

				24		26				Y	25		D		
	20	21	22		24	25	26			Z		3	4	3	
18	19	20	21	U			25	26		A	B	C	D	4	
R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	4	F	
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
19	U	21	22	23	24	25	26	1	2	D	4	5	6		
	V	22	23	24	Y	Z	A		D	E	5	6	7	G	
V	W	23	24	25	Z				D	E	F	6	7	8	H

THE PICTORIAL BIBLE II

Seal Up the Vision and Prophecy

John Harvey

THE PICTORIAL BIBLE II
Seal Up the Vision and Prophecy

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Note

Dimensions are in centimetres, height × width × depth.

The county names given in this publication are those of the pre-1974 counties, by which they were known during the historical period to which some of the material refers.

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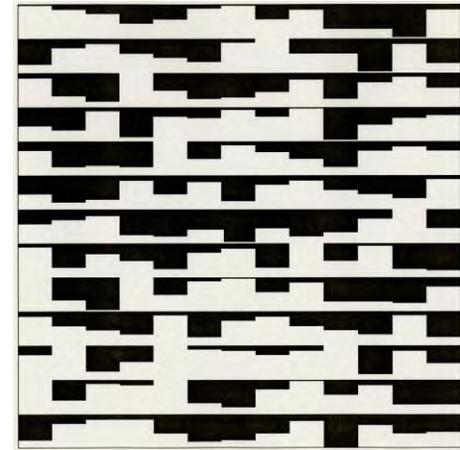


Introduction: *The Pictorial Bible Series*

The Pictorial Bible series explores ways in which biblical texts can be visualized without recourse to figuration or illustration, within a non-iconic framework of religious art. The series represents a coming together of two faculties (believing and seeing); two cultures (the Bible and visuality); and two disciplines (Biblical Studies and Art Practice). Within the network of these interactions, the works are concerned with visualizing biblical texts with reference to a tradition espoused by Judaism and the Protestant Reformed Church that is predicated upon the illegitimacy of pictorializing spiritual concepts and scriptural stories and events.¹ For example, in the seventeenth century, the Protestant Reformers adopted the New Testament's emphasis on the primacy of textual revelation and developed a tradition of text-based decoration and images wherein typographical representations of biblical verses and phrases substitute for religious imagery.

The concept of an image that is at the same time word reflects the convergence of the textual, verbal, and visual in metaphor and experience in the Old Testament, and in the incarnational theology of the New Testament (John 1: 1). The text-based images comprising *The Pictorial Bible* series are a self-conscious and deliberate endeavour to contrive a non-representational religious art form that connects with other expressions of Judaeo-Christian and Protestant cultures (such as literature and music), and with specific developments in Modernism, namely abstraction, systems art, and conceptual art.

The works in the first project in the series, *Settings of the Psalms*, translate Scripture into picture by bringing together the elements of word and image as an undifferentiated whole (1). The biblical texts determine the process and structure of the pictorial composition. Composition takes place within the framework of a grid, which serves as a shape or container into which the letters that make up the Psalm are inserted. The system for translating the Psalms into images



1

Psalm 134: 'Sanctuary' I

1999

oil on board

Authorized King James Version

involves eliminating all the punctuation and spaces between the words to create a continuous letter-strand, and assigning to each letter of the alphabet a tonal, colour, or linear value (2).

The artworks convert time-based disclosure and assimilation (writing and reading) into a percept that can be experienced in a moment. In this sense, the works are no different from figurative illustrations of biblical texts. However, whereas figurative pictorializations of the Bible tend to portray biblical persons, things, events, or stories, the works in the series tend to deal with abstract subjects such as biblical ideas, concepts, motifs, metaphors, processes, structures, and culture. The source texts are never or rarely illustrated by figurative art because to all intents and purposes they cannot be illustrated. In this way the abstract character of the artworks is appropriate to the nature of the subject.

Seal Up the Vision and Prophecy' (Daniel 9: 24)

The second project in the series is based upon writings by visionary prophets from the Old and New Testaments. The prophetic books, especially Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, are intensely visual (3). However, this is not the reason I chose to adapt texts from the prophetic books. Indeed, I have studiously avoided engaging with texts that describe highly visual and often visualized material. There seems little justification for ploughing the same furrow when the vast majority of prophetic texts remain unconsidered from a visual point of view.

Vision and prophecy are often synonymous in the Christian Bible. One of the Hebrew words for prophecy (*chazah*) means 'to see in vision' (Isaiah 30: 10). Visions could be either internal, appearing as 'visions of thy head' (Hebrew *chezev*) (Dan. 2: 28) or as perceptible apparitions (Hebrew *marah*; Greek *optasia*) (Ezek. 8: 4; Luke 1: 22). Visions were thus not only a medium of disclosure and reception (the conduit of communication between the divine and the human) but also a message – in the form of teaching, admonition, warning, and foretelling.

B	E	H	O	L	D	B	L	E	S	S	Y	E
T	H	E	L	O	R	D	A	L	L	Y	E	S
E	R	V	A	N	T	S	O	F	T	H	E	L
O	R	D	W	H	I	C	H	B	Y	N	I	G
H	T	S	T	A	N	D	I	N	T	H	E	H
O	U	S	E	O	F	T	H	E	L	O	R	D
L	I	F	T	U	P	Y	O	U	R	H	A	N
D	S	I	N	T	H	E	S	A	N	C	T	U
A	R	Y	A	N	D	B	L	E	S	S	T	H
E	L	O	R	D	T	H	E	L	O	R	D	T
H	A	T	M	A	D	E	H	E	A	V	E	N
A	N	D	E	A	R	T	H	B	L	E	S	S
T	H	E	E	O	U	T	O	F	Z	I	O	N

2

Diagram

Psalm 134 (grid & letter-fill)

1999

Authorized King James Version

God's command to Daniel to 'seal up the vision and prophecy' has been interpreted as an instruction to the prophet to make the impression of a seal upon the writing so as to accredit it, or to seal it up (its function finished) so as to signify redundancy.² In the context of the project, the concept is understood metaphorically as the act of enclosing, binding up, and securing together vision and prophecy, the visual and the textual, so that we may, in the words of the writer of Proverbs, 'perceive the word' (Prov. 1: 2).

The artworks continue to explore the potential for biblical texts to yield procedural systems and structures as a basis for visual images. They engage further the delimitations and determinations of the source, deploy alphabetic and numerical sequences, codified letter-strands, architectonic proportions and shapes, recurrent patterns, exegetical processes, cross-referencing, and typographical abstractions. At the same time, the works (once again) address the historical and cultural background of Old and New Testaments, and Protestant Reformation piety: its literature, music, pedagogy, and devotional practices. The new works fall into four related categories: codified texts; page pictures; inscription images; and codified images.

Codified Texts

These works follow the methodology deployed in *Settings of the Psalms*, in which the lettering in conjunction with a thematic motif of the source text determine the formal properties of the image – its complexity, proportion, shape, colour, surface, and components.³

Page Pictures

In *Settings of the Psalms*, the paintings and prints are informed by a decorative and devotional tradition of the text-based image, wherein typographic forms placed on the interiors of church



3

Gustave Doré
'Ezekiel Prophesying'
steel-plate engraving

Doré Bible Gallery

1891

buildings assumed an almost iconic significance (4). Some of the new works follow suit, but also connect with another, related, tradition of visual imagery that developed in response to the Protestant ban on icons.

Seventeenth-century Protestant artists, while prohibited from making images as mediators of worship in church, depicted biblical stories and persons as an aid to religious instruction in the home. They also portrayed the devotional habits of contemporary believers. In both genres, artists objectified the Bible (either in part or as a whole) by representing a manuscript or an open book contemplated by an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, or a believer from the artist's own time. In the domestic devotional scenes, the pictorialized Bible served as a visual emblem that signified a divinely inspired artefact; the relevance of its message for the present day; the liberation of the Scriptures following the Gutenberg revolution; and their availability in the vernacular.

Artists represented the Bible often at a distance from the picture plane or on a small scale, and with an eye to perceptual realism. Consequently, the text columns are rendered – out of focus, indistinct, and unreadable – as a series of either summary calligraphic marks denoting letters, or broken lines of different lengths corresponding to words (5). The pictorialization of the Bible in this way translated the printed text into a manual inscription in an incomprehensible 'language' (returning the Bible to its pre-Gutenberg condition). The process abstracts the letters, words, and sentences of the text, converting the literary source of spiritual contemplation into an object of visual perception – a formal proposition without verbal sense.

Following this tradition, *No It A///] ...Ever* (based upon the Revelation of St John the Divine) does not interpret the text literally, that is, with the intent of communicating its plain sense fully and legibly (Plate 1). Instead, text and page (together) are distilled, following a specific rationale suggested by the content of the text or ideas derived from the broader culture



4

Relief wall text

'God is Love'

Burnett's Hill (Calvinistic Methodist) Chapel

Martlewy, Pembrokeshire

built 1810

of Protestantism. In this instance, the work applies straightforwardly the synoptic methods used by Dutch painters. Where in Dutch painting the represented Bible pages are one element of the total picture, in the new works they constitute the entirety. The process of abstraction results from a combination of technical and conceptual processes such as enlarging, cropping, and codification, as well as sampling, scanning, and other forms of digital manipulation. Thus the biblical text is presented using today's new technology, just as it was during the fifteenth century through printing.

Inscription Images

Even after the invention of printing, the Bible was reproduced by hand. For example, girls and young women wrought in embroidery verses from texts such as the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments (6). These samplers were made chiefly by women and girls as a means of developing literacy, learning the Scriptures, and applying the lessons to their lives. Protestants commonly learned Scripture, consigning to memory large portions of the Bible by writing them out repeatedly. Writing or inscription was also the agency through which the Scriptures were originally recorded by the prophets, apostles, and evangelists. Consequently, it was, by association, a sacred process; God himself, it is said, inscribed the Ten Commandments on the stone tables with his finger. He commanded the Israelites to write portions of Scripture on doorposts, sticks, and the ground, and to bind the word of God to their fingers and foreheads. Written words were, in this sense, not only the medium of meaning but also a visual sign (variously of covenant, judgement, and protection). The relationship between writing and image is evident in other ways. Visions and dreams received by the prophets and apostles were translated into holy writ following God's express edict: 'write the vision and make it plain upon tables' (Habakkuk 2: 2). The new works compound these various traditions of Scripture writing. Deploying inscription, superscription, and strategies of memorization, the



