



THE WIEDMANN BIBLE®



THE WORLD'S LONGEST PAINTED BIBLE

STUMBLED ACROSS THE LONGEST ILLUSTRATED BIBLE IN THE WORLD

APPENDIX TO A WORLD PREMIERE AT THE
German Protestant Church Congress
(Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag)

by

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About Daniel Rossa

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Sometimes not getting what you want in life can turn out to be a blessing. Life sent me a gift of this sort at the German Protestant Church Congress (Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag), where I found myself – due to an event I wanted to attend being overcrowded – suddenly needing to fill a bit of time. It was in this moment that I stumbled across an artistic project that is absolutely well worth seeing, and which I would like to introduce to you here:



THE WIEDMANN BIBLE



With this piece, artist Willy Wiedmann¹ (1929 – 2013) created a monumental work that was made accessible for the first time to general public for at this year's German Protestant Church Congress (Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag).

on their own – which they do! In them, Wiedmann enlivens and brings meaning to the (textual) world of the Bible chapter by chapter – and sometimes even verse by verse – in his highly idiosyncratic style. This is easiest to visualize by looking at some images from the Wiedmann Bible itself.

The simple data alone are breathtaking:

For 16 years, from 1984 to 2000, Wiedmann perfected his life's work – 3,333 images distributed over 19 illustrated volumes.

I've provided these calculations because Wiedmann himself bound the only existing copy of his Bible using a leporello format, resulting in 19 illustrated volumes – 295 feet long if laid side to side. These 19 volumes of the Wiedmann Bible encompass almost all of the books of the Bible (only 1-2 Chr. are missing) and some parts of Apocrypha².

The Wiedmann Bible also differs from other illustrated Bibles. The Wiedmann Bible consists entirely of a coherent series of images (and collages) that are intended to stand



1) For more information on Willy Wiedmann, see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willy_Wiedmann.

2) The 19 volumes are divided as follows: 1: Gen, 2: Ex, 3: Lev, 4: Num, 5: Dt, 6: Jos/Jdgs/Rut, 7: 1-2 Sam, 8: 1-2 Kg, 9: Ezra/Neh, 10: Tob/Jdt/Est, 11: Job, 12: Ps, 13: Prov/Ecc/Sol/Isa, 14: Sir, 15: "Prophets" (Isa/Jer/Lam/Ez/Dan/Hos), 16: "Jesus Christ" (Mt/Mk/Lk/Joh), 17: Acts, 18: "Epistles" (Rom/1-2 Cor/Gal/ Eph/Phil/Col/1-2 Thess/1-2 Tim/Tit/Phlm/Hebr/1-2 Petr/ 1-3 Joh/Jac/Jud), 19: Rev. The quotations from Wiedmann's notes I have used in this essay, were all taken from the web presence of the Wiedmann Bible.



The painting of the fall of man, provides an impressive testimony to this fact. Likely because of the cultural recognition value of the scene it represents. It has become in a sense the face or trademark of the Wiedmann Bible.³ Wiedmann displays the tree of knowledge – and perhaps knowledge itself? – as a “tree of snakes,” also calling it this in his notes: “Snake tree = tree of knowledge.”

Apples are chosen to represent the fruit from the tree of knowledge, a traditional practice in artistic representation, even though apples could not have grown within the Mesopotamian region. Another interesting feature of this representation is Wiedmann’s “tree of knowledge” reminiscent of a confusing geometric growth of hedges in a maze or a technical diagram for a system of pipes. The mouths of the snakes reaching towards the two naked figures at the left and right of the foreground – Adam and Eve – to pass them the fruit of the tree of knowledge remind the viewer of open-ended wrenches. One could speculate

whether Wiedmann intended this representation to be a sort of critique of mechanization. It is also interesting that the “branch” holding out an apple to Eve has hair on it. It bears a striking resemblance to a “Popeye” forearm, and clearly represents a man’s arm. It is possible that Wiedmann is referring to grammatical gender – the snake is male in Hebrew (so that sin does not come through a woman!). The viewer also notices that the tree of snakes appears somewhat technological or even barren of life. It stands in clear contrast to the tree at its left, which provides a foretaste of what will become clear in other sections of the Wiedmann Bible (creation stories, Noah’s ark, plagues): Wiedmann loves painting lush and teeming landscapes filled with fauna, including exotic creatures (chameleons, porcupines)! Perhaps this is an artistic nod to the dangers facing creation – or creatures – due to technology and industry?



