

Imaging the Bible

Works by Students, Alumni and Staff

All measurements are in centimetres, h × w × d.

Iain Andrews

Tupelo (2008)

acrylic on canvas

50 × 40

2 Kings 2. 11-15

The painting takes as its starting point an image by Tiepolo and the passage in 2 Kings which tells of Elijah's dramatic ascension to heaven. I am continually bewildered and encouraged in equal measure by accounts of God's intervention in human life, in such powerful and clear ways; this painting is a response to the paradox of the divine being, who is both distant and mysterious, yet made known. Creating a dialogue with the past both sets down a challenge and offers a support: to dare to stand on the shoulders of giants, both spiritually and creatively is a potential source of terror and fulfilment. My work is concerned with the struggle to capture the relationship between the spiritual and the sensual. These are apparent opposites which are expressed through the conflict of high narrative themes and sensuous painterly marks. Peter Fuller talks about how, in the past, the artist could 'transform what is physically perceived by the use of allegoric devices like haloes and 'human' wings, whereas, now, this can only be realized through the transfiguration of formal means like drawing, colour and touch.' The act of making becomes inseparable from the message that is being conveyed through the marks: it is a process of transformation and redemption.

Irene Boutasi

Song of Songs (2008)

oil and egg tempera on board

three panels, each 14 × 24

The Song of Solomon

Solomon's 'Songs of Songs' is traditionally conceived as a marriage song. It is said that the poem 'sings' the love of God for his Creation. While reading it, I was drawn to certain symbolic details and key words, which I finally included in my work. I also discovered that there many questions and possible hidden meanings in the poem. For example: who are the guardians (or watchmen) of the city, and why do they take off the bride's veil and chain her? (The guardians are depicted in the centre panel.) The bride (represented in the left-hand panel) is symbolized by the enclosed garden (a symbol of fertility) within which is a pomegranate tree (a symbol of death). I chose the last words of the text, which speak of her asking her groom to run like a stag towards the great mountains (where the healing herbs represent the groom). (This is alluded to in the right-hand panel). I describe my work as naive, because this is the way I understand the poem. For me, it is a painted folk song. I use

a small and detailed scale to enable me to enter another world: a dreamy one that inhabits certain, often undiscovered, regions of my mind.

Martin Crampin

The Vision of the Four Living Creatures (2008)
Giclée print on canvas and digital projection
76 × 76

Revelation 4.6-9

The vision of the four beasts in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation – with six wings and ‘full of eyes’ – has had a particular resonance throughout Christian art. The four creatures, with the face of a lion, an ox, a man, and one like a flying eagle, were identified by the early church fathers with the Four Evangelists. It is in this context that the beasts are most frequently imaged, rather than in their original setting in the vision of St John the Divine (and its analogue in the Book of Ezekiel). Sometimes they are depicted with the figures of the Evangelists as rather tame symbols, having little in common with their true biblical context.

Gobeithiaw a Ddaw ydd Wyf [Hope for What is to Come] (2006)
Giclée print on paper
49.8 × 29.75

Llawn Llawn Llawn Llawenydd [Full Full Full of Joy] (2006)
Giclée print on paper
49.8 × 29.75

These images, from a series of three, illustrate the work of one of the most distinctive Welsh poets of the middle ages. Sion Cent was severe in his condemnation of the Welsh nobility, but offered hope for the poor, following the teaching of Christ from the gospels. Elements of the images are based on medieval carving and wall painting, as well as incorporate early manuscript versions of the poems. Sion Cent’s idea of the Welsh common people as the recipients of the New Jerusalem, and of Christ presiding over the Last Judgement, find resonances with the Book of Revelation.

Iwan Davis

Disgwyl [Waiting] (2008)
door mat
60 × 90

Revelation 3.20

‘Wele yr wyf yn sefyll wrth y drws ac yn curo’ [Behold, I stand at the door knocking.] I herald from a Welsh Nonconformist background, on both sides of my family. Morgan Jones (my great, great, great, great, grandfather), was a minister who established several chapels in the early 1800s, in the Trelech area of North Pembrokeshire. Today, we live in different times when, sadly, many chapels are closing their doors for the last time. These places are more than mere buildings; they are centres for the local community. The walls have

witnessed some of their most joyous, profound, and saddest moments in their congregations' lives. (The 'ty cwrdd' is literally that: a meeting house where people come to meet God, and each other.) For earlier generations of Welsh folk, the words and phrases of the Bible were part of their everyday life (as can be heard in the colloquialisms of their hymns). Even now, and despite everything, these words – with their expectation and hope – endure.