5

Rembrandt
The Prophetess Anna [detail]
 oil on panel
 1631

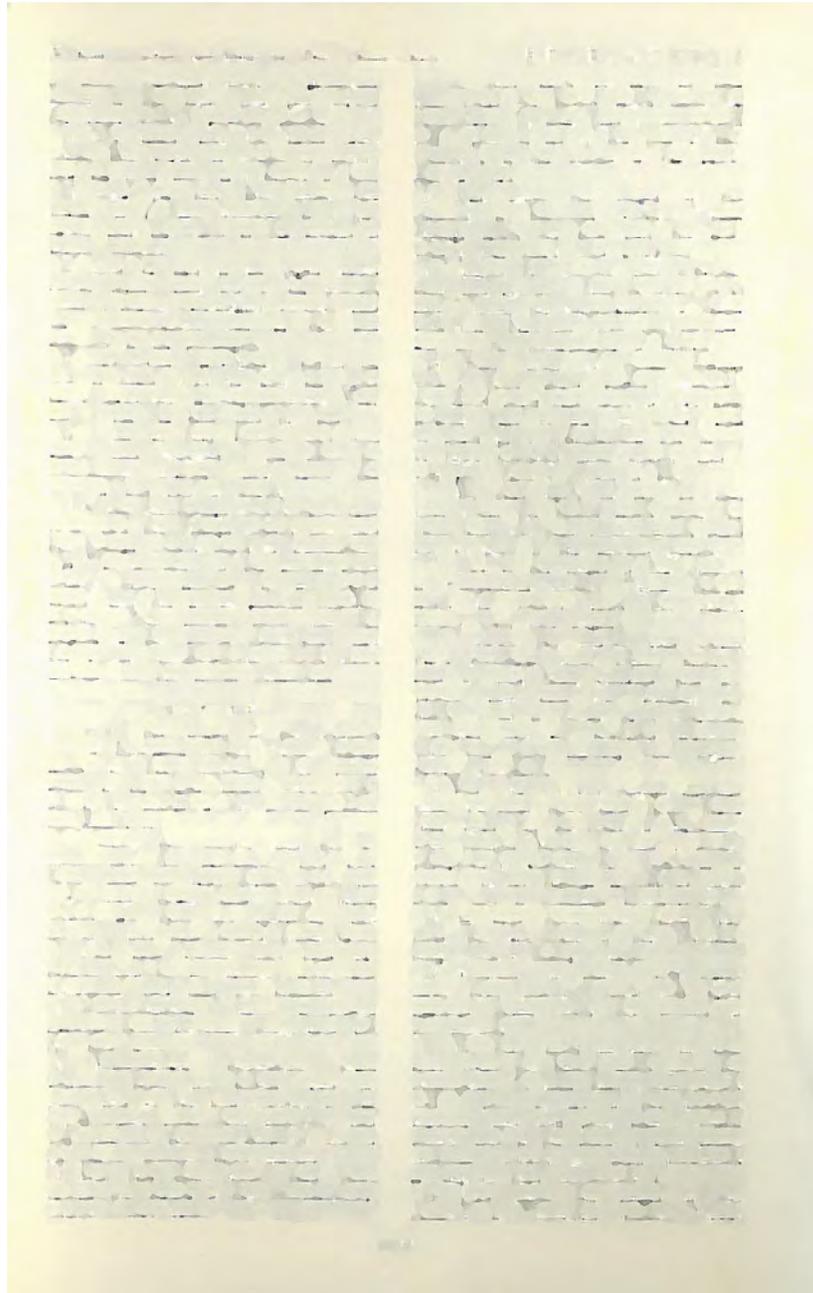


Plate 1

No It Al[l] Ever:1137

2007

gouache and emulsion on paper

40.5 × 25.5

Authorized King James Version

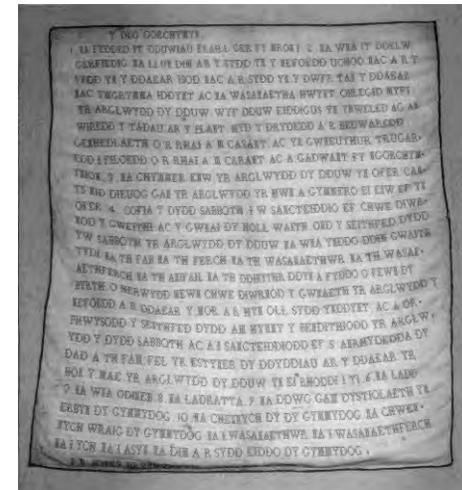
works reunite word-based image-making and spiritual contemplation and return the written description of visions and dreams to the condition of an image.

Codified Images

Several new works adapt the process that informed the writing up of visions and dreams (see above), of converting an image into a text. The visual source is illustrations of significant events and persons from the Old and New Testaments in printed Bibles (29). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these took the form of steel-plate engravings derived from famous religious paintings from the Renaissance to the Victorian period. In the new works, these engravings (illustrating visions of the prophets) are codified as a letter-strand. This in turn serves as the starting point for visual translation, thereby converting the text back into an image, albeit of a very different kind from the original source.

Cultural Equivalence

The collaboration between Biblical Studies and Art Practice, and Art History and Visual Culture, although still in its nascent stage, promises to provide reciprocal insights into the respective fields that have hitherto been lacking. However, the coming together of the two fields is fraught with difficulties. Rarely do artists or art historians possess expertise in biblical scholarship or knowledge of Christian theology and church history. Consequently, when dealing with biblical images, art historians often fail to address either the text as text, or the text as itself an image-laden, culturally and historically specific, and yet constantly adaptable representation. Along with art practitioners, they tend to treat the Bible as little more than a pool of narratives, events, and characters to be illustrated. Similarly, in art-historical studies of biblical art, it is commonplace to discuss an artist's choice and interpretation of subject matter, themes, stories, and iconography,

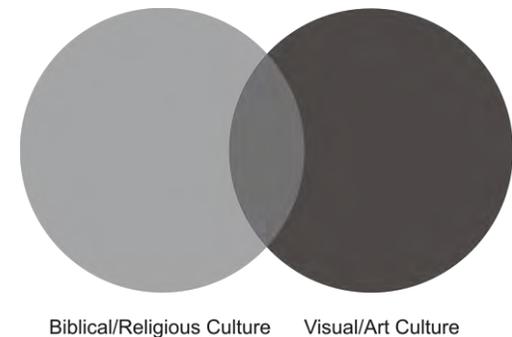


6
Embroidered text
'Y Deg Gorchymyn'
[The Ten Commandments]
19th century, 2nd half
Tre'r ddôl, Wales

and (somewhat less often) to draw attention to the ecclesiastical tradition in which an artist was working. Little consideration is given to convictions about Scripture: whether an artist regarded it as revelation or speculation, unitary or fragmentary, mythology or history, truth or travesty, as authoritative and sacred, or malleable and relative, and whether they approached it with devotion and submission or cool academic detachment. The artist's convictions may affect their intellectual and spiritual attitude to their work, their sense of its significance, and the degree of imaginative interpretation or variance deemed permissible. An understanding of an artist's view of Scripture has, therefore, considerable relevance to a scholarly interpretation of their intent and images.

If art historians are either blind to or unable to deal with the 'biblical' aspect of biblical art, then biblical scholars can be just as deficient in their approach to the 'art' aspect. Understandably, they possess neither the tools for a formal analysis of images, nor the requisite cognizance of the aesthetic principles and practicalities bearing upon image-making. For this reason, academics from both fields need each other and to recognize that artists committed to Christianity belong to two cultures simultaneously – on the one hand a biblical/religious culture, and on the other a visual/art culture – and, moreover, that these cultures must be addressed together in order to engage in an informed study of biblical art.

The terms 'biblical/religious culture' and 'visual/art culture' are defined as follows: 'biblical' refers to the content of belief, while 'religious' refers to the outward expression of belief; 'visual/art' compounds the concepts of visual culture and art culture. The difference and similarity between these two cultures can be illustrated by the adage 'All men are beasts, but not all beasts are men.' Likewise, while all art is visual culture, not all visual culture is art; whereas art (for example, Fine Art) is a special category of creativity, visual culture comprises all artefacts of material culture (that are intended to be apprehended visually). In the diagram,



7
Diagram
Biblical/Religious Culture &
Visual/Art Culture

Biblical/Religious Culture

Protestant
Reformed
Calvinist
Nonconformist
Baptist/Anglican
Evangelical

'Biblical/Religious Culture' and 'Visual/Art Culture' are represented as two circles (7). Together they circumscribe the beliefs, practices, visual sensibilities, and artefacts either of a religious community and tradition in general or of a particular artist belonging to it. The tables itemize the affiliations, commitments, and interests that define the content of my own circles (Tables 1, 2). Table 1 lists my ecclesial and theological affiliations. The descriptors do not denote a specific conviction about Scripture, although they suggest that I hold a high rather than low, a conservative rather than a liberal, view. Table 2 lists the components of my 'visual/art culture'. Viewed as a whole, they are late Modernist, non-representational visual styles (in that they do not seek to depict anything outside themselves). In the case of Conceptualism, the works are images about ideas articulated sometimes through words. Minimalism represents the most ascetic aesthetic, and is characteristically simple, rational, and orderly in form, emphasizing the relationships between the part and the whole. Closely allied to Minimalism is Systems Art, a mode of enquiry that is methodological and systematic in its procedure, and governed by a controlling idea.

Generally speaking, my 'biblical/religious culture' places an emphasis on oral, aural, and textual modes of worship and teaching. The dominant mediums of expressing biblical and religious concepts are preaching, reading, hearing, spoken prayer, and music. Theologically, the culture is Christocentric; upholds biblical authority and inspiration; and stresses the doctrines of atonement, redemption, and conversion, and of missionary activity. Its philosophy of Scripture is systematic, orderly, and rational, and emphasizes a belief in the unity of Scripture in diversity and in the light of a controlling principle, and the relation of its parts to the whole. The shaded area of overlap joining the two circles may represent (among other things) the 'biblical/religious culture's' philosophy of visual culture and art. Until recently, in my own 'religious/biblical' cultural context, images had a low priority; they were considered to be neither essential nor warranted

Table 1

ecclesial and theological affiliations

Visual/Art Culture

Abstraction

Minimalism

Conceptualism

Systems Art

in public and private worship.⁴ Calvinistic Protestants repudiated representations of supernatural entities (following the Reformer John Calvin's (1509–64) interpretation of the Second Commandment (Exod. 20: 4–5)), although there was some recognition of the value of biblical illustration in children's books and religious education. Images also had a low priority in the believer's personal and domestic culture. What visual artefacts there were on the walls of homes tended to be utilitarian (serving as a means of spiritual succour or as an evangelistic tract), to espouse a romantic-naturalist style, to be appended with scriptural texts, or to be prints of works by Protestant artists (8). The culture showed some appreciation of old master works (but not of artists who depicted Roman Catholic themes and doctrine) and a distrust of modern art, which was considered to be often anti-Christian in meaning and intent, and lacking religious utility.

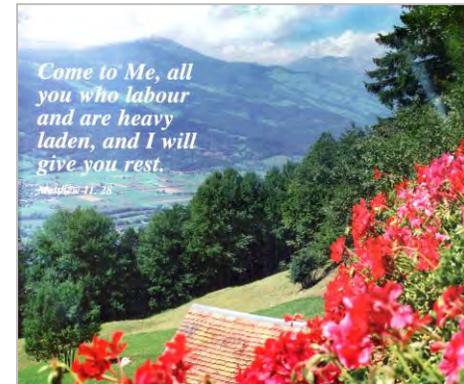
However disdainful or fearful of images a religious community may be, it invariably generates some sort of material and visual culture of its own, and conspicuously so in its places of worship. These places are not culturally neutral but express religious values and ideals. Protestant Nonconformist chapels (for many years the context of my own religious worship), for instance, possess no intrinsic sacredness. In architectural or building design, the early examples tend to be simple, unadorned, spartan, and functional, orientated to (and thereby emphasizing the priority placed upon) preaching, hearing, and singing (9). Their whitewashed interiors anticipate the austere, monochromatic, pared-down austerity of Modernist art and architecture. The recognition of this visual analogy between a theological space and an ideological style provided the catalyst for *The Pictorial Bible* series. Linked by a common bond of idealism, the aspiration to purity, and disdain for superfluities and excrescences of tradition and doctrine, early Nonconformity and late Modernity developed (although with very different objectives and perspectives) a corresponding formal rigour and rational practice (10).

Table 2

visual and art-historical affiliations

These two cultures – ‘biblical/religious’ and ‘visual/art’ – remained independent or unconnected in my thinking until I recognized this and other coincident concerns. The challenge I faced was to build a meaningful synthesis of the two cultures on the basis of their common ground in the form of viable art practice. In realizing the endeavour, my historical research into the visual culture of Nonconformity gave me a sense of past precedent and future direction. Calvinistic Methodism was the dominant expression of Christianity in Wales (where I have lived all my life). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries especially, Wales developed a culture that was strongly orientated to a biblical outlook and values, and predominantly Calvinist in theology. Some have argued that Nonconformity’s Calvinistic view of images was partly responsible for the absence of a strong artistic tradition and visual culture in the country. Inside places of worship, the Calvinistic ban on religious pictures, coupled with a theological emphasis on Scripture, led to the development of a decorative accessory that satisfied both imperatives: the word of God became an image (4).

Texts proclaiming spiritual ideals and the attributes of God, and commending attitudes of devotion, blazed down from above the pulpit. In the home, Nonconformists hung embroideries that showed, for example, the Ten Commandments – a picture of Scripture in a literally literal, rather than figuratively illustrative, sense (11). Only the medium and context of presentation has changed: the text in the printed book has become a stitched wall hanging and a perpetual reminder of the laws of God not unlike the commandment boards (representing either the Ten Commandments or Christ’s Great Commandment (Mark 28: 28–31) set up in Protestant churches (12). In removing the laws of the Decalogue from the printed page and their context in Exodus chapter 20, and by displaying them as an object or visual artefact the text is returned to its original condition as a surface inscription.



8

Calendar illustration

'Come to Me'

offset lithograph

2003

To return to the two circles: in place of my profile, Welsh Nonconformity's Calvinistic sensibility is assigned to the left-hand circle and its anti-iconicism to the right-hand circle. In the section where the circles overlap, I sensed there were opportunities other than those already explored by historic Protestant Nonconformity, of transforming biblical texts into visual images. These opportunities were possible only in the light of developments and movements in art during the past forty years, and by the application of my own personality, ideas, predilections, tastes, and broader cultural interests – the sphere of 'personal culture'. This is represented by a third circle (13). The shaded area now represents the fusion of three cultures. At the interface of this trinity is the domain of perceived new possibilities, creative enterprise, and *The Pictorial Bible* series.



Formal Equivalence

In biblical scholarship there are two approaches to translation: dynamic equivalence (or functional equivalence) and formal equivalence. The former endeavours to discern the thought or sense of the original text and thereby to subordinate strict adherence or literal faithfulness to the objectives of comprehensibility and readability, and (where possible) to provide an unambiguous interpretation. Formal equivalence is a methodology that seeks to maintain the linguistic forms (including word order, idioms, rhetorical patterns, diction, ambiguities, denotative and connotative meanings, associative meanings, and nuances) of the source text as far as possible, irrespective of whether the original meaning is maintained. In short, it is an attempt to translate the text word for word (or literally).