His representation of the stories surrounding God’s revelation in the burning bush illustrate Wiedmann’s approach to the Biblical themes: at the left, we see the children of Israel, reaching their hands tensely to heaven seeking help. A triangle with three frames hovers above them. This image also appears in other places: it always shows up where God (whether blessing or cursing,

or perhaps as man’s counterpart?) “goes into action.” This is Wiedmann’s way of representing God manifesting himself and likely why he uses the triangle – as a historical and cultural symbol for the triune God. The symbol is painted in dark colors here, capturing how the Israelites perceive him. God’s mercy is hidden from them. The people of Israel, on the other hand, are painted in nude

3) This is the only one of the eight image details from the Wiedmann Bible shown here that is freely available online. All other images were provided exclusively for the preparation of this report.

tones – in a way “poor, cold, and naked”. They are without protection, simply humans without any of the covering or veil provided by possessions and clothing.⁴ In the next scene, Moses – distinguished by his shepherd’s staff and white “headscarf” and thus recognizable in coming images as well⁵ – tends his father-in-law’s sheep.

Then comes the scene with the burning bush. Here, however, the revelation of God’s name goes entirely without mention – both in the illustrated volume and in the artist’s handwritten notes! The next image takes up the story after God’s speech (its headline verse, “Ex 4.1” indicates this): This image depicts Moses’ answer to his mission from God and their discussion over whether Moses is a convincing ambassador. The miracle with Moses’ staff – the staff is turned into a snake – is also taken from this passage. Interestingly, however, Moses’ sandals are behind this episode (from left to right), although they are actually mentioned in Ex. 3. Due to this asynchrony in the linear course of representation in the volume, these episodes seem to be connected even though the next image is actually separate. The three faces seeming to flow into one another giving rise to multiple speculations, as they could refer either to Ex. 3 or Ex. 4. If they relate to Ex. 3, one could see this merging the trio of faces as God’s revelation itself: the triune God. This idea is also supported by the “crown of thorns” encircling the third face. Additionally, Hebrew letters appear beside the three-faced figure, automatically reminding the viewer of the revelation of God’s name.

But upon closer examination, it becomes clear that – except for the last three consonants from right to left, which appear to form the Hebrew word דבר, (hebr. “Word,” this is simply incoherent babble. Therefore, in my opinion, it is quite far-fetched to speculate that this word salad refers to the revelation of God. Wiedmann’s commentary on this image and its characters also refers to this. He explains, namely, that Moses was “not eloquent” and that he was “slow of speech and of tongue” (Wiedmann’s commentary related to Ex 4.10). In relation to Ex. 4, then, the following interpretation of the triple face suggests itself: The first face represents the countenance of the manifest God (left face with piercing gaze and triangles with multiple frames under the chin). This face transitions into the face of the prophet Moses, made in the likeness of God (middle face, whose

eyelids are pointed downwards and to the left, giving him somewhat of a tortured or fatalistic impression). This face then merges into the face of Aaron, as Moses’ mouthpiece. The greenish-grey woven garment under the face argues for this identification – Aaron is seen wearing it in the scene to the right of the face, and the Aaron figure also wears it on the other side of the “mountain” in front of Pharaoh.

Additionally, the hair around this face, similar to a crown of thorns, also appears in a representation of Aaron in his family tree a couple of images later on. After this painting, there is also still space on the page for the episode showing Moses’ son’s circumcision in a corner at the lower border. In the scene above, Aaron speaks to the people as Moses’ representative.

