As a result, I am doubtful whether we can treat GJohn as telling the story of Jesus and the history of the Johannine community simul-

⁹ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2003); Wayne A. Meeks, "Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91, no. 1 (1972): 44–72; R. Alan Culpepper, *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools*, SBLDS 26 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975); Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979); Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

¹⁰ It is notable to see Robert Kysar's concluding comments, "there is now sufficient evidence in these early years to indicate that the whither of the Johannine community [the future of the theory] is likely to include its demise." Robert Kysar, "The Whence and Whither of the Johannine Community," in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*, ed. John R. Donahue (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2005), 76. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, "On Finding the Lukan Community: A Cautious Cautionary Essay," in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, ed. Paul J. Achtmeyer (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1979), 89–100; Thomas L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel: A Source-Oriented Approach* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), 15–21; van Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 59–109; Jean Zumstein, "Zur Geschichte des johanneischen Christentums," *TLZ* 122 (1997): 417–28; Adele Reinhartz, "The Johannine Community and Its Jewish Neighbors: A Reappraisal," in *What Is John?: Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. F. Segovia, vol. 2, 2 vols., SBLSymS 3 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1998), 111–38; Richard J. Bauckham, "For Whom Were Gospels Written?," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard J. Bauckham (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 9–48; Robert Kysar, "The Expulsion from the Synagogue: The Tale of a Theory," in *Voyages with John: Charting the Fourth Gospel* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 237–45; Edward W. Klink, "The Gospel Community Debate: State of the Question," *Currents in Biblical Research* 3, no. 1 (2004): 60–85; Adele Reinhartz, "Reading History in the Fourth Gospel," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 191–94; Edward W. Klink, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John*, SNTSMS 141 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 7–15, 19–45; Klink, *Audience*; Eyal Regev, "Were the Early Christians Sectarians?," *JBL* 130, no. 4 (2011): 771–93; David A. Lamb, *Text, Context and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings*, LNTS (London: T&T Clark, 2014).

taneously in the way Louis Martyn proposed (his “two-level drama”).¹¹ Rather, another “two levels” in GJohn, namely the story of Jesus and the characters and that of Jesus and the readers, are better read along the lines of the authorial intention traceable from the text. They are the focus of the present investigation.

B. Previous Investigations

Going back to the subject of “apprehension of Jesus,” on a surface level, it appears to be absent in most Johannine works.¹² There are reasons for that. When writing about a comprehensive study on the concept of revelation in GJohn, John Ashton put forward reasons why no one had ever undertaken it. Two of these equally apply to the concept of apprehension of Jesus. First, because (in Ashton’s words) “most scholars, both budding and full-blown, still find it easier to study a word than a concept,” studies on the concept of apprehending Jesus remain similarly by and large fragmented, as will be shown in the following overview. Second, because of the “sheer ubiquity” of the apprehension vocabulary, studies are often focused on a single thread of the vocabulary, or at most very few.¹³

The only “close to” exception is probably Franz Mussner. Almost fifty years ago, Mussner attempted to incorporate Hans-Georg Gadamer’s idea of “fusion of horizons” to revisit the Johannine “mode of vision.”¹⁴ Through brief studies on “gnoseological terminology” (seeing, hearing, knowing, wit-

¹¹ William Wright argues cogently that Martyn’s hypothesis in essence belongs to a kind of allegorical/figural interpretation rather than a historical reconstruction. Utilising ancient rhetoric, the text of GJohn is “an unfolding argument about Jesus’ identity” more than a history of the Johannine community. William M. Wright, *Rhetoric and Theology: Figural Reading of John 9*, BZNTW 165 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 57–98. While not dismissing the idea of “two levels,” David Aune also notes that “one cannot assume that each Gospel story exactly mirrors the situation of the Evangelist’s community.” David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1988), 60. Most recently, Jonathan Bernier also defends the case that the ἀποσυνάγωγος passages could refer to events during Jesus’ lifetime. Jonathan Bernier, *Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John: Rethinking the Historicity of the Johannine Expulsion Passages*, BIS 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

¹² Cf. the introduction section of most Johannine commentaries, works on Johannine theology, and recent edited volumes.

¹³ John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 491.