The works in *The Pictorial Bible* series result from a form of Bible translation where the source language is textual and the target language visual. The codified text-based images deploy a form of formal equivalence that (in keeping with its usage in Biblical Studies) similarly focuses on retaining the form of the source language in the translation, regardless of whether

9

Interior
Capel Pen-Rhiw (Unitarian)
St. Fagans, Glamorgan
converted 1777

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In terms of the relationship between text and image the concepts of equivalence and translation are, however, something of a misnomer. The languages of the verbal and visual are too different for there to be a formal correspondence. For while interlingual (possessing a relation between two languages), they are also intersemiotic (involving two sign systems). The discontinuity between the two sign systems implies that the process of conversion from one to the other (with all the implications of a change of nature, form, and function) is more in the nature of a transformation than a translation.

The text (and, in some cases, the ways in which one text connects to other texts) is the point of embarkation for the image, the foundation and site of ideation, the object and subject of rumination and interpretation. The image draws upon and works with the text's implicit or explicit visuality, seeking to elucidate the source not in the manner of commentary or exposition (so as



10

Hymn board

c.1968

Nikolaikirche

Leipzig, Germany

refurbished 1997

to explain its meaning) but in order to illuminate or reveal and heighten aspects of the text's patterns, rhythms, architecture, allusiveness, and intertextuality. The artwork may visualize a significance that is either embedded within or mutely implied by the text; bring to the fore a minor aspect of, or a single motif described in, the text; and invoke other texts and contexts (biblical, religious, and art-cultural). As such, while the artwork is founded on the text using a method analogous to formal equivalence, the artwork discourses on the text in a manner that is associative, selective, and dynamic, where force of meaning prevails over force of words.

Text and image are in mutual reciprocity: the source text informs the formation of the image, while the image informs the reader's awareness of the text. Image (output) feeds back to text (input) modifying the percipient's/respondent's reading. The image draws attention to, for example, the dominant theme and aspects of the source that may be overlooked in the course of a scholarly, clerical, or devotional engagement with the text. In this sense the artworks seek to serve the source. Thus, while they adopt the formal language of Modernism they do not espouse the Modernist notion of the autonomy of the art object. Rather, the visual image achieves a sufficient and relative measure of independence of the verbal source (through the discontinuity between the two sign systems). Constraint and freedom are thereby held in tension.

The criteria for judging the artworks address not only the process but also the product. Pictorial integrity and resolution is paramount. Ultimately the pictures must transcend their status as coded text and take on an aesthetic life of their own. The artworks' origin (in text) and procedural systems may always have been on the periphery of the percipient's experience. However, the focus of attention is designedly the artwork *as artwork*. It provides a direct experience of a visual statement and, through it (or thereafter), an ancillary and indirect encounter with the textual. The verbal is suppressed by the visual: the pictures escape their texts. The artworks are music in the absence of lyric or 'songs without words'.



11

'Moses'

steel-plate engraving

Y Bibl Cyssegr-Lan

[1873]

Musical Equivalence

In *Pictorial Bible I: Settings of the Psalms*, the process of submitting Scripture to a numerical base or measure was compared to the adaptation of Psalm texts in metrical psalms. In metrical psalms, the verses of the Bible (which have no metre in English) are translated (or rewritten) to accommodate a regular scansion of pattern and rhymes: accuracy of translation is relinquished in favour of poetry and musicality (a translation analogous to dynamic equivalence). Non-metrical psalms and canticles (from the Latin *continuum*, 'little song', and similar to sung settings of Psalms but set from other books in the Bible) preserve the integrity of the verses. The music is subordinated to the text; the tune has no time signature or bar lines, so as to accommodate the length and number of words (14). (Different texts are often set to the same tune.) On the one hand, the artworks, like metrical psalms, reshape the text by the imposition of a grid wherein the metre is the number of squares in the row or column. On the other hand, like non-metrical hymns, the works preserve the integrity of the source.

Similarly, in plainsong (a sung monophony used prior to the ascendancy of polyphony in the thirteenth century) the music is an unmeasured line (or without strict metre).⁵ Plainsong is unharmonized, unadorned, and solemn, but not without an ethereal beauty. The visual character of the artworks is likewise singular (comprising only one active element in the binary of tones), spare and austere (qualities that produce a neutral mood and formal tenor), without rhythm (in the sense of a regular pattern), and begin and end with the text. Plainsong notation differs from the modern system in having only four lines and three spaces to the staff and a system of note shapes called neumes – the basic elements of Western and Eastern systems of musical notation. By the thirteenth century, neumes (for example, as in manuscripts of Gregorian chant) were usually written in square notation (15). The structure of letter-to-visual-value conversion deployed in some of my artworks involve the equivalent of a staff that sometimes comprises as



12

Law boards

1891

great commandment & creed

Wesley's Chapel, London

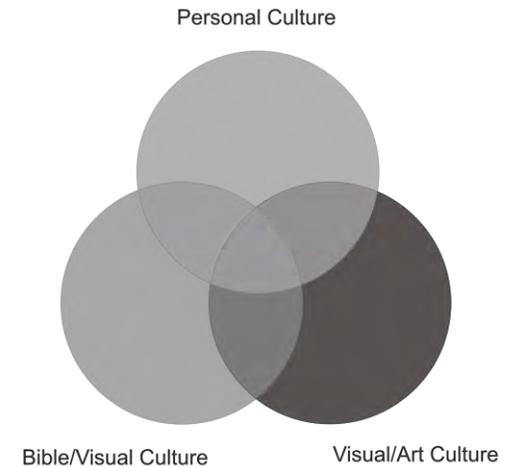
built 1778

many spaces as there are letters in a particular alphabet. Interestingly, the principle of codification used in the artworks has a musical analogy. In his five textbooks on music theory, the Christian philosopher Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (*c.* AD 480–525) applied the first fifteen letters of the Roman alphabet to the musical notes in use at the end of the Roman period. The visual value, like the neume, is (often) geometrical and an abstract substitution for, or representation of, another form (in this case, a letter rather than a note). However, whereas musical notation is a system of writing music for the purpose of recording, reading, and replaying music (a means to an end rather than an end in itself) the artworks are simultaneously the manuscript and the music. In this respect, the subdivisions of each unit of the grid may be regarded as both stave and mode, that is (as in music) an ordered series of intervals assigned (following Boethius' scheme) to the letters of an alphabet.

Prophetic Equivalence

The Bible contains numerical patterns, correspondences, and continuities that are spiritual and significant. For example, the number seven (Hebrew *sheh'-bah* – a root word meaning to be full, total, or complete, which therefore symbolizes perfection) enumerates events, periods, persons, objects, and things throughout Old and New Testaments from the days of the Creation in Genesis to the fifty-four references in the Revelation.⁶ Numbers are used singly and in multiples, for example, halved or in conjunction with other numbers to make a composite (for example, $105 = 15 \times 7$).

Recently, there has been a revival of interest in biblical numerics, or theomatics, a (fiercely disputed) numerological study of the Hebrew and Greek text of the Christian Bible founded in the ancient practice of the Hebrew practice of *gematria* (the comparison and elucidation of words and phrases based on numeric values of Hebrew, in which letters also



13

Diagram

Biblical/Religious Culture,
Visual/Art Culture &
Personal Culture

stand for numbers), and the Greek *isopsephy* (the practice of adding up the number values of the letters in a word to form a single number).⁷ Theomatics is based upon the belief that God had assigned to the Bible numerical values with theological consequence. Indeed, it is claimed, everything in the Bible was composed upon a mathematical sub-stratum or numerical code that determines each letter and, by aggregation, each word and verse and thus the grammar and syntax of the literary text, in order to convey (an often predictive) revelation.

A less contentious and more self-evident equation of numerical relationships may be seen not in the relation between numbers and letters but between numbers and numbers. The principle of numerical equivalence is exemplified in the conditions of Ezekiel's punishment, in which the number of days of his incarceration was equal to the years of Jerusalem's punishment. Elsewhere in the prophecy, numbers demonstrate an equivalence and economy based on a single integer. For example, the description of the geometry and ratio of the restored Temple of Jerusalem and Ezekiel's visionary temple is based upon the number twenty-five (represented either as itself, doubled, or as one of its multiples): the vision of the temple came to the prophet in the twenty-fifth year of Israel's captivity (40: 1); the temple's length was 50 cubits and its breadth 25 cubits (40: 2); the dimensions of the adjoining chambers and the 'arches round about'; were likewise (40: 25, 29–36); the size of the temple's porch was 5 × 5 cubits; while the area and city of Jerusalem itself would be 25,000 × 25,000 cubits (48: 20).

Very large numbers, such as the 144,000, do not denote an actual sum but are symbolic of the total and extensive sum (in this case of the redeemed (Rev. 7: 14; 41: 1)). The number is a permutation and intensification of the number twelve (12,000 × 12,000), symbolizing the twelve apostles (Revelation 21: 9–27), which number is doubled to denote the number of elders that surround the throne of God (Rev. 4: 4). Elsewhere, large numbers are figured metaphorically: 'They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head'



14

Graduale Aboens

hymn book

Turku, Finland

14th–15th centuries

(Ps. 69: 4). (God’s ability to assign a finite number to the hairs on a head spoke of his infinite care of those who trusted in him: ‘even the very hairs of your head are all numbered’ (Luke 12: 7).)

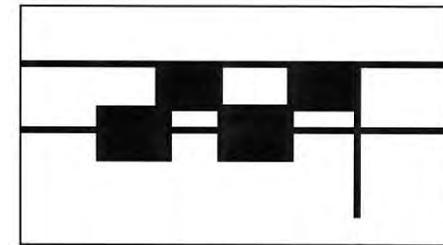
The artworks do not hold to or engage theories about numerological encoding of the Bible. I use the numbers in Scripture to serve as of source of units, ratios, proportions, and measures that determine the structure of the artworks and to provide an aesthetic of equivalence (a biblical style) that is rational, simple, consistent, and connected.

Exhibition and Dissemination

The works in the project are made for traditional art contexts such as the gallery and museum, as well as for academic venues, temporary installation in churches, and the Internet. The aim is to provide opportunities to see and discuss the work for people who are coming to art through an interest in the Bible, as well as those who are coming to the Bible through an interest in art and those who have a scholarly concern for uniting the two. In view of the source subject of the works, the project seeks to explore the relationship between the artworks and the architectural contexts of religious worship and (through the agency of web-based artwork) to make imagery available perpetually, generally, and freely.

Philadelphia

The aim was to produce a basic pictorial statement: a one-word work of very few letters – the simplest expression of the series’ conceptual strategy.⁸ In the Anglican and Protestant Nonconformist tradition of text-based decoration, ‘God is Love’ (1 John 4: 8, 16) is the shortest biblical quotation chosen for illumination (4). The phrase conjoins the two smallest and most potent theological words from the Christian lexicon in English. The word ‘love’ was preferred for



15

Diagram

Gregorian notation (square neumes)

two reasons: first, representing 'God' as an image (albeit non-figuratively) compromised the series' anti-iconicness. Secondly, since 'God is love', the former is (in terms of a strictly verbal proposition) synonymous with, or subsumed into, the latter.⁹ In this way, 'love' represents (stands for, as a proxy) 'God' too.

In art culture, 'love' already has an iconic (in the sense of symbolic and widely recognized) status, derived from the Pop artist Robert Indiana's (*b.* 1928) works bearing that title. While *LOVE* has been associated with the peaceable aspirations and spirit of the hippy generation, its original connotations were religious. First designed for a Christmas card commissioned by the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1964, the image was subsequently included in a series of postage stamps for the United States Postal Service, and realized sculpturally in museum and public artworks on display in, for example, Love Park, JFK Plaza, Philadelphia, where it has become the signature artwork for the city (16).¹⁰ Philadelphia was founded by the Quaker William Penn (1644–1718) in 1682 as a 'holy experiment' in social utopianism. The city derives its name from the ancient city of Philadelphia (Greek, 'brotherly love'), referred to in the Revelation: Philadelphia was one of the seven churches in Asia Minor to which Christ addressed letters of rebuke or encouragement (Rev. 1: 11; 3: 7–13).

Indiana's visual interpretation of the word 'love' involves a 2 × 2 letter-stack contained by an orthogonal shape (analogous to the series' procedure of running on letters within a grid). In this way, the word is broken (and our reading dislocated); the 'O' is tilted, suggesting an informal or imperfect poise, and the red serif letter forms are arranged without leading or space between letters and lines so that they touch one another and form a whole. In the two-dimensional renderings of *LOVE*, the negative spaces interlocking and surrounding the letter forms, coloured blue and green, create distinctions between foreground and background, make the relationship between solid object and space ambiguous, and further abstract the familiar. The work also



16

Robert Indiana

LOVE

polychromed aluminium

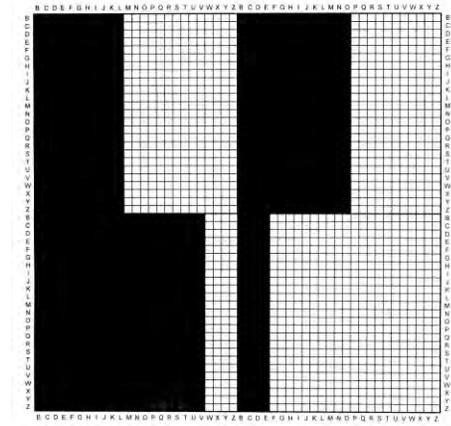
Philadelphia

1976

enters a playful and parodic engagement with contemporaneous, hard-edged abstract painting. (In the sculptural versions of *LOVE*, the negative colours are assigned to the third dimension.)