On the other side of the “mountain” separating this panel, we seem to see a foreshadowing of the scene wherein the first miracles are performed before Pharaoh in Ex 7. Wiedmann shows this somewhat later, but in even more detail and with multiple snakes. It is interesting that Wiedmann paints two snakes in front of Pharaoh here. They are too few for Pharaoh’s many magicians to be turning their staffs into snakes, and too many to represent only Moses’ staff turning into a snake.

Perhaps this duel is placed here because Aaron is acting as Moses’ sidekick?

4) From my observations, this is how Wiedmann seems to represent man in other places as well when their existence is affected or even threatened (usually in plural and as a mass, for instance a public / a nation listening to Jesus speak).

5) This is true, in any case, for Ex, but is not maintained in Lev, Num, and Dtn. These were, however, not conceptualized as narrative storybook volumes. The visual appearance of historical protagonists such as Saul, David, Solomon, and Jesus is, however, maintained. One does, however, sometimes get the fascinating impression (and not just with Jesus) that the characters are aging over time.

Similar to the idea of the Pauper's Bible, church paintings, and church windows in the Middle Ages, it was Wiedmann's stated goal to allow people who had particular difficulty in reading and writing access to the Bible through his paintings.

But the artistic representation of the Biblical text in Wiedmann's images is not just informative for individuals to whom textual worlds are less inaccessible or even closed off. In my opinion, they also open up new perspectives on the Bible for theologians – a book we believe we know so well and whose material seems so familiar. The Wiedmann Bible certainly provides stimulation for discourse between theological disciplines, as well as for dialogue between art (history) and theology.

Wiedmann's claim to offer a complete representation of the Bible "from a single hand" does more to accommodate an academic interest in comparability, systematic representation, and completeness than is the case in many other artistic projects.

Due to the richness of its representations and due to Wiedmann's style, the Wiedmann Bible also offers great potential for community work and church education, school classes, and art viewings associated with sermons and devotions. The project is worth exploration by – and praise from – theologians.

Reflections on the following excerpts from the Wiedmann Bible will also contribute to this impression:



Besides representing the fruit of the tree of knowledge as an apple, and using the triangular shape as a symbol for the presence of the (triune) God in the stories Wiedmann's images tell, Wiedmann's painting above of Samuel can also be understood as a reflection on art history:



Image: Matthias Grünewald

Namely, it recalls the deictic function which Matthias Grünewald impunes to John the Baptist's finger on the Isenheim altar.

With Jesus Christ, God's rule has descended upon the Earth. As figures from different eons, Grünewald's juxtaposition of John and Jesus under the cross represents a turning point and a change of eras.

Since Wiedmann seems to be referring to Grünewald's representation of John the Baptist in his picturing of Samuel beside Saul (yellow

here, Theologically speaking, this leads to a parallel one might otherwise normally not arrive at: Grünewald has John the Baptist point at Christ on the cross, the one John promised would come at the end of time to herald the coming of God's kingdom: the anointed of God (Messiah), the last shoot of David's dynasty, the legitimate royal house of Israel. This makes John the last representative of an older time, one Christians see as overcome or completed in Jesus as the Christ (or Messiah).

This era ends when the people of Israel ask for a king, a wish God grants through Samuel by anointing Saul as the first king of Israel (just as John anoints Jesus in baptism as the last or eschatological ruler of Israel (Adoptionism)).

In this way, Wiedmann's image connects the beginning and the eschatological conclusion of the royal era in Israel through a reference to art history (there is also a triangle above the anointing!).

