

JESUS AND THE VISIBILITY OF GOD

Although scholars have debated the link between the empirical senses and belief in the Gospel of John, few have queried their own presuppositions about the invisibility of God. In this study, Luke Irwin establishes the value of God's physical incarnation for belief, arguing that the theological nature of belief derives from a God who makes himself physically visible in the world. Irwin builds on recent work on divine embodiment in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament and illuminates the Jewish context for John's Gospel. He also explains John's understanding of 'seeing' as a positive component of belief-formation and resolves the Johannine relationship between 'seeing' and 'believing'. Showing that God is the ultimate target of belief, Irwin argues that unless God becomes physically visible in Jesus, belief cannot be attained.

LUKE IRWIN is Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Covenant College.

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Sight and Belief in the Fourth Gospel

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This is for Bekah

τίς ἄν θεὸν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα
ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἴδοιτ' ἢ ἔνθ' ἢ ἔνθα κiónτα;

Who may behold a god against his will,
whether going to or fro?

—Homer, *Odyssey*, 10.573–574

Teque deprecor, bone Iesu, ut cui propitius donasti uerba tuae
scientiae dulciter haurire, dones etiam benignus aliquando ad te
fontem omnis sapientiae peruenire, et parere semper ante
faciem tuam.

I pray thee, merciful Jesus, that as thou hast graciously granted me
sweet draughts from the word which tells of thee, so wilt thou, of thy
goodness, grant that I may come at length to thee, the fount of all
wisdom, and stand before thy face for ever.

—Beda Venerabilis, *Ecclesiastical History
of the English People*, 5.25

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οἱ δὲ βουλόμενοι τὰγαθὰ τοῖς φίλοις ἐκείνων ἕνεκα μάλιστα φίλοι,
 δι' αὐτοὺς γὰρ οὕτως ἔχουσι καὶ οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

It is those who wish the good of their friends for their friends' sake who are friends in the fullest sense, since they love each other for themselves and not accidentally.

—Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3.6

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ABBREVIATIONS

Where abbreviations are used, they follow the conventions as set out in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd edition (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014).