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. Thus, 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 ink on parchment or paper (a reference to the materials of letter writing), while the planar and hard-edged character of the infill and ground suggests an architectonic structure; Christ's letter to 'the angel of the church in Philadelphia' promises those he finds faithful at his *parousia* that he will make them a pillar in the temple of God and write upon them the name of the city of God (the new Jerusalem) (Rev. 3: 12). This city (like *Philadelphia*) has equal length and breadth (Rev. 21: 16).

The components and dimensions of the 'holy city' are based on multiples of 12 (the number of the tribes of Israel): the city has twelve foundations garnished with twelve types of precious stone; each of the four walls has three gates; the measure of the city is 12,000 furlongs, and the measure of the wall 144 cubits (Rev. 21: 12–21).¹¹ The dimensions of *Philadelphia* are also based upon the principle of numerical economy. Here, the governing integer is 50, the sum of the numerical values of the letters L, O, V, and E in a system where A = 1 and Z = 26. The height and width of the painting of the painting are both 50 cm, and the depth 5 cm. The number of sections in each square of the grid is 25 (17). The compositional symmetry provides an apt metaphor for the correspondence of two as one in balanced proportion, harmony, and agreement that is the essence of human love (Plate 2).



17

Diagram

grid & letter fill for L, O, V, E

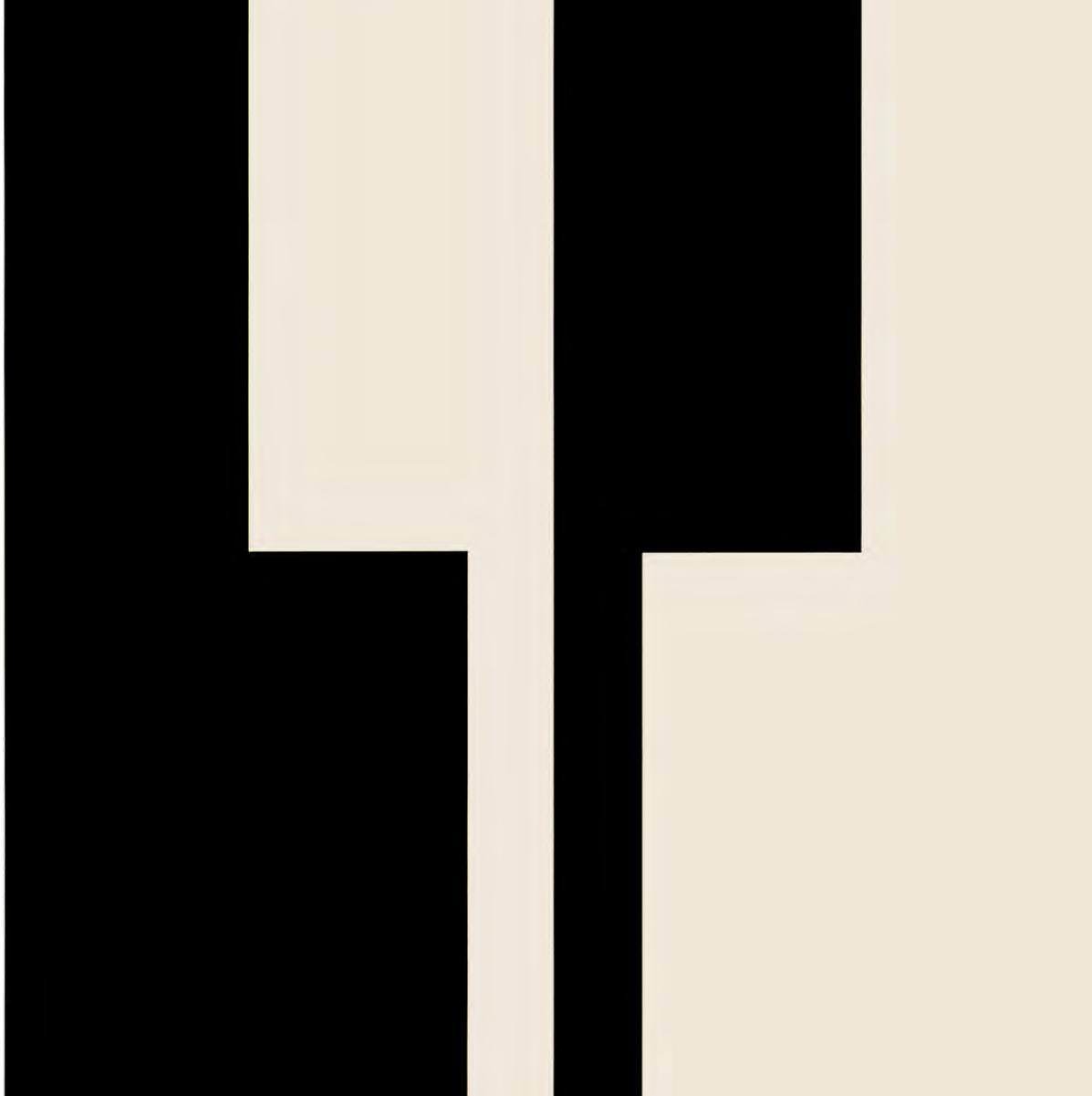
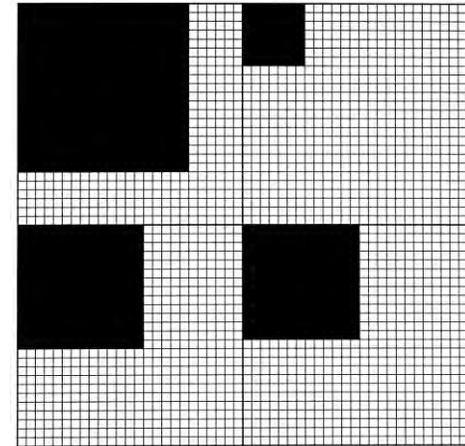


Plate 2
Philadelphia
2006-7
oil on board
50 × 50 × 5

Foundation Piece

Foundation Piece is based upon 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.¹² 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.¹³ This account of the act of drawing is unique in the Bible, and the first biblical reference to mapping.¹⁴ 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 since 597 BC.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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 21.¹⁷ 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 (18). Each square is subdivided by coordinates from 0 to 25, that is, twenty-six positions corresponding to the



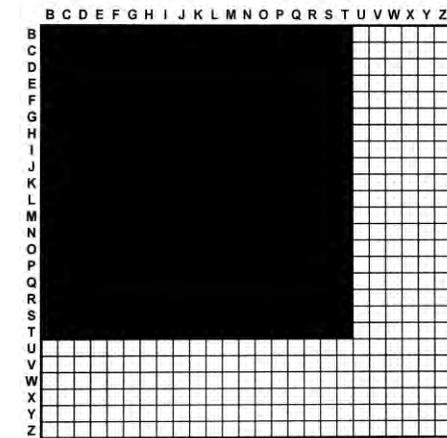
18

Diagram
grid & letter fill for T, H, N, O

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 (19). 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 (20). 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' (21).¹⁸

The realization of Ezekiel's drawing as a painting was inspired by Calvin's gloss on God's commission: 'he orders his prophet to paint Jerusalem on a tile'.¹⁹ In the Authorized Version 'pourtray' translates the Hebrew word *chaqaq* (to grave or incise). However, the same word occurs later on in the prophecy, on the occasion when the whore Aholibah 'saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermillion' (Ezek. 23: 14). The reference to colour suggests that the male figures were painted rather than cut, and that *chaqaq* was therefore an imprecise term that could be used generically to describe either intaglio or planar modes of imaging. Hebrew did not lack words for 'paint', 'to paint', or 'painting'. In the Bible the terms are used with reference to the decoration either of the face or of a domestic interior to denote the non-figurative application of paint – the act of smearing or covering a surface – rather than an act of representation, as suggested by the term *chaqaq* (Ezek. 23: 40; 2 Kings 9: 30; Jer. 4: 30; 22: 14).

Painting, in the context of *Foundation Piece* and other works in *The Pictorial Bible* series, reconciles the process of layering a plane and the intent to represent – the decorative and figurative (in its literary sense) – as a single signification. Vermilion, or more properly red ochre (Hebrew *saser*), was used for painting on walls and wood (see Jer. 22: 14) and had strongly



19

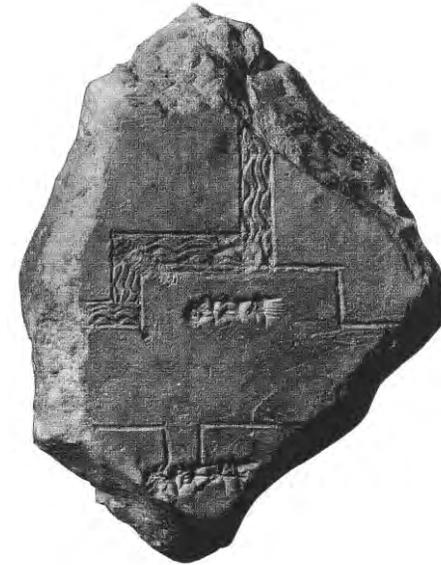
Diagram
grid & letter-fill for T

negative associations such as infatuation and idolatry. Red ochre provides the overlay colour of the first version of *Foundation Piece*, evoking both the earthiness of a clay tablet and several of the thematic underpinnings of Ezekiel's prophecy: the wickedness of the nation, laying bare the iniquity of the people, fall, and judgement. The white base colour refers to the whitewash ('untempered mortar') daubed walls, referred to in Ezekiel 13: 10–11.²⁰ In the second version of the piece, black is likewise a denotative and connotative colour, here indicative of one of the physical characteristics of asphalt and signifying sin, lamentation, mourning, and woe (following the symbolic meaning of black in the Bible) (Plate 3).

One Jot or One Tittle

After Johannes Gutenberg (1400–1468) printed the Bible on the first movable metal-type press at Mainz in 1456, the Scriptures could be reproduced and disseminated in numbers and at speeds unprecedented in the earlier tradition of the scriptorium. Today, copies of the same Bible are virtually printed on the Internet, providing an ease and breadth of access and a degree of replication that would have been unimaginable even for Gutenberg. The artwork entitled *One Jot or One Tittle* contributes to the tradition of allying the ancient and modern, text and technology. It is designed to be seen and engaged in the form of a website, and to visualize Christ's pronouncement 'For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled' (Matt. 5: 18). The aim is to literalize the hyperbole by rendering (visually) every jot and tittle in the Old Testament (to which Christ refers) in order to objectify and make significant (to make both important and as a sign) the tiniest and very least part of Scripture, in keeping with the spirit of the pronouncement.