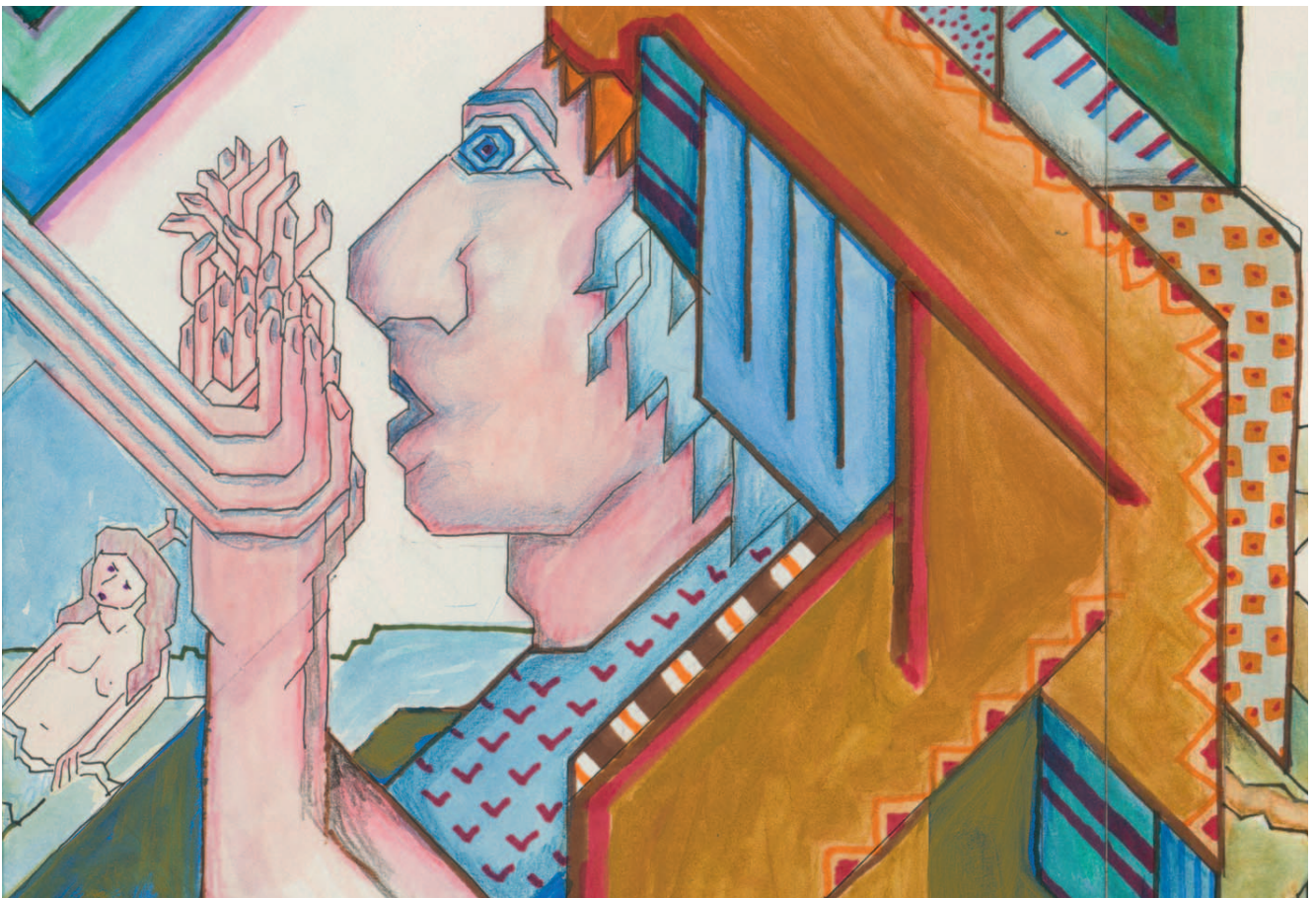


Wiedmann's presentation is refreshingly contemporary: his style is, on the one hand, figurative enough to bring out the narrative dimensions of the biblical text, whose importance for a life of faith has been proven ever more clearly in recent years by theologians. On the other hand, Wiedmann's style remains abstract even when he paints figures, alienating them from the viewer in their naivety by using an angular style. This ensures that the figures and their fates are not trivialized as, in my opinion, is the case with the too-often harmonious, warmly rounded figures painted by some naïve artists.



His figures are, happily, too abstract and angular to create rounded, happy garden-gnome like idyllic scenes.

Nevertheless, Wiedmann often succeeded in giving his figures impressive and also expressive facial features and physical postures with only a few clear lines, which do awaken empathy in the viewer in their own way. This is clear, for instance, in his representation of Daniel's prayer for forgiveness (Dan 9) (left top) – or in the scene representing the stoning of the adulteress (right top).