¹⁴ Franz Mussner, *Die Johanneische Sehweise und die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, QD 28 (Freiburg: Herder, 1965). *Horizontverschmelzung* emphasises that the generation of meaning occurs in the merging of the contemporary reader’s horizons with the horizons of the historical past.

nessing, and remembering) based on isolated texts, he aims at showing to what extent the Johannine Christ is relevant to the Quest of the Historical Jesus and why John is different from the synoptic gospels. Mussner contributed to the discussion by providing foundational analysis of the threads of vocabulary I will study. Yet, with his different purposes just noted, Mussner unfortunately fell into the problems Ashton raised: his study is word-based instead of concept-based; with his “gnoseological” focus, an important but complicated element is insufficiently analysed, viz., the believing terms in GJohn.¹⁵ While his contributions will be further noted, rapid changes have occurred since Mussner’s work, not least the rise of narrative criticism. In light of these observations, a review of the recent history of research is apt.

1. On Seeing and Its Relation to Other Concepts

Seeing and hearing, out of the five senses, are the most prominent faculties mentioned in GJohn.¹⁶ As an element of apprehending Jesus, the eminent Johannine scholar Edwin Abbott claimed that seeing has subtle shades of connotations in GJohn. Different Greek verbs (βλέπω, θεάομαι, θεωρέω, ἰδοῦ, and ὁράω) have different meanings in themselves, ranging from ocular vision, to looking with concentration, to sign accompanying real understanding, or to contemplation.¹⁷ Raymond E. Brown, in surveying the peculiar Johannine import of these “crucial words,” briefly noted the problems in differentiating shades of meaning based on the use of different Greek verbs. He concluded that positing different types of sight in GJohn should not be founded solely on the author’s choice of seeing vocabulary.¹⁸ But how should they be founded? After all, are there different types of sight in GJohn? A closer look will reveal its complexity.

¹⁵ But see his influence on Schwankl’s light and darkness motifs; Otto Schwankl, *Licht und Finsternis: Ein metaphorisches Paradigma in den johanneischen Schriften*, Herders biblische Studien 5 (Freiburg: Herder, 1995).

¹⁶ Dorothy Lee has probed into the cooperation of five senses, namely sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell in GJohn. Dorothy A. Lee, “The Gospel of John and the Five Senses,” *JBL* 129, no. 1 (2010): 115–27. But upon close scrutiny, tasting, touching, and smelling, in terms of the concepts themselves, are apparently not as prominent as she claimed.

¹⁷ Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with Those of the Three*, Diatessarica 5 (London: A. and C. Black, 1905), §1597–1611; G. L. Phillips, “Faith and Vision in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F.L. Cross and C.H. Dodd (London: Mowbray, 1957), 83–96.

¹⁸ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 501–3. Similarly, see Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, trans. A. Stewart Todd and James B. Torrance (London: SCM, 1953), 41.

One important aspect of the seeing vocabulary is that seeing is repeatedly associated with seeing “signs.” Rudolf Bultmann, Robert Fortna, and others¹⁹ first attempted to construct a putative signs gospel based on the use of σημεῖον in GJohn. But now the near impossibility of retrieving the underlying sources is almost universally recognised.²⁰

If so, turning to the text itself, what is meant by a “sign” (σημεῖον) that is seen? Scholars differ on this basic issue. Other than the six signs explicitly mentioned in GJohn,²¹ are other things Jesus said or did signs? R.

¹⁹ Rudolf K. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 6–7, 113; Wilhelm Wilkens, *Zeichen und Werke: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des 4. Evangeliums in Erzählungs- und Redestoff*, ATANT 55 (Zürich: Zwingli, 1969); Robert T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Robert T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Willem Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel: Tradition and Redaction*, NovTSup 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Earliest Version of John's Gospel: Recovering the Gospel of Signs* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1989); Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John: Vol. 1: Introduction, Analysis, and Reference*, ECC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

²⁰ Eugen Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums: Der gegenwärtige Stand der einschlägigen Forschungen*, Studia Friburgensia, Neue Folge 3 (Freiburg Schweiz: Paulusverlag, 1951), 291–330; Donald A. Carson, “Current Source Criticism of the Fourth Gospel: Some Methodological Questions,” *JBL* 97, no. 3 (1978): 411–29; Wolfgang J. Bittner, *Jesu Zeichen im Johannesevangelium: Die Messias-Erkenntnis im Johannesevangelium vor ihrem jüdischen Hintergrund*, WUNT 2/26 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 2–15; Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 150–64; Christian Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen: Die Wundergeschichten des Johannesevangeliums literarisch untersucht: Mit einem Ausblick auf Joh 21*, WUNT 2/69 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 12–14; Gilbert Van Belle, *The Signs Source in the Fourth Gospel: Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation of the Semeia Hypothesis*, BETL 116 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994); Gilbert Van Belle, “Style Criticism and the Fourth Gospel,” in *One Text, a Thousand Methods: Studies in Memory of Sjeff van Tilborg*, ed. Patrick Chatelion Counet and Ulrich Berges (Boston: Brill Academic, 2005), 291–316. Instead of a signs source, Udo Schnelle proposes that use of σημεῖον should be attributed to the Evangelist himself. Schnelle, *Antidocetic-Christology*, 145.