'Jot' is a transliteration of the Greek word *iota*. 'Tittle' has been variously interpreted: it is the Hebrew letter (*waw*) or the small stroke that distinguishes several pairs of Hebrew letters, or



20

Fragment of clay tablet with drawing of a plan of the town of Nippur

c. 1500 BC

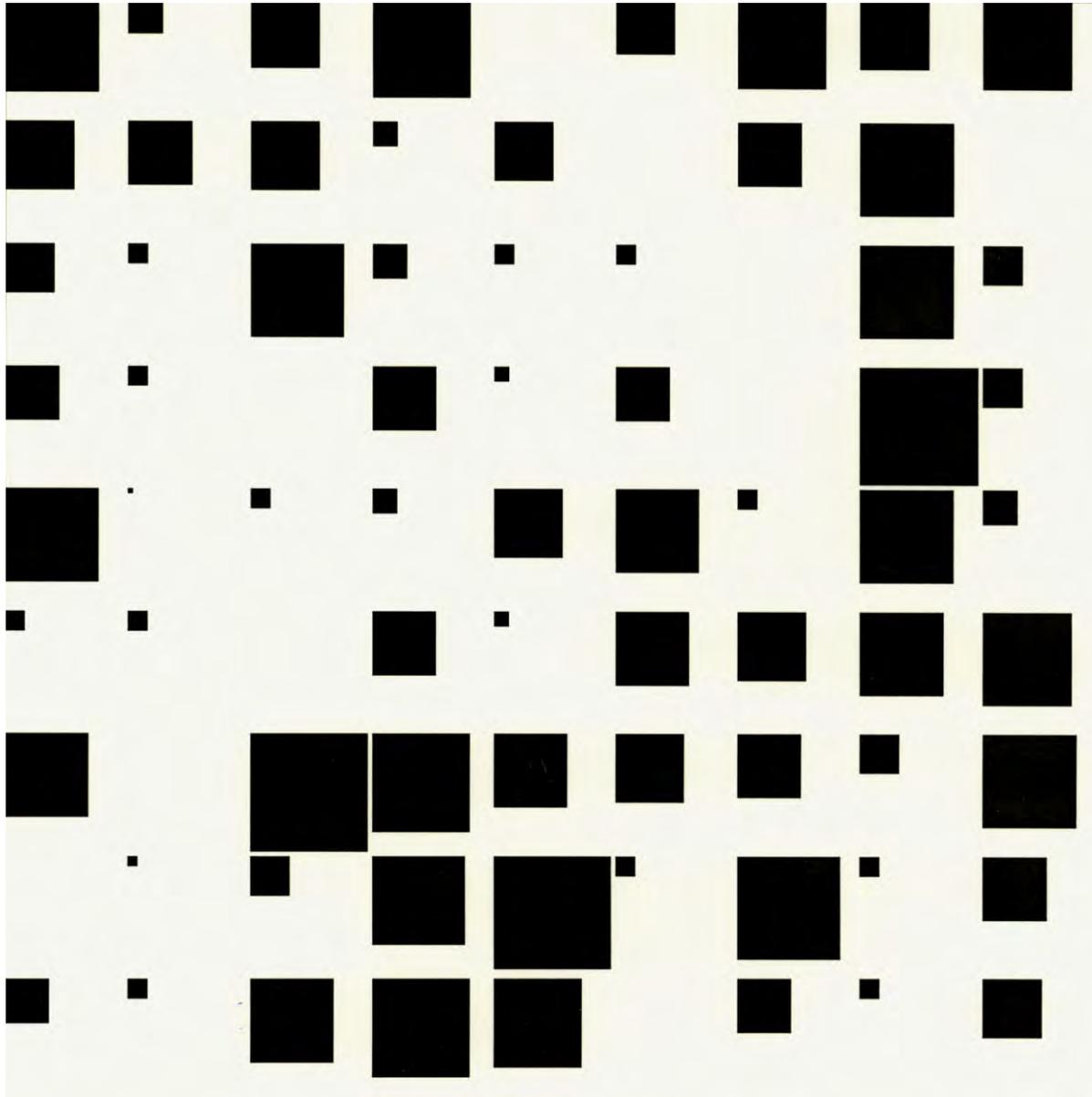


Plate 3

Foundation Piece II (Ezekiel 4: 1)

2002–7

oil on board

45 × 45 × 2.5

Authorized King James Version

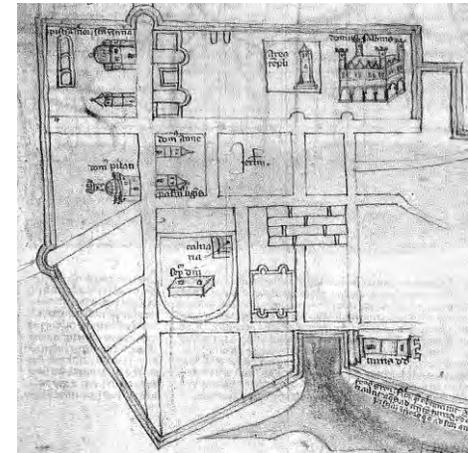
the purely ornamental stroke, a 'crown'; or it forms a hendiadys with 'jot', referring to the smallest letter and of having the smallest part of the smallest letter. The source text for the work is an English translation of the Bible (22).

The process of rendering the artwork is as follows. Beginning at the Book of Genesis chapter 1, each page of the Old Testament is scanned and converted into an image file. The image at this juncture is a photographic facsimile. As such it retains the fonts, margins, format, and proportion of the original, although on a smaller scale. Thereafter, every number, punctuation mark, ornament, and letter on the page (with the exception of the letter *l*) is erased digitally. The resultant image comprises a white expanse of empty paper peppered with *ś*, occupying the positions they did in the original words (23–24). The prepared page is published on a website dedicated to the project. Subsequent pages of the Scriptures are prepared in the same way, and superimposed, one on top of another, as a succession of virtual transparencies.

The artwork is thus a cumulative development. As it progresses, page upon page, more and more *ś* accrue. By the final chapter of Malachi, and after over 900 overlays, the digital page will comprise an aggregate of letters, forming a densely packed black rectangle interspersed with flecks of white (like stars in the heavens), evoking the cosmos referred to in the source text. Visitors to the website will be able to see the cumulative result of addition, view a specific page in the compilation, or play the whole sequence to date in the form of a transitional animation (Plate 4).

X

When the Old Testament Israelites possessed only an oral culture, remembering was essential not only to obedience but also in maintaining the transmission of values and beliefs from one generation to another. With the development of the sacred text, writing and reading



21

Pietro Vesconte
'Map of Jerusalem'
c.1320

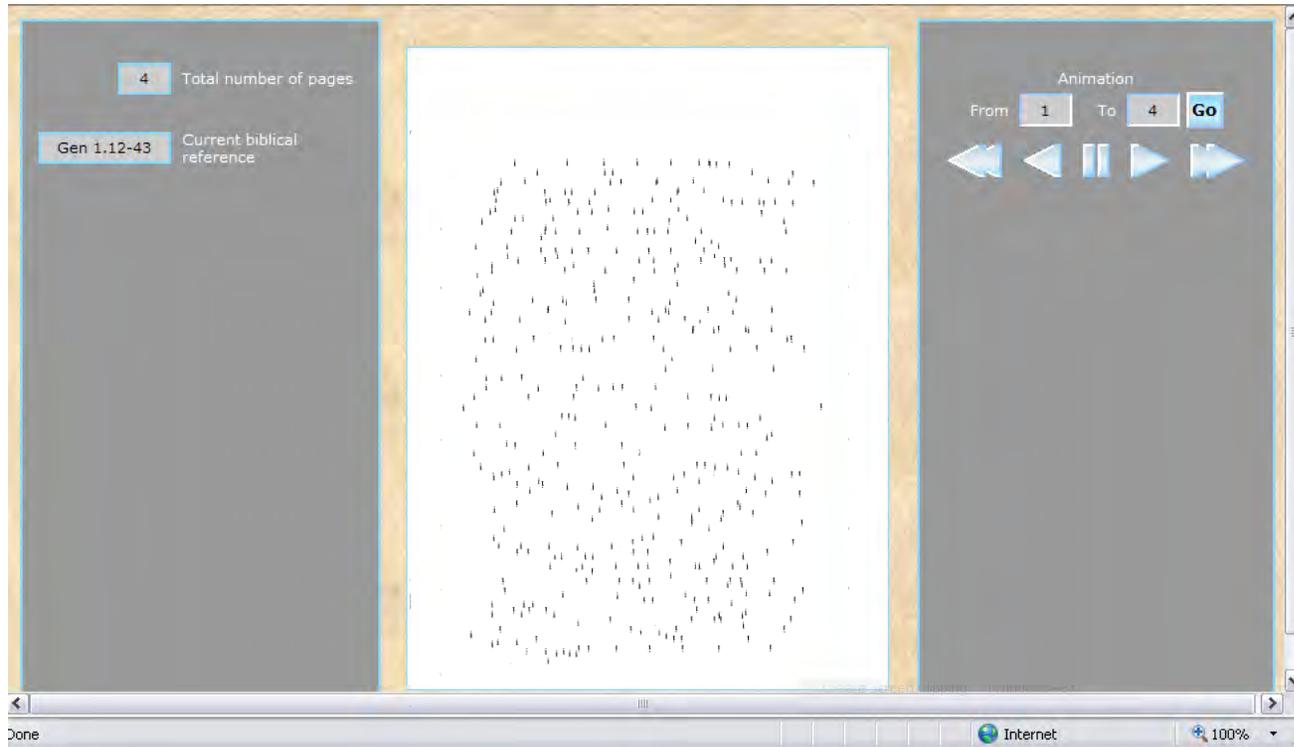


Plate 4

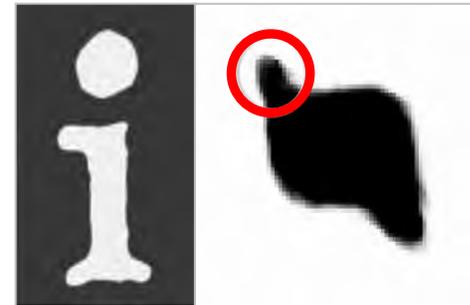
'One Jot or One Tittle'

begun 2006

web-based, interactive digital image

supplemented the acts of speaking and listening in the construction of memory. Inscription gave God's laws and precepts a visible and varied form. Scribes committed the Scripture to papyrus, leather scrolls, and potsherds using ink, and incised it upon precious stones, clay tiles, copper scrolls, and tables or tablets of stone. The use of durable material for supports gave the Word a symbolic permanence, and underlined some of Scripture's principal functions: to serve as an enduring memorial and testimony to the character of God and his people (Exod. 14: 17). The pre-eminent example is the two stone tables upon which God inscribed with his finger the Ten Commandments (which would impart to writing a sacred ethos by association). The tables were a perpetual and perceptual contract reminding both God and the Israelites of their covenant. Cutting and engraving made the words physically resilient, and by analogy implied their spiritual perpetuity. The technique also intimately united the word and the support. This too expressed a theological parallel: God's self-identification with, and determination not to forget, his people in terms of incision, declaring (anthropomorphically) that he had graven them on the palms of his hands as the unremovable reminder of his commitment (Isa. 49: 16).

Traditionally, the Commandments have been included in the decorative scheme of many Anglican and Roman Catholic churches and Nonconformist chapels in the form of a pair of law boards or tables of commandments hung upon the wall, usually above the large table, altar, or pulpit (12). The artwork consists of two parts (each a square) either closely situated adjacent or joined to each other. However, the image is not based on the text of the Decalogue, but on a verse enjoining the people of God to remember the Law of Moses (Mal. 4: 4). In order to help fulfil their obligation, God commanded the Israelites to 'make fringes in the borders of their garment ... that [they] look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them' (Num. 15: 38–40). The fringe served as a visual, abstract mnemonic of the textual, covenantal proposition. The artwork follows in the spirit and function of this device (Plate 5).



22

Diagram

i & *y* (*waw*) with tittle circled

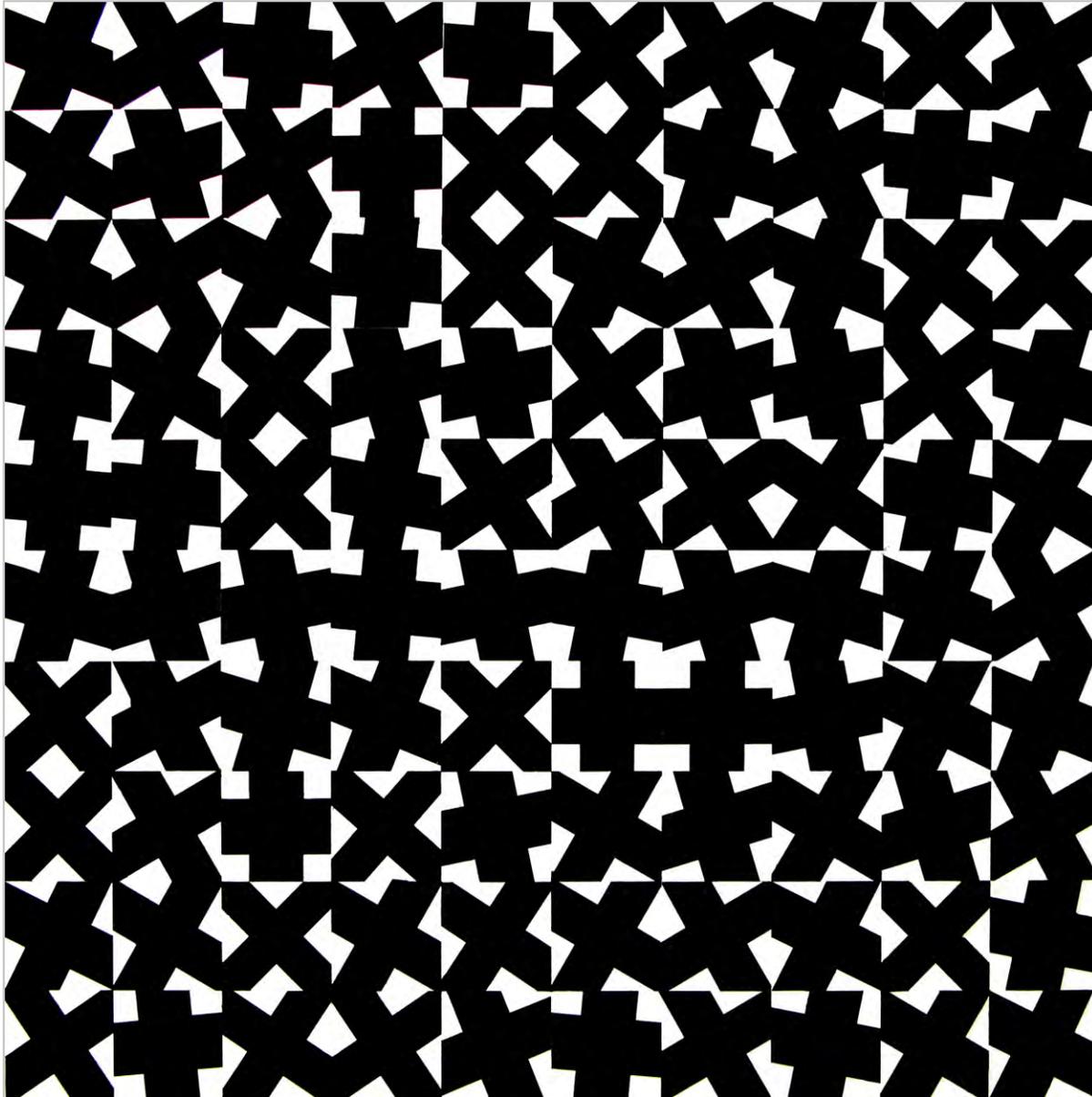


Plate 5

X (Malachi 4: 4)