It is deeply moving to see this adult man (Adam's apple!) with his angular face wringing his hands, and to see other, human hands reaching down to him from the section of the triangle (!) at left upper edge of the image. These hands show sympathy, taking the hands of the afflicted praying man into his own. Is Daniel simply wringing his hands here – or perhaps even struggling against God? Or is God instead coming to his aid in his time of despair?

This is not exactly an entirely loving way for Wiedmann to illustrate the verses in Daniel 9: “18 Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy [...] 21 While I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He instructed me and said to me, ‘Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. 23 As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision: for you are beloved of God.’”

Below the heading “The Adulteress,” Wiedmann illustrates Jesus’ intervention in the stoning of a

woman: in the background, the rough rocky quarry, petering out into a sandy area in the foreground, into which Jesus draws figures with a stick. The “adulteress” is represented as brightly colored and vibrant, like a piece of candy (perhaps this is why Wiedmann uses a piece of candy wrapper for her skirt⁶ with a pattern of pineapples and the text “Mamba”), and seems to have a sumptuous deep-cut neckline. Jesus stands at the bottom right, a towering and awe-inspiring presence at her side, and has his arm raised in a demand that the stone-throwers stop. Pictured in the background are the “narrow-minded” and bigoted men who want to stone the woman: they have their arms up and ready to throw, and Wiedmann has pictured their bodies – perhaps in a touch of “pictorial justice” – as about as large as one might expect for their mental abilities.

This stiff-looking, angular style of figural representation is characteristic of the multi-panel style of painting (Polykonmalerei) Wiedmann developed.⁷ Because it reminds the viewer of pixelated graphics from a computer game from older, more analog times, the characters Wiedmann paints become a representation of late- or postmodern man, who understands his existence as broken, “failed,” or at least fragmentary.



We have already seen something of Wiedmann’s representation of the fragility of human life in his scene between the people of Israel and the burning bush. But the illustrated section shown here from the initial passage of Wiedmann’s volume “Jesus Christ,” an artistic compilation of the canonical gospels (Harmonia Evangelica / Gospel harmony), provides evidence of this fragility and need for protection as well. It also shows the typical fragmentary nature and brokenness of Wiedmann’s images of people. For me, this section is one of the most curious in Wiedmann’s entire oeuvre: the painting of Jesus’ family tree ends at the top left with the mention of Joseph,

whose green signature – a hint at his profession – terminates in a hammer. Mundane, natural wooden boards follow, even including a few spiders, similar to the lowliness of the stall with which the Jesus story begins. The carpenter Joseph, who is old, grey, bearded, and wearing a blue robe, emerges from this wooden shack.⁸ He even seems somehow bent over, due to the diagonal termination of his image at the top left edge. He precedes the story of Jesus, carrying two wooden boards that form a cross (!).⁹

The image continues on the one hand with small figures of Joseph coming from the lower edge of

6) Many thanks to Vicar Tobias Schreiber in Kastellaun, who contributed this insight!

7) For more information on “Polykonmalerei,” see: <http://de.encyclopaedia.wikia.com/wiki/Polykonmalerei>.

8) His blue clothing and his hat are closer to Wiedmann’s typical Noah figure, and the images also use similar wood graining patterns (Ark!).

9) He strangely has six fingers (two thumbs?), as does Samuel in the frieze above. I haven’t yet been able to determine what this means.

the picture and now clearly wearing a version of the uniform carpenters wore during their journey years in Germany up until today: (a wide-brimmed hat, red scarf). He is occupied with finding some way to connect the boards together again. Knowing that Mary and Joseph had not yet been married in this story, one might ask: is Joseph perhaps attempting to save whatever he still can? Here, the powerful carpenter Joseph seems small, fragile, and somehow overburdened.