²¹ 2:11, 4:54, 6:2 (5:1–18); 6:14, 9:16, and 12:18. For various attempts to identify the seventh sign, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 55–72; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 329–35. For the debate on whether crucifixion and resurrection should be seen as the last sign, see C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1978), 78; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*,

Schnackenburg maintained that signs are “works of Jesus, performed in the sight of his disciples, miracles, in fact, which of their nature should lead to faith in ‘Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God’.”²² Yet for C. H. Dodd, “a σημεῖον is not, in essence, a miraculous act, but a significant act, one which, for the seeing eye and the understanding mind, symbolises eternal realities.”²³ Rudolf Bultmann, in claiming that Jesus’ signs and words are interchangeable, considered that the entire GJohn can be comprised under the term “signs.”²⁴ G. R. Beasley-Murray, in reaction to Bultmann, insisted that “signs” are “specifically actions of Jesus, generally miraculous, which find their exposition in discourses.”²⁵ From this glimpse of various definitions, we can see the debate hinges on whether a sign should be miraculous, whether it should have an intrinsic symbolic value, and how it is connected with Jesus’ works/act.

These discussions provide us an understanding of the debated nature of seeing signs. But seeing or seeing signs in GJohn is also linked to the concept of believing.

a) *Seeing and Believing*

Scholars have long noted the connection of seeing to believing in GJohn. There is a tension between a seeing of signs that leads to faith and a seeing of signs that does not lead to faith.²⁶

Brown analysed this succinctly via his proposal of “four stages of faith.”²⁷ The first stage is the reaction of those who are unbelieving and refused to see

ed. J. Massingberd Ford and Kevin Smyth, trans. Kevin Smyth, vol. 1, 3 vols. (New York: Herder, 1968), 520n.7; Salier, *Semeia*, 142–71.

²² Schnackenburg, *John-I*, 1:515.

²³ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 90. Dodd also suggested that the evangelist considered the cleansing of the temple and the washing of the disciples’ feet a σημεῖον too. Similarly, Brown treated the elevation of the serpent in Moses’ time (3:14–15) as another non-miraculous sign. Brown, *John-I*, 528. Marianne Thompson treated signs as “a manifestation.” Marianne Meye Thompson, “Signs and Faith in the Fourth Gospel,” *BBR* 1 (1991): 89–108; 93–94. Köstenberger has it as “a symbol-laden, but not necessarily ‘miraculous,’ public work of Jesus selected and explicitly identified as such by John for the reason that it displays God’s glory in Jesus who is thus shown to be God’s true representative.” Köstenberger, *Theology of John*, 328.

²⁴ Bultmann, *John*, 698. For the debate he generated on whether signs are in themselves revelation, see the summary of Marianne M. Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 56.

²⁵ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., WBC (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 386.

²⁶ This arises from an alleged conflict between the Evangelist and the “signs source” he used. But see footnote 20.

²⁷ For a much earlier discussion on the stages of faith in Calvin’s commentary on GJohn and similar disagreement in church history on whether signs/miracles can advance faith,

signs. The second is those who believed through seeing signs but their faith is nevertheless not real. The third stage is those who see the true significance of signs and believed. There are two sub-stages within this: germinating faith and “full salvific faith,” the latter being available only after Jesus’ resurrection (cf. Thomas’ confession, 20:28). The last stage is those who believed without seeing signs, which is exalted as the author appeals to “the life-situation of the Church.”²⁸

Is the last stage of faith mentioned above superior to the others? Brown considered this a speculation which is “rather idle” to be asked.²⁹ But this question is pursued by various scholars. Walter Grundmann held that signs faith is altogether insufficient.³⁰ Bultmann saw “a deep intention” behind 20:29 that criticised anyone who, like Thomas, “asks for tangible demonstrations of the Revealer.”³¹ Fortna, following Bultmann, drew from the text a “clear implication that belief without seeing signs is a superior form of faith.”³² However, Ferdinand Hahn and others argued against this. Hahn claimed that a signs faith is never said to be wrong or inferior.³³ Loren Johns and Douglas Miller similarly argued that signs in 2:23–3:21, 4:48, 6:25–51, and 20:24–29 could be understood as consistently having a positive role for faith.³⁴ Marianne Thompson captured well the problem of Bultmann and others, saying that they “denigrate signs as providing the requisite basis for faith. Instead, the believer must turn away from the sign to see a greater, spiritual, or otherworldly reality of the deed itself.”³⁵ She rightly questioned such an approach of negating the importance of initial eyewitness in GJohn and highlighted the significance of the materiality of signs.³⁶

see Barbara Pitkin, “Seeing and Believing in the Commentaries on John by Martin Bucer and John Calvin,” *Church History* 68, no. 4 (1999): 865–85.