Julie Davis

Self-Portrait: Mother (2008)

oil on canvas

84 × 61

Exodus 12. 23-30

The final plague, the Passover, and subsequent death of the Egyptian firstborn, is a shocking and powerful narrative about captors, captivity, and a people identified and saved by blood. In keeping with the book of Exodus as a whole, the account is concerned with struggle and a battle of wills: those of man and God. But I believe there are other stories and other characters implied by the text; characters who were profoundly affected by the events in the narrative, but whose stories have never been told. While researching the Exodus account, I was surprised to read that the Egyptians are described as the Hebrews' neighbours. The fact that the ordinary everyday Egyptian may have lived side by side with the equally ordinary and everyday Hebrew makes the events of the Passover night seem all the more disturbing: for this was once one community, now split apart by mistrust, tragedy, grief, and, finally, the Hebrews' migration into an unknown future. The death of a child is every parent's greatest fear. In today's media, we are confronted almost daily with images of other people's experience of this tragedy, and wonder how we would cope if it happened to us. My painting is a self-portrait: in trying to comprehend an Egyptian mother's heartache, I (as a mother) have, literally, put myself in the picture.

Beth Fletcher

The Five Kingdoms (2008)

oil, pigment, clay, gold leaf and silver leaf on wood

54 × 18

Daniel 2.26-45

Throughout history, religious artefacts have portrayed the greatness of not only God but also those that commissioned the work. The small portable altarpieces commissioned in Roman Catholic Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries are an interesting illustration of this tradition. Ostensibly, they served as visual aids for personal devotion, and often depicted a favourite saint and the patron at worship. But they were also laden with symbols of the owner's personal material wealth and 'divine right' to authority, and, thus, were a portable, visual indication of prestige too. In both the use of precious materials and a shallow pictorial space, the pictures equalize heaven and earth and blur the distinction between devotee and deity. Nebuchadnezzar was the super-dictator of his time. He was king over a vast empire and a 'god' to his people. And yet his dreams were haunted by images representing the destruction of world powers ... including his own. The first four chapters of Daniel narrate Nebuchadnezzar's gradual realisation of both his own mortality and the transience of his

kingdom (in comparison to the everlasting, spiritual kingdom of the omnipotent God, whom Daniel worshipped). This triptych reverses the narcissistic aspect of the 'little altarpiece' tradition, in keeping with Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The painting is a *memento mori* for the king. The central panel signifies the 'kingdom that will never be destroyed' (Daniel 2.44), and is flanked by the four symbolic materials associated with Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue, which are (in the painting) tarnished, damaged, and faded.

John Harvey

Philadelphia (2006-7)

oil on board

50 × 50 × 5

Revelation 3.7-13

The title derives, in the first instance, from the name of the ancient city of Philadelphia (the Greek word for 'brotherly love'), referred to in the Book of Revelation. In the second instance, it refers to that other city called Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. In the Nonconformist tradition of text-based decoration, 'God is Love' is the shortest biblical quotation chosen for illumination. The phrase conjoins the two smallest and most potent theological words from the Christian lexicon in English. The word 'love' was preferred for two reasons: first, representing 'God' as an image (even abstractly) compromised the Protestant prohibition on visualizing the deity by any means. Secondly, since 'God is love', the former is (in terms of a strictly verbal proposition) synonymous with, or subsumed into, the latter. In this way, 'love' represents (or stands for, as a proxy) 'God' too. In art culture, 'love' already has an iconic status, derived from the Pop artist Robert Indiana's works bearing that title. One example is on display in Love Park Philadelphia. Indiana's visual interpretation of the word 'love' involves a 2 by 2 letter-stack contained by a regular shape. My take in *Philadelphia* follows Indiana's two-tier arrangement of the letters L, O, V, and E. They are inserted into a 2 × 2 grid. Each square of the grid is subdivided vertically into twenty-five sections. Each section designates a letter from B to Z. In this system, the alphabetical value is converted into an abstract value by a process of filling in with a colour the sections up to and including the letter to be rendered. So, the letter Z would be expressed as a fully filled square, while A would be rendered as a completely empty square. The colour binary (an off-black on a tempered white) connotes variously ink on parchment or paper (a reference to the materials of letter writing associated with the Book of Revelation) and the austere achromatic colours of the first Nonconformist meeting houses.