The scene above this one does follow from the image header (Mary's meeting with?) Elizabeth – and the flesh-colored letters (where one would expect to see the “pixelated” body of the woman whose head is placed at an angle above) do spell the name “Elizabeth.” In my opinion, however, it is more likely that this painting is an imaginative representation of the Holy Ghost coming to Maria: it is present here not as a white dove, but as a flock of birds which appear to be origami, colorful as butterflies (in the stomachs of a happy couple). In addition, the woman shown (Mary?) is clearly naked: This is clear not only because of the nude color of the pixelated fields, but also because of her two visible breasts. And the graciously and secretively censored areas (censored using triangles!) clearly conceal the act of conception – this is indicated by the obvious male genitalia in the left lower part of the flesh-colored section of the image. The woman's tousled („bedhead“ as one would say) hairstyle also indicates the image represents a couple discovered in flagranti during the act. The presence of God in this – in reality – profane incident is also indicated through the face and wings of the angel / man of God Gabriel, who is to the right of the woman's head, flying towards (the figure who is possibly) Mary. Another significant hint that this painting represents Mary's immaculate conception of Jesus through the Holy Ghost is that the rough, natural, spider web-covered wooden boards continue directly below the center of the supposed holy conception – suddenly white, pure, and totally free from spider webs!

After this follows the most disconcerting scene in the entire representation: a woman – likely Mary – squats in a meadow of flowers, surrounded by two Pegasus, with what appears to be a lamb at her feet. Fish and a cat are also evident in the image.

It is particularly interesting that the white doves appear here again, reminding the viewer especially strongly of origami doves folded from paper.¹⁰ The entire image is titled “Life of the Virgin.” But the image does not in any way fit, even into the traditional extra-biblical stations of Mary's life – and this scene does not appear at all in the Gospels. We have a very strange case here, in which Wiedmann does not adhere to any material stipulated by the Bible.¹¹ It seems sensible to me that this scene is to be understood either as an extension of the conception pictured earlier, or as an embellishment of Gabriel's annunciation which, in my opinion, Wiedmann combines on the right side of the image detail with the content of the Magnificat in the touching scene between Mary and Gabriel. This segment emanates security, trust, familiarity, peace, and support (hands!).

This angularity and squareness is a consequence of Wiedmann's concept of “Polykonmalerei” (multi-panel painting) [from gr. polys πολύς “many” and gr. icon εἰκών “picture), in which a surface is divided using a specific technique – and generally with angular, geometric shapes – into sections. These “complete one another, overlap with one another, or are woven into one another. In the overall composition, the shapes become images, which transform into or merge into other images, etc.”¹² The framework of images created in this manner involuntarily recalls associations with a through-composed (modern) church window.¹³ The method has considerable effects: when viewed, the arrangements and image compositions unfold through the interactions of their internal dynamics and deeper dimensions, allowing new details to “come to light” or come to the foreground every time one looks at the picture. This continuously calls up new associations for the viewer, resulting in a panorama of shapes, details, and meanings continuously emerging and transcending one another. Structurally, in my opinion, for viewers this effect provides a counterbalance to the dogmatic figure of the “word of God” which, in theology, stands for the hermeneutic process (es) in which the textual world of the Bible “speaks” to the lives of its readers and listeners. Observations on the illustrated volume that follows can clarify the effects of emergence and transcendence:

10) Wiedmann also uses this image in the area of the Epistles (vol. 18) and a variation of it for the tower of Babel (vol. 1)!

11) Up to now, I have only found one further passage between the second story of creation and the fall of man (vol. 1) where this is also the case.

12) <http://de.encyclopaedia.wikia.com/wiki/Polykonmalerei>. – Actually, in view of its results, this method might be better thought of as a “composition” or “compositions.” Wiedmann also studied music for a time, and brought the knowledge he gained there into his painting. In 1995, for instance, he interpreted the organ works of Dietrich Buxtehude in painting (see. PDF “Wiedmann in numbers – Fact Sheet” from the press kit of the online presence at diewiedmann-bibel.de).