²⁸ Brown, *John-I*, 530–31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 531.

³⁰ Walter Grundmann, “Verständnis und Bewegung des Glaubens im Johannes-Evangelium,” *KD* 6 (1960): 131–54; Brown, *John-I*, 530–31.

³¹ Rudolf K. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1951), 2:57.

³² Robert T. Fortna, “Source and Redaction in the Fourth Gospel’s Portrayal of Jesus’ Signs,” *JBL* 89, no. 2 (1970): 162.

³³ Ferdinand Hahn, “Sehen und Glauben im Johannesevangelium,” in *Neues Testament und Geschichte: historisches Geschehen und Deutung im Neuen Testament: Oscar Cullmann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Heinrich Baltensweiler and Bo Ivar Reicke (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972), 129; Bittner, *Zeichen*; Schnelle, *Antidocetic-Christology*, 169–70.

³⁴ Loren L. Johns and Douglas B. Miller, “The Signs as Witnesses in the Fourth Gospel: Reexamining the Evidence,” *CBQ* 56, no. 3 (1994): 519–35.

³⁵ Thompson, *Humanity*, 55.

³⁶ In another article, she also affirmed the positive value of seeing signs which leads to faith. Thompson, “Signs and Faith.”

These aforementioned controversies are unsettled. While Brown's four stages of faith appear logical and systematic, are there alternatives to his formulation?³⁷ How are the stages deployed in GJohn? Are they systematically related to different parts of GJohn?

b) Seeing Is Believing

Probing further into the thorny issue of seeing and believing, one finds another proposal suggesting that seeing and believing essentially boil down to one single idea. Bultmann contended that seeing in GJohn is faith's perception. According to him, seeing, hearing, and believing are more than parallel to each other. They are identical. In treating the seeing vocabulary as wholly a subset under the idea of believing, the vocabulary's eyewitnessing function is denied.³⁸ Wilhelm Michaelis, in his TDNT article, argued that "sight is for him [John] the seeing of faith... it is itself faith."³⁹ Emphasising Bultmann's notion of existential encounters with Jesus, Michaelis considered that seeing in GJohn is consistently understood as spiritual perception and almost never as sense perception/eyewitnessing in its real sense. Seeing Jesus is then understood as "the decision which is taken in encounter with Jesus and which is a turning to faith."⁴⁰ In the same vein, Andrew Lincoln also argued that seeing in the Johannine prologue is not "the everyday language of physical seeing." It is "virtually synonymous" with receiving, knowing, and believing in its context.⁴¹

On this issue, Ernst Käsemann countered Bultmann's assertions by maintaining that miracles, perceived by the physical senses, are indispensable for any idea of divine intervention and manifestations of Jesus' glory.⁴² Cullmann maintained that while a "spiritual" seeing is often "kept in mind alongside as a challenge," "seeing in the flesh" has played an important role in

³⁷ For instance, Fernando Pérez modified Brown's stages and investigated the relationship of seeing to believing in selected pericopae in GJohn; Fernando R. Pérez, *Ver a Jesús y sus signos, y creer en Él: Estudio exegético-teológico de la relación "ver y creer" en el evangelio según san Juan*, Analecta Gregoriana 292 (Rome: Editrice Pontifica Università Gregoriana, 2004).

³⁸ Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:72.

³⁹ Wilhelm Michaelis, "ὁράω κτλ.," *TDNT*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, C.2.e.

⁴¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Beloved Disciple as Eyewitness and the Fourth Gospel as Witness," *JSNT* 85 (2002): 3–26; 8. Similarly, Arthur Dewey contends that seeing throughout GJohn is not "a matter of physical contact" but "of insight into a deeper understanding," "a multifaceted envisioning." Arthur J. Dewey, "The Eyewitness of History: Visionary Consciousness in the Fourth Gospel," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2001), 66, 69.

⁴² Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, trans. Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 21–22.