2007

alkyd on board

100 × 100 × 2.5

Authorized King James Version

The verse from Malachi, in the Authorized Version of the Bible, comprises 100 letters. The number ten, (the *X* of the title) is appropriate to the theme of the Commandments, has been employed as the base or governing number. The letters are poured into a 10 × 10 square grid to serve as the structural basis for each of the two panels or boards (25). The axes of each square are divided into twenty coordinates to form a 400-unit grid. Each coordinate is assigned a number from 0 to 20, and each number is assigned one of the twenty-one letters of the alphabet included in the Malachi text (the verse does not include the letters K, P, Q, X, and Y). In this scheme, 0 = A, 1 = B, and so on to Y = 20. The number 20 is twice the base number or number of Commandments. (Significantly, the Commandments were written twice by the finger of God.) Each square (representing a letter) encloses an X-shaped form, the constituent dimensions of which are each 5 units (that is, 10 ÷ 2). X not only represents the diagonal structure of the square but also alludes to the Roman numeral for 10, the saltire or St Andrew's cross, and is a symbol of negation (connoting the Commandment's prohibitions). The X is rotated around the central axis of each square. The extent of the rotation is graduated, and determined by the letters. For example, D is represented by a rotation along three coordinates of the vertical and horizontal axes (26).

God wrote on both sides of the original tables, possibly five of the Commandments on each side. The artwork seeks to realize this characteristic. Accordingly, in the left-hand square the letter-fill will read from left to right, while in the right-hand square, it will read from right to left (the direction the text would take on the reverse plane of the original tables, when the tables were viewed from the front). The colour scheme of the artwork reflects the stark absolutism of the Commandments.

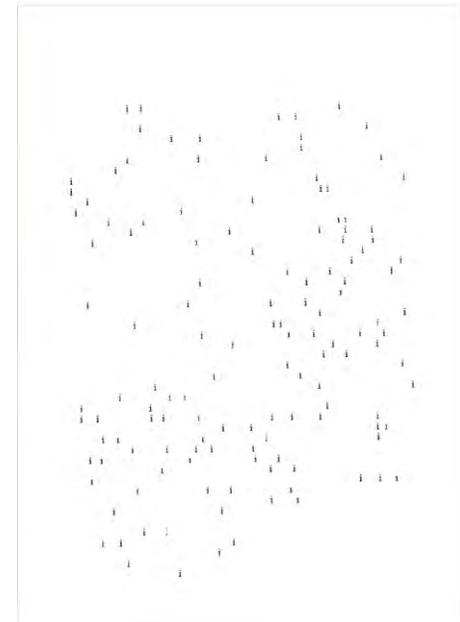


The First Day

Genesis 1: 1–5 describes the beginning of ‘the heaven and the earth’, and God’s operations on day one of Creation. Creation is based upon the principles of twofold formation, separation, and opposition: heaven and earth; darkness and light; night and day; and evening and morning. As day follows day, the doubling and divisions become more prolific and complex: sun and moon; ‘the waters from water’, earth from the seas; the upper from the lower firmament; sea creatures (in the lower firmament) from fowl (in the upper firmament); herb from fruit tree; cattle, beasts, and creeping things (on the earth); and man (male and female) (Gen. 1: 6 – 2: 25).

The artwork addresses the dualism of the Creation’s modus operandi and elements. The concept of twoness is expressed in the use of a system of codification based upon binary (a numerical system, that is base 2 numerals, which represents numerical values typically using 0 and 1). The concept of oppositeness (and the fundamental distinction undergirding the distinction of darkness and light and night and day in the verses) is reflected in the use of the colours black and white. The binary sequence comprises five integers (1, 2, 4, 8, 16), the numbers doubling in value as they progress (echoing the steady, incremental multiplication of elements during the process of creation). This sequence of integers is assigned to each of 196 squares composed in the form of a grid of 14 × 14 squares. (Fortuitously, fourteen is twice the number of the days of creation plus the day on which God rested.) The 196 squares represent the number of letters in Hebrew comprising the first five verses of Genesis chapter 1. Each square is divided vertically into five columns and each column assigned an integer.

The Hebrew alphabet, named after the first two letters (*alef-bet*), is made up of twenty-two letters. The letters may also be used as numbers. In the artwork, the numerical value assigned to each letter is equivalent to their position in the alphabet. For example, *Vav* (the sixth letter) has a numerical value of 6.²¹ The numeric value for the letter is entered into the square



24

Page of Bible after erasure

as infills of the second and third column from the right (integers 2 and 4) (27).²² Each letter value is entered in the same way until the grid is filled (Plate 6).

iKon/iPod I: Magnificat

Usually, the artworks in the series derive their format, ratio, or proportion from the relationship of the two components of the multiple (the number of letters making up a chosen text). For example, a grid made up of 240 letter-squares may be expressed as a rectangle 12 × 20, 6 × 40, or 24 × 10 letter-squares. The size and scale of the works is, likewise, largely determined by the text. The dimensions of *Foundation Piece*, for instance, are the median of two possible sizes of the artefact referred to in the text on which the work is based. In other cases, the size of the work is established on the basis of the complexity of the work: it needs to be large enough to enable the smallest component to be sufficiently visible and ably executed. In the *iKon/iPod* project (as in the web-based work *One Jot or One Tittle*) the format, proportion, and size of the works are predetermined by that of the apparatus' viewing screen, in this instance belonging to the now ubiquitous portable digital media player.²³

The motivation for using the device as the vehicle of presentation was – paradoxically, in view of both the anti-iconic and the non-representational nature of the series' works and the antiquity of the source (in contrast to the contemporaneity of the technology) – my renewed interest in icons (particularly the small portable miniatures) and the illuminated breviaries (an abridged liturgical book).²⁴ Icon miniatures (depicting saints, Christ, and the Virgin Mary, as well as narrative scenes such as Christ's crucifixion) were painted on wood and crafted in a variety of mediums including precious metal, ivory, marble, enamel, gemstone, and mosaic. Some were suspended around the neck as pendants, others formed the covers of small reliquary boxes, while yet others were hung in cloth or leather pouches from a chain attached to a belt in the

R	E	M	E	M	B	E	R	Y	E
T	H	E	L	A	W	O	F	M	O
S	E	S	M	Y	S	E	R	V	A
N	T	W	H	I	C	H	I	C	O
M	M	A	N	D	E	D	U	N	T
O	H	I	M	I	N	H	O	R	E
B	F	O	R	A	L	L	I	S	R
A	E	L	W	I	T	H	T	H	E
S	T	A	T	U	T	E	S	A	N
D	J	U	D	G	M	E	N	T	S

25

Diagram

Malachi 4: 4 (grid & letter-fill)

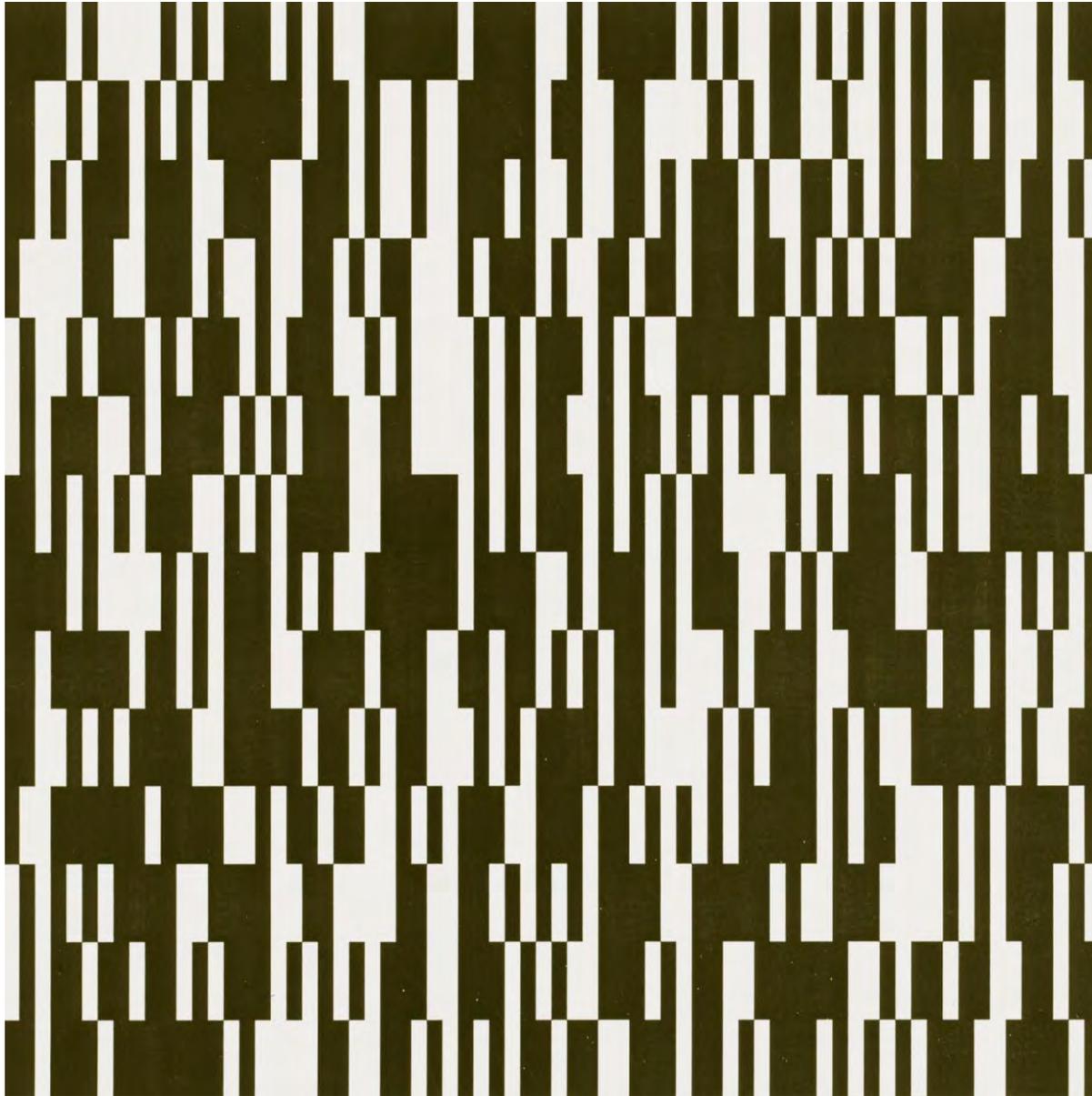


Plate 6

The First Day (Genesis 5: 1–5)

2007

oil on board

70 × 70 × 2.5

Hebrew

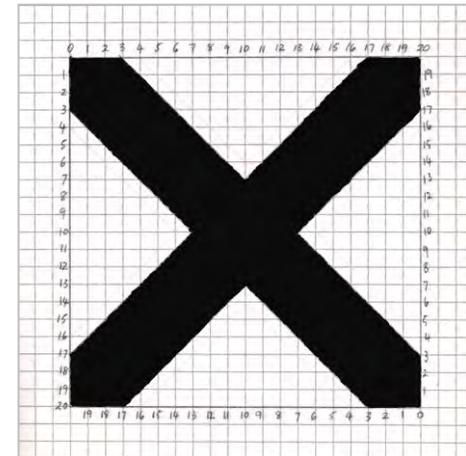
manner of a portuary (a breviary small enough to be carried on a person).²⁵ The icon miniature and portuary were thus the first portable media (28).

The iPod is a small portable media device. Some models are capable of storing and playing music and video, and displaying photographs and text files. As such they combine the utility of the icon miniature and portuary. The first series of images designed to be viewed on the media player similarly amalgamate the visual and the textual. The source material is taken from the Magnificat, the Latin version and vernacular translation of the Song of Mary, her doxological response to the angel Gabriel's prophecy regarding the son she would conceive (Luke 1: 46–55). The opening words 'My soul doth magnify the Lord' provide the conceptual process for the images. The word 'Lord' is literally enlarged up to 1000 per cent. Sections of the word's letters and the ground on which they are printed are then abstracted.²⁶ The backlit illumination of the screen inevitably gives rise to an association with stained glass, the typifying colours of which inform the palette for the works (Plate 7).