13) Here, as well, it is revealing to learn that Wiedmann began his Bible following the decoration of the main area of the Pauluskirche in Zuffenhausen, a suburb of Stuttgart, and that he took part in designing a church window in the Martinskirche in Wildberg. He did, then, work specifically in this area. This supports the parallels I indicated above to the conception of medieval church design, church windows, and Pauper's Bibles.



Left half



Right half

This part of the illustrated volume “Jesus Christ” displays the progression of events from the last supper to the foot washing, then Jesus dipping the bread into the same bowl as his betrayer, then waiting and praying in Gethsemane, and finally the Judas kiss. The scenes meld into one another. All of these situations are represented autonomously, and in a deeply impressive manner. Wiedmann also reflects on these paintings in his notes in a revealing manner, referring to art history.

In his notes, Wiedmann clearly differentiates his representation from those of Leonardo da Vinci, Juan de Juanes, and Martin Schongauer, explaining his philosophy as follows: “rather, in order to ultimately intercept the controversial questions regarding the existence of Jesus without answering them, I have given the master a spot at front and center – with his back to us. It is slightly symbolically meaningful that it [sic! Sc. he?] is leaving this world. The iris colors should transfer the rainbow (such as the one that once connected Noah to God) to Jesus here. (My kingdom is not of this world). I tried to present answers to each individual in a manner that corresponded with the characters.” This note makes it clear that Wiedmann claimed to be producing his Bible in deliberate manner in view of his interpretations of art history and theology.

The scene of the foot washing (John 13:1-20) is appended as a follow-up to the last supper (Mk 14:12-25) in this frieze. Here, we see how Wiedmann proceeds in creating a coherent, unified story of Jesus’ life in his illustrated volume “Jesus Christ.” He arranges various scenes from different Gospels into an overall linear (he has no other choice with the leporello format of the illustrated volumes!) and therefore chronological sequence. In the foot washing scene, it is interesting here that Jesus – as in many parts of Wiedmann’s Gos-

pel images – has blonde (!) hair! This is unusual, does not correspond to typical representations of Jesus and, tragically, reminds one of the image of Jesus held by the church party of the German Christians during the nazi regime! It is also remarkable that Judas – here in the yellow and green clothing Wiedmann maintains throughout his representation (similar to the clothing of Saul in the upper image, another persona non grata!) – has placed his feet beside the water trough so that it seems his feet will not be washed (perhaps because of John 13:10f.: “Jesus said to him: ‘The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.’ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’”).

In comparison to the last supper scene, one also notices that the environment here no longer seems to have been made by hand: the brown drapes in the last supper scene looked a bit like wood paneling, and something that looks like three transom windows can be seen in the background. This appears to be the elegant hall mentioned in Mk 14:15 (which is said to be decorated with cushions), in which Jesus wanted to celebrate Passover with his disciples. The scene of the foot washing, on the other hand, takes place in front of a background that gives the impression of being a cave wall. The crack through which one looks – through the rock – into this scene seems to have a folded, angular style reminiscent of a cave’s mouth which, in church orthodoxy, is present in the Christmas scene of Christ’s birth (lat. “spelunca” / gr. “spelygx”). The cave stands for the lowliness God enters into in his incarnation, becoming a defenseless baby lying in filthy hay in a feeding trough. Lowliness is also a motif here in the foot washing scene. This is indicated in Joh 13:12-15: “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me teacher and

Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him." And yet: Jesus, the master, washes his servants' feet: a topsy-turvy world.

"He becomes a servant and I a lord, what an exchange that is:" a literal translation of lyrics from the German Christmas song "Lobt Gott, ihr Christen alle gleich" ("Let all together praise our God"). This is exactly what Wiedmann is expressing here. Whether he refers to the representation of the orthodox Christmas scene can't be determined with certainty, unfortunately. But it is possible.

