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Hanger, Jeannine Marie: Sensing Salvation in the Gospel of John. The Embodied, Sensory Qualities of Participation in the I Am Sayings. – Leiden: Brill 2023. 226 S. (Biblical Interpretation Series, 213), geb. \$ 128,00 ISBN: 978-90-04-67825-5

Jeannine Marie Hanger's monograph, a revised version of her doctoral thesis at Aberdeen, explores the role of sensory imagery in the *I am* sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. She examines how these sayings employ sensory language both within the metaphors themselves and in their broader narrative contexts. H. argues that these sayings are deeply embodied and sensory, emphasizing the active participation of believers in responding to Jesus. She asserts that the *I am* sayings not only illustrate but also require embodied action in response. For example, in John 6, Jesus' feeding of the multitudes serves as a tangible demonstration of his claim to be the bread of life. In response, hearers are called to participate with Jesus by eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

While previous studies have addressed the sensory aspects of the Johannine corpus (e. g., Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, Sunny Wang, and Dorothy Lee), H.'s work contributes significantly by engaging with emerging research in sensory anthropology and historical studies of the senses (see also the work of Dominika Kurek-Chomycz). In her introductory chap., she surveys scholarship on the *I am* sayings and introduces sensory anthropology, which posits that perceptions of the senses are culturally determined. As such, H. asserts that rather than accepting the universality of sense valuations – such as Aristotle's demarcation between "higher" and "lower" senses (privileging the senses of hearing and sight over all others) – senses must be understood and assessed within their cultural context. In the present vol., H. shows that the Fourth Gospel appears to resist the Aristotelian valuation of the senses by highlighting how the so-called 'lower' senses of smell, touch, and taste serve essential roles in the context of the *I am* sayings. One example is the extensive "taste-related" language used in relation to the bread of life saying.

In addition to revaluing the senses, H. introduces the notion of renumbering the senses. H. expands her investigations of sensory experience beyond the traditional pentasensory model (seeing, hearing, taste, touch, and smell) proposed by Aristotle and still considered normative in the modern West today. Instead, H. employs a more expansive view of the senses that also incorporates the senses of speech and movement (kinaesthesia). She asserts that while it is "beyond the study's purpose to propose a sensorium for the Fourth Gospel" (15), she employs a septasensory model following the lead of Yael Avrahami in her research on the senses in the Hebrew Bible. While H. explains the reasons why some are skeptical about including movement and speech among the senses (for example, speech is considered a form of output rather than input, 88), she does not provide a rationale for their inclusion in her sensory schema either for modern or ancient readers of the text.

The monograph systematically examines the seven predicate *I am* sayings, with the two sayings of John 10 (gate, good shepherd) studied together. Each chap. highlights key sensory vocabulary, its frequency, and significance in respect to each of the *I am* sayings. H. then applies Paul Ricœur's concepts of reproductive and productive imagination to analyze the sensory elements of the sayings. H. suggests firstly that each of the *I am* sayings relies upon known and familiar sensory memories and experiences (reproductive imagination). These sense memories include not only a person's physical, sensory experiences, such as eating bread or tending to vines, but might also include particular sense memories related to Old Testament imagery or rituals. This is most clearly articulated in chap. three, where H. argues that Jesus' revelation of being the light of the world is set against the backdrop of the sensory experiences of participating in the Feast of Tabernacles and the nightly lamp-lighting ritual that was an important feature of the Feast. As well as building upon or recalling existing sense memories, H. argues that the *I am* sayings also contribute to developing new sense memories (productive imagination). For example, by revealing that believers must eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, Jesus ties believers' future experiences of eating and drinking to his revelation of being the bread of life.

Each chap. concludes by discussing the invitational and participatory elements of each of the *I am* sayings. H. argues that these sayings invite hearers to respond, yet each invitation involves an element of disjunction. She observes that "(T)here are those who respond positively to Jesus and are drawn toward him, and there are those who respond negatively and move away from him" (39). Ultimately, she concludes that "(E)ach predicated *I am* saying presents a different salvific picture of how Jesus brings 'life in his name' (20:31)" (176). Furthermore, the sayings provide a model of belief, illustrating faith as an embodied and participatory act demonstrating what it means to have life in his name (Jn. 20:31). Through assessing the *I am* sayings from a sensory perspective, H. proposes that the present volume assists with identifying concrete examples "which further clarify and define the concept of participation with Christ" (176).

H.'s volume makes a valuable contribution to Johannine studies. In particular, its emphasis on embodiment and the tactile nature of belief reminds readers of the physicality of the Fourth Gospel. Belief is not merely 'spiritual' in the gospel but also active and participatory. The current volume also takes steps toward introducing readers to the developing field of sensory studies and its nexus with biblical studies. As noted, her insights into the cultural context of the valuation and numbering of the senses are particularly valuable. However, in her concluding chap., H. claims that the physical senses provide "a window into the universal embodied experiences of human existence" (177). This assertion appears at odds with her earlier emphasis on the cultural specificity of sensory perception. Indeed, it appears to overlook a key tenet of sensory anthropology, which is that it is not merely the valuations and numbering of the senses that are culturally located but the very way we perceive, understand, and make meaning of the senses. We cannot assume that modern readers of the Fourth Gospel *perceive* and interpret the sensory experiences of the text in the same way ancient readers did. A more detailed discussion of cross-cultural sensory perception would have strengthened this argument.

Despite this, H.'s study significantly enriches our understanding of embodiment and sensory experience in the Fourth Gospel. Her research, in conversation with the growing field of disability studies (see the work of Louise Lawrence who addresses both sensory and disability studies in the gospels), highlights the potential of sensory studies for biblical interpretation. Her analysis underscores how much remains to be explored about the role of the senses in responding to and

enacting belief. Future research in this area will not only deepen our understanding of early Christian sensory experiences but may also yield valuable insights into contemporary believers' engagement with the Gospel's sensory dimensions.

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