

Book Review

***What Would Jesus See? Ways of Looking at a Disorienting World.* By Aaron Rosen. Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2023. x+199 pages. \$29.99 (hardcover). ISBN 9781506478654.**



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“Few people in the history of the world have understood as clearly and intuitively as Jesus that the way we look at people is intimately entwined with how we treat them” (3). With that statement, Aaron Rosen—a scholar of art and religion, a curator, a skilled educator—lets the reader know that the overarching theme of his latest book is ethics. Rosen is Jewish; his spouse is an Episcopal priest. He speaks of himself as both a practitioner of Judaism and of interfaith dialogue. He admits to ongoing fascination with Jesus. Previously, he has investigated how Jewish artists have looked *at* Jesus. Now, he wants to look *with* him (17).

In *What Would Jesus See: Ways of Looking at a Disorienting World*, Aaron Rosen endeavors to help his readers understand “*how* Jesus saw, *what* he saw, and *why* this is important today” (3). By considering the functions of sight, seeing, and being seen in the Gospel narrative accounts of Jesus’ ministry, he teases out how Jesus “teaches us to see in new and meaningful ways” (9).

In Chapter 1, “Eye to Eye,” the driving question is, “How does Jesus think sight actually works?” (28). Here Rosen points out how Jesus both tells and shows us “what he thinks about sight,” how Jesus provokes reflection on “the act of looking itself,” how that leads to a “reordering of the social economy of sight” (33).

Chapter 2, “Paying Attention,” is an examination of “the looking that Jesus challenges us to practice”—his requirement “that we look *with care*, an attention that is acute and empathetic in equal measure” (53). The themes of this chapter include wakefulness, attentiveness, maintaining distance, and strategies for replenishment of concentration.

In Chapter 3, “Discerning Truth,” Rosen considers “how Jesus sees the distinction between truth and falsity, and what truth he offers for discerning the difference” (93). Here he demonstrates how the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ ministry “help frame some of the central issues at stake when we try to discern truth in a disorienting world” (125).

In Chapter 4, “Recognizing Others,” Rosen explores “the fundamental difference between sight and recognition” (131). Themes include misrecognition, delayed recognition, and Jesus’ moral vision. It is a study of “how Jesus encourages us [to] look at others in a way that allows them to be, and become, themselves before our eyes;” Jesus’ lessons on the distinction between pity and mercy; and the ways in which preconceptions and prejudice blur vision and distort recognition (167). Rosen has moved from looking *through* to looking *into* Jesus’ eyes, with the hope that the reader has done so as well (167).

What Would Jesus See: Ways of Looking at a Disorienting World is indeed about Jesus; it is also about contemporary politics, racism, economic justice issues, and much more. It is informed by rigorous scholarship without the encumbrance of apparatus typical of academic writing. Each chapter concludes with a brief reminder of the “vantage points” it has offered. The volume’s backmatter includes a bibliography presented chapter-by-chapter; likewise, notes for each chapter—but they are unnumbered, and no note-references are inserted into the book’s text.

What Aaron Rosen has crafted in *What Would Jesus See* is an extended essay on ethics—the informal style and conversational tone of which will appeal to a broad readership and can serve a wide range of purposes.

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