It is even more interesting that this dingy environment in which the foot washing takes place suddenly transitions into the (no longer blonde here!) hair of Jesus. This makes it seem as if the foot washing is taking place in Jesus' head, the center of his thoughts, and suddenly emerging as an idea and concept behind Jesus' preaching, which can be seen clearly in line with John's theology. At the same moment: In this perspective Jesus' concept of teaching becomes/is part of Jesus (as) Christ himself (the revealed and incarnate word of God), which makes Jesus Christ preaching himself – which, from a theological standpoint, is the content of the teachings of John's Jesus/Christ. It is also moving that the "close-up" of Jesus' face that follows is entirely abstract (similar to the faces of his disciples behind him). Only on the face of the disciple "whom Jesus loved" and who "was reclining next to him" (Joh 13:23), do we see tears of mourning in reaction to Jesus' words about a traitor at the table.

Judas, a wild incarnation of a red, horned figure already possessed by the devil (see Joh 13:2), creates a strong contrast. His eyes look aghast as he stares around the room (his pupils and iris, incidentally, form the familiar multi / 3-framed triangle indicating the acting God). His lips are blue, and remain blue at the end of our sequence, in which Judas betrays Jesus with blue lips ("as cold as ice") with a sign of love. The traitorous bowl stands before Judas – who has taken on the likeness of the devil (!) – on the table, into which Jesus dips his bread with a conspicuously natural (!, human) hand. Between the portrait of Judas and the Judas kiss, we also have a suggestion of the rooster's head, a sign for the announcement of Peter's denial and the garden of Gethsemane, bathed in darkness, in which the branches of the trees rise darkly into the night. To the left of this

(below the rooster's head), one sees the sleeping city of Jerusalem in the distance.

Only the silhouette of Jesus, standing quietly, looms in the garden. The three disciples he has taken with him lie deep in sleep, supported by or snuggling with one another at the lower right edge of the image. Jesus himself prays – as in the Gospels (see Mk 14:32-41) – three times in the middle of the image. Jesus literally bows to the cup he wants to pass from him in this scene, as he does to the father's will that is to be done (see Mk 14:36) represented by the beam coming down from the heavens. He is shown being thrown to the ground three times.

Because of their monumental size, it was not possible for Willy Wiedmann to copy or distribute his Bible before his death. Reproducing it would also exhaust the financial resources of most interested parties. Only a single copy of the Genesis volume is available, and was provided to church congress attendees to thumb through.

But this does not mean that you can only see the Wiedmann Bible in some outlying museum. Since Wiedmann always intended his creation to be available as a piece of art for the largest possible number of people, his children have taken up Wiedmann's work after his death and ensured that it could be digitized and prepared using modern technology to make it widely accessible. You can call up the Wiedmann Bible at the online address of the same name: (<http://www.thewiedmannbible.com>) or buy it as an app or a DVD. You can view up to 280 images free of charge. If you'd like to see more, you can purchase a personal license for a one-time charge of less than 5 € that



allows you to log in online from any device. 5 € for 3,333 paintings is just a fraction of a cent per image! This price seems more than fair to me.

Also, since part of the proceeds are donated to charitable causes, in my opinion figuring out a way to get around this minimal licensing fee just wouldn't be right!

In addition to the illustrated volumes of the Wiedmann Bible, the online version of the work also includes Wiedmann's hand-written notes on each image as a typed subtitle. The illustrated volume can either be moved forwards (and backwards) manually, or it will shift forwards in a set time interval using the play function. In the menu, you

also have the option of marking individual motifs and ordering them as a print (or puzzle, poster, cup, T-shirt, etc.). You can also call up each book individually and search for a particular place in the associated volume or enter a term listed in the heading or subtitle (e.g. name of a Biblical figure) in order to view all pictures associated with it. Equipped with these tools and added accessibility, the online version of the Wiedmann Bible is, in my opinion, ideally prepared for theological examination and for use in congregations, schools, and universities.

Consider this your personal invitation on an aesthetically and theologically appealing voyage of discovery!



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Genesis



Exodus



Leviticus



Numeri



Deuteronomium



Joshua – Judges
Ruth



Samuel



The Book of
the Kings



Ezra – Nehemia



Tobit Judith Esther



Job



The Psalter



Books of Wisdom



The Book of Jesus:
Son of Sira



Prophets



The New Testament



The Acts of the
Apostles



The Letters of the
New Testament



Apocalypse



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