As with *One Jot or One Tittle* (and following Gutenberg's principles), the series of works uses new technology to democratize Scripture, enabling copies of the original to be downloaded freely from a digital source.

No It Al[I] ... Ever

The Revelation of St John the Divine is the most illustrated of the Bible's prophetic books, largely because of its vivid apocalyptic imagery, dramatic narrative, and abundance of esoteric visual symbolism. But, for all its 'visibility', its message remains in many respects hidden, obfuscated, and exegetically problematic (not to say dangerous). Even Calvin, the doyen of Protestant exposition, omitted the book from his commentary on the New Testament, while Martin Luther (1483–1546) went as far as to question the book's canonicity, arguing that a



26

Diagram
drawing for X (axis for D)

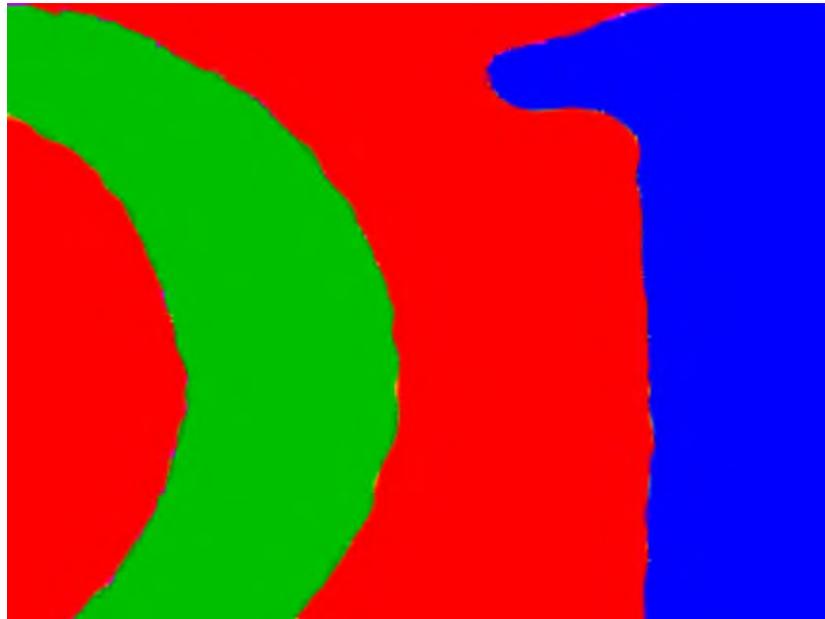
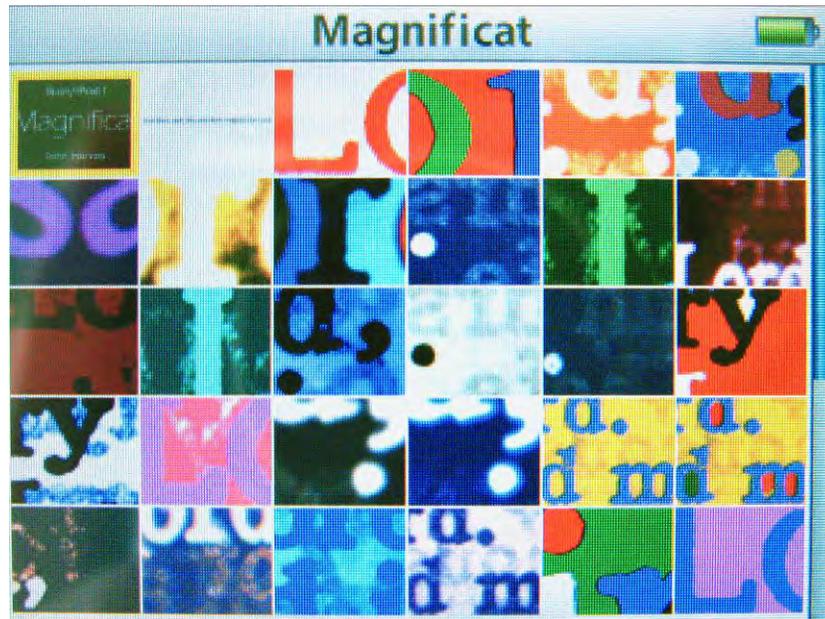


Plate 7

Ikon/iPod I: Magnificat screen (above)
& *Magnificat (Lord 3.5.1)* (below) (Luke 1: 46)

2007

digital image

New Revised Standard Version

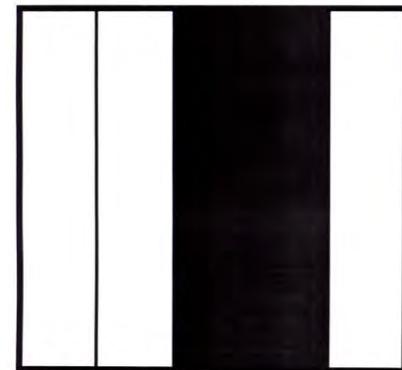
revelation should 'reveal'. Arguably, it is its very mystery (and refusal to yield easy or comprehensible solutions) that accounts, at least in part, for the book's transcendental quality and enduring potency. We will not know it all ... ever (perhaps).

No It All!] ... *Ever* addresses the obscurity of the Revelation (Plate 1) in a series of page pictures (see above), one for each page of book in the Eyre and Spottiswoode edition of the Holy Bible (1953). The paintings are the final outcome of a fivefold process of transference analogous to the transmission of the prophecy recorded in the Bible: (1) God gave the Revelation to Christ; (2) Christ passed the message on to his angel; (3) the angel sent the prophecy to John; (4) John wrote the message to the angels of the seven churches; and (5) those letters are passed on (as Scripture) to succeeding generations of readers and hearers (Rev. 1: 1–2; chapters 2–3). Each printed page is scanned digitally and printed four times. The final photographic print is manually translated into a painting in a manner that alludes to some sixteenth-century paintings representing the Bible as artefact as an abstract adumbration of the text, which conceals rather than reveals its meaning.

'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables' (Habakkuk 2: 2)

Habakkuk was one of the twelve minor prophets. In his opening discussion with God, the prophet is led into a concern about the punishment of Judah's sins and, thereafter, on a journey from incomprehension and doubt to faith and trust. Unlike Revelation, the prophecy of Habakkuk is very rarely illustrated. It is largely dialogic and without dramatic action or salient or encapsulating imagery. Consequently, where it does find visualization, it is often in scenes of anonymous barren landscapes (the illustrations alluding to Habakkuk 3: 17) or amalgamated, as in H. S. Mcludle's veritable circus parade made up of the oppressed and the oppressor (29).

16	8	4	2	1
0	0	1	1	0



27
Diagram
binary rendering of 1 (vav)

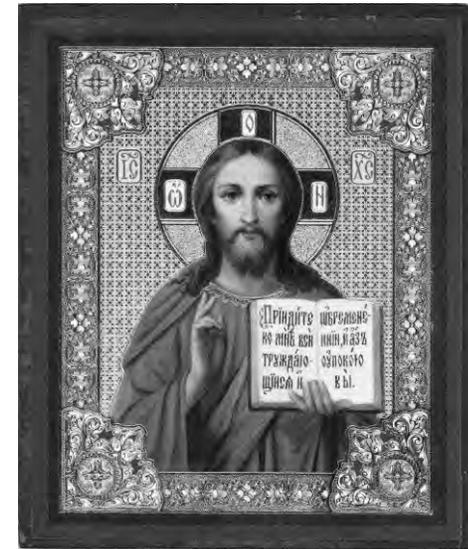
The prophecy comes to Habakkuk in the form of a vision that God commands him to 'write ... and make it plain upon tables'.²⁷ The action involved converting an image into a text, the very opposite of the procedure deployed in *The Pictorial Bible* series. The artwork follows Habakkuk's example. The 'vision' in this case is Mcludle's frontispiece. The conversion of the image into text is through the interface of sound. A small unidirectional microphone is attached to a pencil (30). The original artwork is then redrawn by tracing over the lines of the steel-plate engraving. The sound of the drawing (the scratches and rubbing of the graphite point on the tracing paper) is recorded as a sound file. The sound file is then played into a voice-recognition software program, which endeavours to recognize the sounds as speech and translate them into printed words. The letters and words provide the raw materials for visual codification.

In the Old Testament, tables refer to a simple smooth flat surface (like the tablets of the law and the clay tablet on which Ezekiel drew (see above)).²⁸ The flat planes of the picture's supports provide a physical correspondent (Plate 8).

Bible Studies: The Lamentations of Jeremiah

This body of work was the fulfilment of a desire to develop a more 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 works are a combination of page pictures and inscription images: pages from a Bible are used as a prepared support, on top of which are layered painted and drawn images and written texts.²⁹ Scripture and picture are related but (unlike the other projects in the series) they remain disintegrated.

The text selected for treatment is the prophecy of the Lamentations of Jeremiah. A scanned image of the open Bible serves as the basis of visualization. Since each double-page



28

Portable icon (commercial miniature)

Uspenskin Katedraali

Helsinki, Finland

c.2006

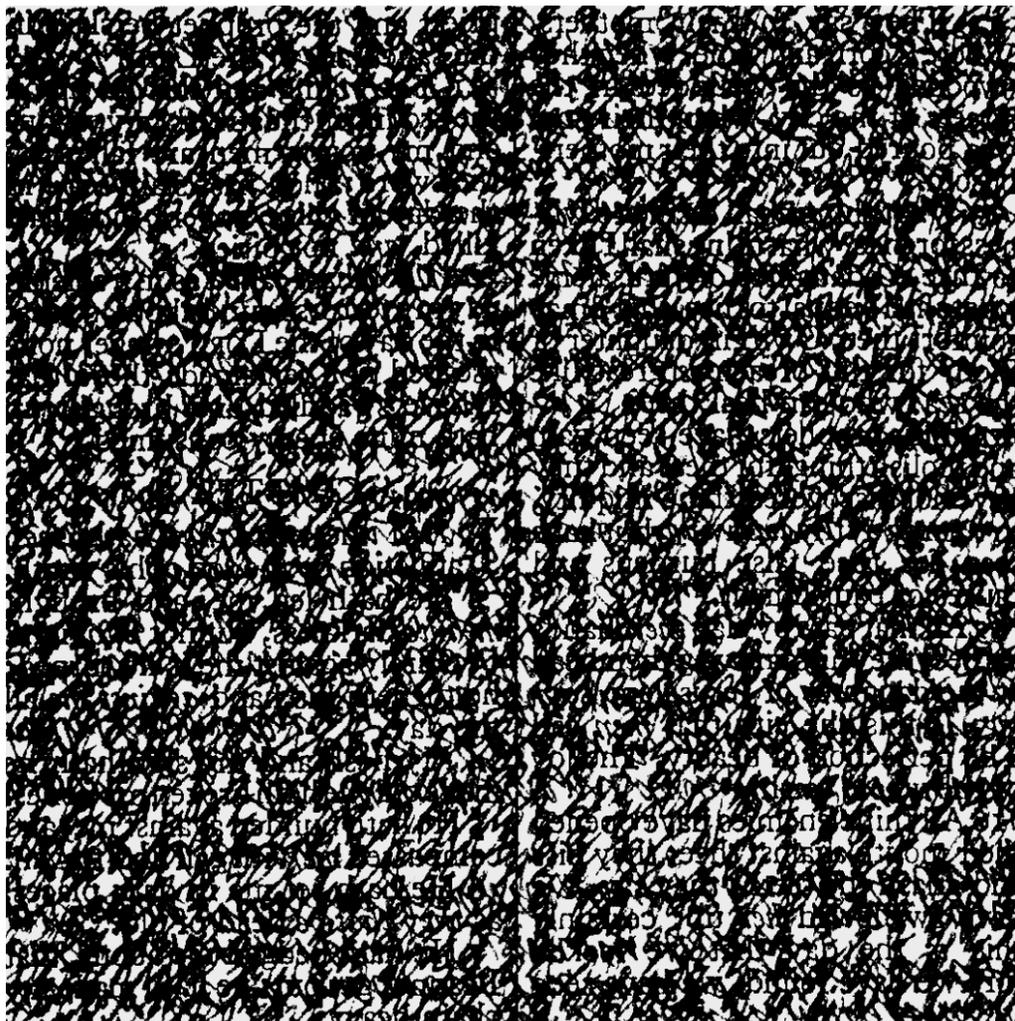


Plate 8

*'Write the vision and make it
plain upon tables' (Habakkuk 2: 2)*

2007

ink on paper on card

15 × 15

spread suggests a number of visual ideas and conceptual strategies, it may be used repeatedly as the basis of several successive treatments (Plate 9). Alternatively, the same passage may be realized in a number of consecutive images if the text proves to be sufficiently yielding. 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.³⁰

This practice of ruminating on and imagining the text in a devotional context has a precedent in the tradition of the embroidered sampler. Women and children learned to read, write, memorize the Scriptures, and sew by hand the letters of a biblical text or religious maxim on a cloth. As they applied themselves to the work they applied the text’s lessons to their lives. Often the worker wrought around the words, stitched images associated with the text, such as emblems, biblical characters, and vignettes of the narrative. As in the *Bible Studies* project, text and image are brought together in the same context, but (intersemiotically) they remain separate.