Foundation Piece II (2002-7)
oil on board
45 × 45 × 2.5

Ezekiel 4.1

The text describes one of a complex series of prophetic performative acts representing the doom that was to come upon Jerusalem seven years later. God commands Ezekiel to represent a city on a tile or tablet made of either uncooked clay or asphalt, soft enough to be inscribed with a stylus. This account of the act of drawing is unique in the Bible, and the first biblical reference to mapping. The prophet outlines a plan for describing the forthcoming siege of the city. Similar plans are found on monuments in Babylonia, where the prophet had lived in exile. If Ezekiel's portrayal was the size of extant tile maps, it would have been about 18 × 21 cm; or, if it was the size of a normal tile used in buildings, it could have been as large as 58 × 38 cm. In respect to size, the painting strikes a compromise somewhere between the two extremes. Its format is square rather than rectangular (in the manner of the tiles). This departure from the probable shape of the artefact described in the text is, nevertheless, determined by the text, although not the words but their letters. The Ezekiel verse has 81 letters, which can be accommodated by a 9 × 9 or 27 × 3 grid. The square is an appropriate shape for the city of Jerusalem, anticipating the proportions of the visionary city described later in Ezekiel chapter 48, and the heavenly Jerusalem envisioned in Revelation chapter 21. The Hebrew name Jerusalem means 'foundation of peace'. Fortuitously, on the grid, it occupies the base-line of the picture and so serves, metaphorically, as the foundation of the piece (that is, P I E C E, rather than P E A C E).

The grid also serves as the skeleton for the picture. Each individual square (a microcosm of the whole) is the framework for translating a letter into a visual value. The system for conversion is, again, derived from the text. Since the subject of the verse is in part a map, the piece deploys (albeit contemporary) principles of plotting and grid referencing. Each square is subdivided by coordinates from 0 to 25, that is, twenty-six positions corresponding to the number of letters in the Roman alphabet. The letters of the alphabet are allocated to the coordinates. For example, T corresponds to position 19 on the square. The letter is mapped to that point on both the longitudinal and latitudinal axes, and then filled. The process is repeated square by square for each successive letter. The geometry of the structures, while a consequence of mapping procedure, is not unlike the right-angled shapes drawn on Babylonian tiles. It is a feature that persists in much later maps depicting Jerusalem with the infrastructure of a Byzantine town, divided into four quarters by two intersecting linear main streets.

Bible Studies: Lamentations ('He hath ... pulled me to pieces') I & II (2007)
mixed media on paper
Each 15.8 × 20.7

Lamentations 3.11

The works represent are informal, spontaneous, improvisatory, and ruminative response to the biblical text. The process adapts the habit observed by some Christians of daily reading and reflecting upon a portion of Scripture and endeavouring to apply it to their lives. The 'imagery' represents an entirely subjective response to the text. The process of pictorializing the text involves a rumination on the passage, which, in turn, leads to the formation of mental images related to, for example, commentary on, and other translations of, the text;

the text's own imagery; existing artworks (such as paintings and engravings) illustrating the text; thoughts conjured up by a reflection on how the text might be applied in one's life; and - more often than one would like to think - thoughts that have nothing whatsoever to do with the passage. As in the tradition of the mnemotechnic picture Bibles (in which the textual content of the Scripture is memorized using a system of mnemonic images), the formation of and engagement with the visual strata serves to embed the meaning of the text and the words in one's memory.

Sarah Haxby

Hearth & Home I & II (2008)

cotton stitch on cotton-duck canvas

each 37 × 37 × 4

Song of Solomon 5.9-10

I was inspired to learn the technique of Welsh smocking by the Ceredigion Museum's exhibition of traditional Welsh workingmen's smock frocks. A man's smock was often sewn by their beloved and incorporated a personal symbolism. One can imagine that, in stitching parts of the garment together (which can be a meditative process), the woman's loving-bond with her beloved (the 'chiefest among ten thousand' (v. 10)) was both contemplated and turned into a material metaphor.