The works in *The Pictorial Bible* series self-consciously revivify and extend a historical tradition for converting text into image while allying it to a contemporary and accessible medium of



29

H. S. McLudde

'The Book of Habakkuk'

steel-plate engraving

Holy Bible

[n.d.]

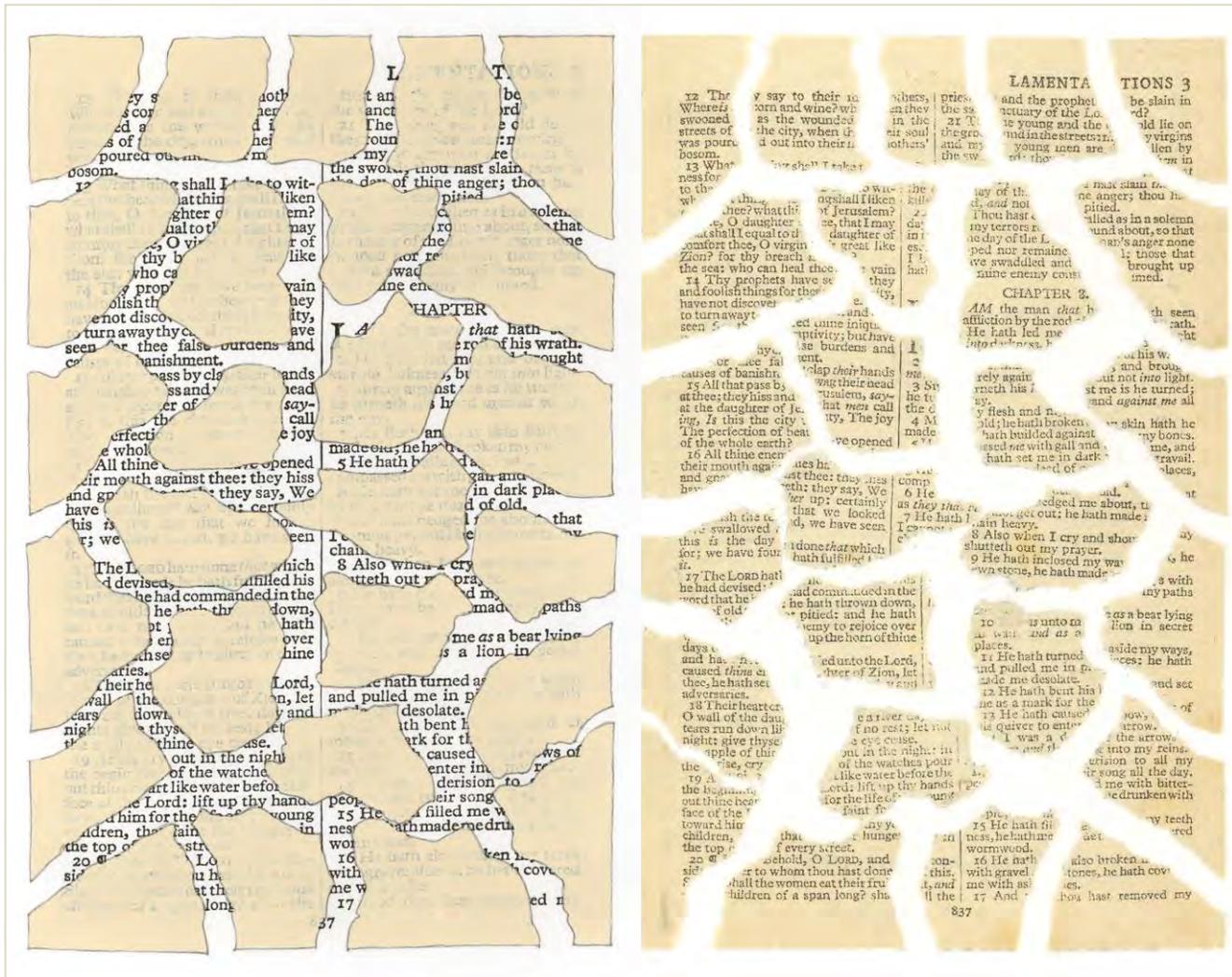
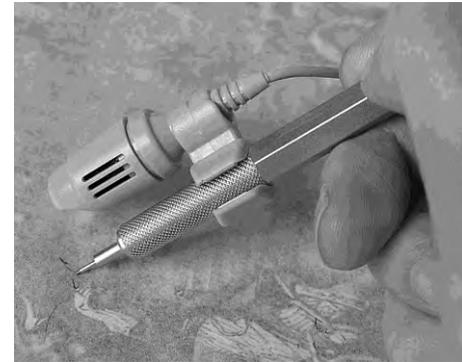


Plate 9
 Bible Studies: Lamentations
 ('He hath ... pulled me to pieces')
 (Lamentations 3: 11)

2007
 mixed media
 15.8 x 20.7
 Authorized King James Version

communication, visual form, and conceptual sensibility. The artworks transform what is often seen as a negative tendency in Judaeo and Protestant Reformed thinking – the repudiation of pictorial representations of the Bible – into a positive potential, adapting (paradoxically) anti-iconicism and an emphasis upon the authority of Scripture into a viable and sustainable basis for creating visual images.



30

'Pencrophone'

used to draw *'Write the vision, and
make it plain upon tables'*

2007

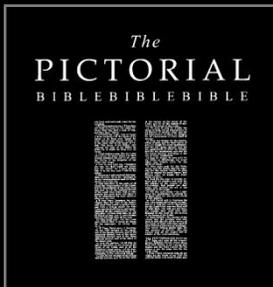
Notes

1. This does not imply that I disapprove of imaging the Bible. The stricture is adopted as a conceptual constraint (a discipline) to which I willingly subjected myself in order to define and explore this negative capability of Christian art.
2. Edward J. Young, *Daniel* (1949), Geneva Series of Commentaries (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 200.
3. The term 'codify', in the context of the series, is used to describe the arrangement of things (letters) into an organized system (of visual values) to translate and convey information, rather than a process whereby information is obfuscated so as to be communicated secretly. (The distinction is one of intent rather than of procedure.)
4. I was a member of the Baptist denomination until 2004, when I joined the Anglican Church.
5. Plainsong or plainchant was used in the ritual of medieval Christian liturgies in Europe and the Middle East. It was usually synonymous with Gregorian chant, the liturgical music of the Roman Catholic Church. The texts of plainsong are the words of the Mass, the Psalms, canticles, and certain verses of hymns.
6. For example, there are seven churches and spirits (1: 4); golden candlesticks (1: 12); stars (1: 16); angels (1: 20); lamps (4: 5); seals (5: 5); horns and eyes (5: 6); trumpets (8: 2); thunders (10: 3); heads and crowns (12: 3); plagues (15: 1); golden vials (15: 7); mountains (17: 9); and kings (17: 10).
7. Exponents of theomantics include Ivan Panin, E. W. Bullinger, John J. Davis, Michael Drosnin, and Del Wasburn.
8. Other works in the series, such as *One Jot or One Tittle*, comprise a large number of words and thousands of letters.
9. Theologically, the concepts of God and love are not interchangeable: that 'God is love' (*Deus dilectio est*) should not, therefore, imply the corollary that love is God.
10. Sculptural versions of *LOVE* also exist in New York City; the Indianapolis Museum of Art; Scottsdale's Civic Center, Arizona; and the University of Pennsylvania campus.
11. See also the measures and proportions in cubits (length × breadth) of Ezekiel's visionary temple: 50 × 25 (40: 21); 50 × 25 (40: 25); 50 × 25 (40: 29); 40: 30 (25 × 5); 50 × 25 (40: 33); 50 × 25 (40: 36); 5 × 5 (40: 48) and 25,000 × 25,000 (48: 20), (compare with Rev. 21: 12–13).
12. Ezekiel was an aristocratic priest prophesying in the fifth year of King Jehoiachim's exile in Babylonia, seven years before the final fall of Jerusalem (586–585 BC). The prophet was under house arrest and prohibited from speaking publicly to his people (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica; [New York: Macmillan), 6.1078).
13. Friebel argues the Hebrew phrase for city can be understood as an apposition for emphasis. Because of the grammatical inconsistency of an undetermined noun being followed by a determined known in apposition, the phrase is often excised as an explanatory gloss that comes too soon in the narrative. The grammatical inconsistency of the undetermined city being specified as Jerusalem may indicate that Ezekiel's drawing was to be a sketch of a city without any indication of a specific city. Yet for the purpose of the prophecy, the prophet was informed that the sketch was to represent Jerusalem very specifically (Kelvin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts: Rhetorical Nonverbal Communication*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 283 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 202–3).
14. James Bennett Pritchard (ed.), *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 278.

15. Eran Laor, *Maps of the Holy Land: Cartobibliography of Printed Maps, 1475–1900* (New York: Alan R. Liss; Amsterdam: Meridian, 1986), p. xi.
16. James L. Kelso, *The Ceramic Vocabulary of the Old Testament*, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, Supplementary Studies, 5/6 (1948), 34.
17. Since the nineteenth century, the infrastructure of Jerusalem has been divided into quarters by two intersecting linear streets. The resultant geometry (four sections) forms the basis of the ethnic-religious quarters: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Armenian (David Kroyanker, *Jerusalem Architecture* (London: Taurus Parke, 1994), 19).
18. The concept of a map implies an aerial view of the city. However, Freibell argues, 'there is the possibility that the inscribed city was rather a sideview depicting the city walls ... Such was the common way of illustrating in victory reliefs the triumphant campaign by the king against a foreign city' (Kroyanker, *Jerusalem Architecture*, 19; Freibell, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, 205).
19. John Calvin, *Ezekiel I, Chapters 1–12*, trans. D. Foxgrover and D. Martin, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), 108.
20. Interestingly, while the symbolic significance of white (in the abstract) is purity, holiness, and perfection in the Bible, when it is grounded in the context of substance and surface – in this instance, untempered mortar and an unsoundly cemented wall – the colour accrues the pejorative connotations of hypocrisy and a mere outward show. Christ adapts the image when he condemns the Pharisees' duplicity using the metaphor of 'whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness' (Matt. 23: 27).
21. Properly, the Hebrew numeric system functions on the basis of addition. The numeric values of letters are added together to create the sum. In this system, *Kaph* (the eleventh letter) has the numeric value of 20; *Qoph* (the nineteenth letter) has a numeric value of 100; and *Tav* (the twenty-second letter) has a numeric value of 400.
22. The aggregate of the five integers is 31. The total must be at least 22, the numerical value for the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet in the system of the artwork.
23. The iPod video device (fifth generation) possesses a 2.5-inch (diagonal) QVGA transreflective screen, with an over-65,000-colour liquid crystal display and a white LED backlight. The screen has 320 × 240 pixel resolution, and a 156-mm dot pitch (Apple iPod Technical Specifications).
24. The breviary (Latin *brevis*, 'short' or 'concise') was a compendium of hymns, Psalms, readings, public or canonical prayers, and notations for everyday use, particularly by priests in Divine Office and ministering to the housebound.
25. The term 'portuary' derives from the Latin *portare*, 'to carry, out of doors or abroad'.
26. The abstraction of typographic representations of Scripture was also undertaken in *The Pictorial Bible I*, and the artworks *Psalms 51: 'Hide thy Face'* (2000) and *Psalms 88: 'Hidest thou thy face'* (2000) (John Harvey, *The Pictorial Bible I: Settings of the Psalms* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 2000), 41).
27. Writing was a form of memorialization. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, non-remembrance was oblivion, signifying damnation, while remembrance signified salvation, as in, for example, the assurance of redemption given to those believers whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 2: 12) (Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Caelestia: The Heavenly Arcana Contained in the Holy Scripture or Word of the Lord* (1851), 10, nos 8033–9111, 4th edn (London: Swedenborg, 1932), 253).
28. George G. V. Stonehouse, *The Book of Habakkuk: Introduction, Translation, and*

Notes on the Hebrew Text (London: Rivingtons, 1911), 136; Robert D. Haak, *Habakkuk*, Supplements to Vestus Testamentum, vol. XLIV (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 55–6.

29. The source text is taken from *The Holy Bible* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, [n.d.]). The book was given to my mother and used in the context of her Scripture class at school during the 1940s.
30. See: Paul Saenger and Kimberly Van Kampen (eds), *The Bible as Book: The First printed Editions* (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press).



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