Christopher Iliff

The Great Beast; The Bear; The Leopard; The Lion (2008)

watercolour with pen and ink on paper

each 50 × 30

Daniel 7

When looking for a subject to illustrate, I wanted to choose a passage from the Bible that was, first, not very well known and, secondly, sure to fire my imagination. Daniel 7 fulfils both of these criteria very well. Since the existing work on this subject is limited, I was able to produce something that is unique. I loved the challenge of bringing to life these strange creatures and making them look believable.

Paul Joyner

So Teach Us to Number Our Days That We May Apply Our Hearts to Wisdom (1980-3)

acrylic and PVA on canvas

76 × 76

So Teach Us to Number Our Days That We May Apply Our Hearts to Wisdom (2008)
mixed media on paper
41 × 67.5

Psalm 90.12

Both pictures represent the view of Pen Dinas from the cemetery of Llanbadarn Church, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth. On a tomb just to the west of the church porch is an inscription on the slate from Psalm 90, verse 12: 'So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' I first saw this in 1975, then in my twenty-first year, and was struck powerfully by the stark message that life was short, and that it would be prudent to consider how we spend that precious commodity. The canvas was the result of those musings, and the subject forced itself into the composition. The result is a painting which discourses, in threes, upon the idea that death underlies life. Even thirty years later, it still speaks to me of how important it is to consider, profoundly, our life's direction. The work on paper, painted this March from almost the same spot, and with that phrase in mind, is a contrasting piece. Here the interest is in twos. Here, too, the message is much more hopeful: we live with the reality of death; it walks with us and we live for living. There is real hope here, and (I suppose) an understanding that the Psalms can speak to us throughout our life. I believe firmly that we need to consider the Psalms, alongside both our own experience and the traditions of those who have gone before us, in order to discover how they may support and guide us today.

Sian Kingscott-Smith

Jesus (2008)
acrylic on board
12 panels: each 25.4 × 20.3

The gospels

I chose this subject because I am interested in the way Jesus has been portrayed in western art. (I grew up with the image of a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus with characteristically European features.) Although the Bible does not describe Jesus' appearance, it does record that he was born in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth (both places situated in the Middle East), and was a Jew. Therefore, he would almost certainly have had darkish skin and looked more Arabic than western European. I have also noticed that, when he is not shown either as a baby or in death, Jesus tends to be portrayed with a rather benign expression: as the 'meek and mild' figure that we often see in Victorian art, for example. But the biblical accounts describe a much more animated, dynamic, and well-rounded personality. For instance, he over-turned the tables of the money-changers in the temple, and he fiercely condemned the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. The gospels also describe Jesus as having many different emotions: he was in anguish while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he wept when Lazarus died. And there are accounts of him expressing great joy too. The paintings are an attempt to counter the stereotypical portraits of Jesus by visualizing a more biblical and multi-faceted realism.

Aislinn Knight

The Seven Seals I & III (2007)

ink-jet print on paper

58 × 41.7 & 59 × 41.7

Revelation 5.1

The Seven Seals follows my earlier work, which was a contemporary interpretation of Hieronymous Bosch's apocalyptic *Garden of Earthly Delights*. *The Seven Seals* explores the idea that, in the opening of the seals in the Book of Revelation, St John witnessed prophecies that are now coming to pass. Thus, the works constitute a visual hermeneutic on the theme of 'the end of the (our) world'. The prints use new media and processes, such as photocopy, printmaking, collage, Photoshop manipulation, and digitization. Forms are layered randomly, creating a chaos of multiple marks and distorting the coherence of the source material. Through these works, the viewer is made to witness a vision of an apocalypse set in our own day.

Eloiza Mills

Garden (2008)

acrylic on board

26.5 × 19

The Song of Solomon 4.12

In reading the Song of Solomon, I was immediately taken by its richly detailed description of a garden. The impression I gained was one of vitality and freshness. Having never previously worked from a text, I found the process daunting and took refuge in attempting to make a historically accurate image, researching the plants mentioned and the appearance of gardens in Solomon's time and place. It was not until I began to draw on personal experience, however, that the image began to take shape. My father is a gardener, and my sister and I were brought up with a garden always in the background. As a treat, we were taken to a public garden and set loose. It is these memories – the unadulterated delight and vividness of my childhood experience of gardens – that I hoped to express. But not for the sake of nostalgia. Rather, because I suspect that the authenticity and the guilelessness of very young children's reactions are worth remembering. My father is also included in the piece, because his influence is intrinsically woven into how I see gardens. For the sake of continuity, I have pictured him, here, as I remember him during my early childhood: a blurry, two-dimensional figure of terrible authority, and also tenderness.

John O'Rourke

Visitation: Linga Sharira (2006-7)

mixed-media sculpture and digital photograph

76.2 × 61

Luke 1.43

This work involves an interface between sculpture, painting, and photography, while drawing upon imagery of the Virgin Mary in western art. It also references the artifices of Victorian spirit photography, and is one of three pieces which deal with the same subject. In

2006, I made the original sculpture. The following year it was exhibited alongside some of my architectural/labyrinthine heads which, in contrast, are constructed from oak. *Visitation* consists of a facial plaster-cast painted in very light and transparent monochrome tones. An off-white coloured fabric was arranged around the head and then treated to retain its form. From my observation of this sculpture I produced a painting that employs a limited palette of tertiary colours. The third, digital, outcome (exhibited here) completes the series. The hardwood panels behind the levitating head were photographed in St John the Baptist Church, Newcastle upon Tyne. The inclusion of wainscoting in the background is partly informed by the use of oak in many of my sculptures.

Jonathan Moss

Rivesalte (Shoah I–XII) (2008)

Carborundum prints on paper

12-print display: 48.7 diameter

Exodus 3.7-8

2,551 Jews were sent from Rivesaltes to Auschwitz during August, September, and October 1942. In 1947 parts of the 'promised land' were given back to the people of Israel. This series of prints is based on stills from 'video walks' made at the camp during August 2007. Each image is a 'zoom' on nature, exploring details which usually pass us by: uneven, weathered rock textures; cracks found in dry earth; moving grass; and branches. The work explores a beautiful landscape which belies its history:

'Torrid heat at the camp. The barbed wire, tightly strung around K and F blocks, is oppressing. The moans of the tormented still linger in the air. I see them filing out of their barracks, panting under the weight of their belongings. The guards are beside them. Lining up for the role call. Waiting for hours in a field in the sun. Then the trucks arrive to take them to the rail roads. They get off the trucks in two rows, between the guards, and climb on the cattle cars. Some hesitant, others apathetic, others defiantly, heads held high. This goes on for hours until all are crammed into the cars where the heat is suffocating. I recognise certain faces through the bars. Calling out one last request, or thanking. At every door, two guards. I look at the faces. Even despair has disappeared from these aged, ashen, doleful faces. From the last car we hear "goodbye ...".'

(Except from *Journal de Rivesaltes 1941* by Friedel Bohny-Reiter, whilst working for the Red Cross at the Centre National de Rassemblement des Israelites at Rivesaltes, France, 9 August 1942.)

Geoffrey Oke

Cruciform (2008)

mixed media on paper

112 × 112

The work has no intentional religious significance. Rather, it adapts the cross-shape (native the crucifixion motif in Christian art) merely to create abstract scaffolding upon which a drawing is built through a process of improvised statement and restatement.

Trevor Sewell

Revelation (2008)
acrylic on canvas
61 × 61

Exodus 10.21-9; 20.1-21, Revelation 16.1-17

Revelation is inspired by three biblical passages: Exodus 10.21-29, Exodus 20.1-21, and Revelation 16.1-17. In Exodus 10.21 a 'darkness which may be felt' covered Egypt. Even though this darkness was absolute, the Israelites still had light within their homes. As a result of the darkness (created by the fifth angel in Revelation 16.10-11) the 'People gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done'. In Exodus 20.21: 'Moses approached the thick darkness where God was'. In the Bible, darkness is often associated with evil and light with good. But very often God appears within this darkness as, for example, in 2 Samuel 22.10, 1 Kings 8.12, Job 22.13, Psalm 97.2, and elsewhere. Light always enters the darkness. My painting reflects a darkness wherein God can be found.

Margaret Sharrow

Soul Windows I & II (2008)
photographs on fibre-based paper
each 40.6 × 50.8

Matthew 6.22

My work explores spiritual themes, particularly representations of the soul and the higher self. A closely held gaze offers a deeper communication between souls than do words. Light has so much spiritual resonance, whether you believe that it enters the eye at the speed of light, or, as medieval thinkers thought, that the eyes emanate their own radiant beams. The concept of the eye as the light of the body evokes a wonderful image of the world peopled by glowing lamps, illuminated by the souls within. Light shines through the negative and onto the paper, creating a shadow of our physical selves, just as our physical selves are a shadow of our spiritual selves ('For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then we shall see face to face' 1 Corinthians 13.12). Light shines through the eyes of the people in the photographs, and is captured by the mechanical eye of the camera. Photographing people implies a connection that is made between subject, photographer, and viewer - especially when shooting close up, where trust is paramount. Looking deeply into the eyes of another person offers respect, connection, and a revelation of the treasure of their presence - something that we often overlook in the rush of daily life. As the preceding verse in Matthew chapter 6 states: 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (v. 21).

Philippa Sibert

Dec. 2nd 1980 (2008)

collage and mixed media

58 × 60 × 6

Daniel 11.33-5

Those who are wise will give instruction to many. But, for a time, many of these teachers will die by fire and sword, or they will be jailed and robbed. And some who are wise will fall victim to persecutions. In this way, they will be refined, cleansed, and made pure until the time of the end ... for the appointed time is still to come. The overall theme I want to convey through this work is faith in adversity. The assemblage draws attention to the lives of four women who were working among the poor in El Salvador. Today we frequently hear in the news about martyrs and martyrdom. On 2 December 1980, Jean Donovan, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke and Dorothy Kazel were beaten, raped, and murdered by members of that country's army. They, like Daniel, lived out their faith in hostile and difficult territory, despite knowing that they risked their lives by doing so. But unlike Daniel and his friends, they did not survive the ordeal. Daniel interpreted visions and dreams that were full of symbols. The function of symbols is to point beyond themselves to that which can never be adequately expressed in words. In this work, I have used a window to symbolise these women and their martyrdom, as well as a boundary or threshold between what we know and the mysteries of the unknown.

Jennifer Smith

Cry Out (2008)

mixed medium

170 × 75

Micah 6.8

This passage enshrines one of the key tenets of my Christian faith. It led me to look at the passages in Exodus (Chapter 3, in particular) relating to the Israelites time as slaves in Egypt. Slavery, both then and now (in different and more covert forms) dehumanises both the subjugated and the subjugators. The powerful may seem to have the upper hand, but God is on the side of the poor and the weak. No situation is too dire, for he hears the cry of the oppressed: the powerful will eventually fall; the slaves will be free. I have also been exploring how time and experience weather and mould landscapes, objects, and people. In *Cry Out*, my interests in the biblical text and in natural surfaces are cemented together. Old walls will eventually fall into disuse and disrepair. In time, the original builders will be no longer remembered, along with the original cost in human terms. (They will be forgotten by man, but not by God.)

Catrin Webster

The Morning Service, Palm Sunday, BBC Radio, Long Wave (2008)

Ink on paper

3 pieces, each 8.5 × 12.5

In this work, I am interested in translating text and music into a visual language.

The drawings are an abstract visualization made in response the succession of sounds broadcast on the radio.

Christopher P Webster

The Fall of Ouroborindra (2008)

mixed-media collage

37.5 × 34.5

Joel 2.31

As is my custom when making images, I began by experimenting with materials and with a vague idea of evoking the numinous presence of the unrepresentable. Originally, I had in mind Ezekiel chapter 1, verse 4: 'And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north'. But as the fragments were assembled, the mood became increasingly apocalyptic: the black sun was placed in the right hand corner, the moon turned blood red. Then, by chance, I came across an entirely different passage in Joel that referred directly to a black sun and red moon. It seemed that I had been referring to this passage unconsciously all along: 'The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come'.